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# THE ROAD TO WAR



**THE ROAD TO WAR**  
being an Analysis of the  
National Government's Foreign Policy

*With a Preface by*

**THE RIGHT HON. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P.**

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This Analysis has been prepared by  
a Small Group of Experts on the basis,  
and as a continuation of,

**INQUEST ON PEACE**

by "VIGILANTES"

The experts include two of the original  
three who wrote that account of the  
Government's Foreign Policy from  
June 1931 until October 1935

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#### NOTE

It must not be taken that all the views expressed in this book are necessarily those of the New Fabian Research Bureau.



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## PREFACE

*Inquest on Peace*, by "Vigilantes," was published just prior to the General Election of 1935, during the Italo-Abyssinian war. In the introduction to the book it was pointed out that the National Government was preparing to use that war, for which it itself bore a heavy responsibility, to secure, in a "snap" election, approval for a vast programme of re-armament.

The present book appears at a no less opportune moment, when the £1,500,000,000 Arms Bill, which this country is being asked to meet, is precipitating a new and greater arms race in Europe, and when the policy of the National Government is largely responsible for allowing international Fascism to destroy the legally constituted Spanish Government.

*The Road to War* is a detailed and fully documented review and analysis of the foreign policy of the National Government since 1935, and should be as warmly received as *Inquest on Peace*, for the issues with which it deals are probably of even more vital importance to the peace of Europe.

I do not necessarily agree with every opinion expressed in it, but I consider that it shows quite clearly that the Government's betrayal of collective security has been due not to mere hesitancy and confusion, but to the realisation that the support of the League Covenant meant, and means, opposition to the reactionary and conservative forces in Europe, and co-operation with those Powers which stand for social progress as well as the maintenance of international law.

It shows that a Government which is fundamentally reactionary at home, cannot effectively work for peace

abroad. The present British Government has always sympathy for reaction and dislike for what it considers to be Left-Wing Governments. It is, therefore, hopeless to expect that it will put up a real resistance to Fascism, because to do so would be to weaken its own position.

It is the responsibility of all those who desire peace to work to replace this Government by one which really believes in rebuilding the League on a firm foundation of social justice, and which has a home policy in harmony with its international outlook.

This book has been published under the auspices of the New Fabian Research Bureau. The Bureau is not officially responsible for the opinions expressed, but puts them forward for consideration and discussion. The offices of the Bureau are at 37 Great James Street, W.C.1.

C. R. ATTLEE

*March 1937.*

# I

## INTRODUCTION

IT IS OBVIOUS that the forces making for war have had the upper hand in the world since 1931, and that the struggle for peace is still a losing fight. It has been repeated *ad nauseam* that the next war will be even more destructive to civilisation than the last. It is clear beyond need for argument that the drift to war is a wholly man-made phenomenon and due, principally, to the foreign policies of the Great Powers. Foreign policy, as will be shown below, has become intimately connected with domestic policy, and both are dominated by the attempts of Governments to solve economic and social problems made acute by the great economic depression that began in 1929 and reached its lowest depth in 1932.

It was for some years the boast of our "National" Government that British prestige and influence in the world rose to unparalleled heights under their rule. This claim was never true, and little is heard of it now. But undoubtedly British foreign policy has been for at least a century, and still is, a quite first-class, indeed a decisive, factor in world affairs. Therefore, for good or ill, the foreign policy of the National Government has since 1931 exerted a great influence on the course of events, i.e. on the drift to war.

So much is indisputable, and cannot be contested by either the supporters or the opponents of the Government. The object of this book is to study the nature, causes, and consequences of this influence. Has it been, as the Government's supporters claim, an honest and well-meant, although unsuccessful, attempt to lead the world in

disarmament and in the strengthening of collective security? Or is it true, as the Labour Party asserts, that

“ The Government has a terrible responsibility for the present international situation. . . . This Government is a danger to the peace of the world and to the security of this country.”<sup>1</sup>

In either case, whether the Government's policy is good though incapable of stopping the drift to war, as its apologists imply, or bad in promoting the drift to war, as its opponents assert, the question arises, What will happen next if there is no drastic change in British foreign policy? Is it true, as the Rt. Hon. A. V. Alexander announced on May 31st, 1936, that, “ Unless the people as a whole are prepared to act, to demand and obtain a change in our foreign policy, war with all its dreadful consequences cannot long be delayed ” ? (reported in the *Daily Herald* of June 1st, 1936). If so, what change in our foreign policy should the Labour Party demand, and what should it do to obtain that change?

These are the questions on which this book endeavours to throw light. It does so by analysing the National Government's foreign policy in such a way as to show not only what has happened, but *why* it has happened, what are the motives and forces behind the National Government, how its foreign policy is related to its home policy, and how both spring from the fundamental purpose for which the Government exists and which cannot change until the Government is replaced by one that represents different motives and different social dynamics.

The National Government's foreign policy from 1931 until the 1935 General Election has been described, and to

<sup>1</sup> From the Labour Party Election Manifesto of October 26th, 1935. For official statements of the Labour Party's views on peace and the Government's policy, see Appendix.

some extent analysed, in *Inquest on Peace*, by "Vigilantes" (Victor Gollancz, 3s. 6d.). Most of the statements of fact made in this book are backed by references to verifiable—generally official—sources. No important fact has been questioned by any critic—indeed some, as, for example, Mr. J. A. Spender in the *Spectator*—have gone out of their way to say that they can find no inaccuracy in the facts, although they dissent from the conclusions of the book because they find them so wounding to patriotic susceptibilities. On the other hand, the correctness of the conclusions is vouched for by the only criterion that can be applied, namely by the extent to which the predictions made in the book have subsequently been verified by the course of events. Anyone who chooses to compare the predictions made in the book as to the future development and consequences of the Government's policy with what has actually happened since the book was written will realise that its analysis of the motives and forces behind the Government's policy must be pretty close to the truth. Therefore the account of the Government's international record given in *Inquest on Peace* will be taken as the starting-point for considering the Government's foreign policy in the last year, and for drawing conclusions as to the causes and consequences of that policy.

The order in which the various aspects of the subject will be treated is as follows: The Background of the "National" Government's Foreign Policy; the Far East; Italy and Abyssinia; Spain; Germany; the Collective System, Defence, and Peace; Conclusions and Forecast. Germany comes late in this list because the Government's attitude to that country is now the central point of its foreign policy and its justification for its Italian and Spanish policies. The question of the collective system, defence, and peace comes next because it embodies the purpose and result of the whole of the Government's policy.

In the Appendix at the end of this book there are a series of quotations from official and semi-official statements by the Labour Party and its leaders, recording their views on the international situation; on the National Government's foreign policy; and on Labour's own foreign policy. It will be observed that the analysis and findings of this book corroborate these statements in every particular.

## II

# THE BACKGROUND OF THE “NATIONAL” GOVERNMENT’S FOREIGN POLICY

### (a) *Continuity*

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT’S defence White Papers and other official statements on foreign policy have repeatedly emphasised the continuity of the Government’s policy. There is much truth in this contention. Whether Mr. MacDonald or Mr. Baldwin or Mr. Neville Chamberlain is the nominal or real head of the Government, or whether Sir John Simon, Sir Samuel Hoare, or Mr. Eden is Foreign Secretary, the main lines and fundamental characteristics of the Government’s foreign policy remain unchanged. It is necessary to stress this fact, because Labour as well as other commentators frequently speak as though the Government’s foreign policy was due to the idiosyncrasies, the personal defects or virtues of this or that Member of the Government. Actually, no important decision on foreign policy has ever been taken by the National Government without the concurrence of the whole Cabinet. And the Cabinet has been guided in its decisions not only by the advice of the Foreign Office, War Office, and Admiralty, but primarily by the attitude of the Conservative Party and of those interests which the Conservative Party exists to protect and which it identifies with the interests of the nation.

Before the war foreign policy could plausibly be represented as the prerogative of the Foreign Secretary and his

advisers, although even then this was an unduly simple picture. For, as the *Manchester Guardian* wrote on March 30th, 1936: "It was Gladstone who said that the foundation of a good foreign policy is a good home policy. In any case, there is an organic connection between home affairs and foreign, and if we examine the domestic affairs of any Power we shall be able to understand its foreign affairs all the better." The truth enunciated by Gladstone and recalled by the *Manchester Guardian* became obvious after the Great War, and in the shape of the "conflict of ideologies" overshadows world affairs to-day. This is due to three principal reasons.

(b) *The Democratisation of Foreign Policy*

The first reason is that foreign policy has become democratised. Mr. C. R. Attlee once pointed out that in the three years preceding the World War there were only two debates in the House on foreign affairs. To-day the average is nearer one debate every three weeks. Before the war, both the Conservative and the Liberal Parties believed that there must be "continuity" in foreign policy, and that this subject was "above party politics." To-day, Labour does not share this belief. The Conservatives still endeavour to exploit this doctrine in order to secure support for their own Party's foreign policy. But each time the Conservative Party came to power it abandoned and reversed the policy of its Labour predecessors. Foreign policy has now become a first-class electoral issue, a chief plank in the programme of every political party.

The democratisation of foreign policy is due to the dawning realisation, after the World War, that foreign policy involves literally life-and-death issues for every man, woman, and child, and to the fact that the official purpose of foreign policy since 1919 has been the building up of a

form of world government known as the League of Nations. The League of Nations, it should never be forgotten, was conceived as an attempt at world government. This fact was emphasised at the Peace Conference, and notably in General Smuts's famous pamphlet, *The League of Nations, A Practical Suggestion*.

(c) *The League of Nations*

The existence of the League, the propaganda and publicity centring about the League (and including not only the Press, but that powerful new agency, broadcasting) are the second reason why foreign policy has become democratic and a matter for the whole Government. The attempt to build up a world government by its very nature tends progressively to obliterate the distinction between home and foreign affairs. "League policy" has from the beginning transcended the conventional limits of foreign policy and involved many Government departments besides the Foreign Office and the fighting services.

(d) *The Fusion of Economics and Politics*

Since the great economic depression a third factor has further broadened the basis of foreign policy and linked it more intimately with domestic issues. As a result of the depression, public life is increasingly dominated by the attempts of Governments to solve economic and social problems, or to distract the attention of their peoples from the increasing gravity of such problems. As Mr. Harold Butler, the Director of the International Labour Organisation, put it in his Annual Report of 1936:

"In 1936 the perception that the failure to ensure economic and social equilibrium was the most radical flaw in the peace settlement is dimly beginning to dawn.

. . . There is now a vague awareness that territorial claims and armament programmes are not the fundamental issues and that it is impossible to allay the international tension which they have created without striking deeper. They are not the causes of our present discontents but the symptoms. The roots are to be found in actual or threatened impoverishment, declining standards of life, insecurity for the future of themselves and their children which darkens the outlook of the present generation in so many countries. The remedy is not to be found then in political pacts or frontier rectifications or disarmament conferences alone. These methods have been tried and have failed because they did not touch the real source of the trouble. . . . We are beginning faintly to understand that the economic nationalism of the eighteenth century is utterly disastrous in the twentieth. . . . Economic and social problems have become political problems of the first national and international magnitude. . . . That is why it is no longer possible to dissociate the future of peace from the future of social justice” (pp. 73-5).

But in the economic and social domain interdependence between nations is a fact, and the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs is artificial. Hence, as Señor del Vayo, the Spanish Foreign Minister, put it to the League Council at its extraordinary session in December 1936: “It is becoming more and more difficult to draw a clear line between what is the internal affair of a nation and what may be regarded as a matter of international concern.”

(e) *The Social and Political Repercussions of the Great Crisis*

This difficulty is all the greater because since the outset of the economic depression both internal and international

affairs are being more and more dominated by the struggle between those who wish to maintain the existing social order and those who want to change it. The international and social consequences of the great depression have been analysed in a number of publications of the League Secretariat and of the International Labour Office. These publications<sup>1</sup> are of unique value, for they are the only publications in the world that combine independence of any Government or vested interest with the strict accuracy of fact required in an official publication, and that unite both to a cosmopolitan point of view which regards world conditions and world forces as the subject of study.

What has been happening in the world since the onset of the great economic depression is set forth very clearly in these publications. The steps in the process are three (although it must be remembered that they are interdependent and concurrent):

(1) Business and banking circles in every country endeavoured to escape from the consequences of the economic depression—i.e. of the way capitalism works—by pushing their Governments into policies of economic nationalism (tariffs, quotas, subsidies), accompanied by an increasing concentration of economic and financial power in national trusts, combines, banks, and monopolies of various kinds.

(2) Those who pressed for economic nationalism used as one of their main arguments the danger of war and the necessity of being prepared for war. This very soon passed over into increasing stress on rearmament and other war

<sup>1</sup> e.g. the annual "World Economic Survey" of the Economic Intelligence Service of the Secretariat; the 1935 and 1936 Reports of the Economic Committee on "The Present Phase of International Economic Relations," the Annual Reports of the Director of the International Labour Office.

preparations, both on political grounds and as the only way to combat unemployment on the basis of private enterprise and within the framework of economic nationalism.

(3) The interests and elements in the community—i.e. the propertied classes—that took the lead in this movement everywhere invoked the religion of nationalism—that is, the sentiment of patriotism, “national unity transcending party politics,” etc.—in order to secure support for their campaign to “save the country,” by which they meant the existing social and economic order. Men naturally tend to defend their position, when other arguments fail and their opponents press hard, by falling back on authority and primitive emotions. John Stuart Mill once observed that when an evil becomes too great to defend on other grounds it is defended on religious grounds. The political religion of the defenders of the present social and economic order is nationalism.

This world-wide process is working itself out in different forms and at a different rate in all countries.

In Italy democracy was smashed by an alliance between the propertied classes and extreme nationalism and political gangsterism after the first post-war slump, in fear lest the workers should use their political rights to gain power. Fascism became actively aggressive as a result of its failure to solve the domestic problems arising out of the great slump. In Germany and Japan similar developments occurred as a direct consequence of the social and economic strains resulting from the great slump, although in these cases, as in Italy, international political grievances were used as part of the “ideology” of the capitalist-militarist counter-revolution.

In Russia a social revolution was carried out in the last stages of the World War at a fearful cost—which was immeasurably increased by the policy of France and Great

Britain—and a collectivist economic system replaced capitalism. During the years when the capitalist States were suffering from the economic depression, the Soviet Union was forging ahead rapidly with its first and second Five-Year Plans. Whereas capitalist Governments have resorted to, and are relying on, war preparations as their only way out from the problems of unemployment and poverty, the U.S.S.R. feels rearmament as a hateful necessity that constitutes a brake and a drain on her collectivist economic system. As a direct result of her new economic and social system and the accompanying "ideology"—belief in the coming of world government through the rise to power and international solidarity of the workers—the foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. is in the sharpest possible contrast to that of the Fascist Powers.

In France and Great Britain democracy is older and works better than it ever did in Germany and Italy (in Japan and Russia there never was democracy; in the latter country it is just beginning, as part of the new civilisation). There has been no crushing of the workers as under the Fascist Powers, and no victory of the workers, as in the U.S.S.R. But here, too, the same process is at work as in the rest of the world (including the U.S.A., although here peculiar local conditions have led to it working out in widely different forms): the propertied classes have sunk their party differences and coalesced into "National" Governments so as to meet the threat to the existing social order arising out of the discontent of the workers with the conditions created by the great depression. The "ideology" of patriotism, "national solidarity above party rivalry," etc., has been freely invoked, and nationalism and war preparations are being increasingly relied on by the propertied classes and their political parties as their only means of survival. In these two countries, also, foreign policy is, like domestic policy, dominated by the struggle between the

workers' and the capitalist parties, and varies as the fortunes of that long-drawn struggle fluctuate.

*(f) The Nature and Function of the "National" Government*

It is against this background that the foreign policy of the National Government must be studied. In its origin the National Government was a coalition of the capitalist parties, whose object it was to preserve the existing social and economic order. This they identified quite sincerely with "saving the country." At luncheons by the National Labour Party, in October 1933 and October 1934, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Baldwin, and Sir John Simon boasted that the National Government represented the same principle of national concentration, and was performing the same task for this country in the world crisis, as the Fascist dictatorships were doing for Germany and Italy. They were right. The National Government have pretty consistently acted as the servants of the rich and of the vested interests of capitalism against the poor and the community at large, as have the Fascist regimes. Within the National Government the Conservative Party has acquired undisputed control, and within the Conservative Party the hard-faced, unrepentant Tories are getting the upper hand. As the Government become steadily more reactionary their subservience to the vested interests of the rich becomes plainer, and their identification of the demands of the plutocracy with the interests of the nation becomes more unblushing. This phenomenon is familiar enough in the Government's domestic policy. But it is not clearly enough realised that the same forces and influences determine their foreign policy. At home, under the guise of devotion to democracy and the unity of the nation, the National Government conduct the class war of the rich against the poor. Abroad, under the guise, again, of devotion to democracy

and of neutrality between Fascism and Communism, they have in fact persistently connived at and encouraged Fascist aggression in Asia, Africa, and Europe. It is wrong to think of the Government's foreign policy in terms of the shortcomings of individuals. It is almost equally wrong to talk as though it were merely a display of collective weakness, muddle, and cowardice. There have been plenty of mistakes and even rascalities by individuals, and a lot of weakness, cowardice, and muddle by the whole Government. But the real evil, which underlies and gives rise to most of the rest, is that the National Government's foreign policy is trying to pursue contradictory and irreconcilable aims. It tries to (a) persuade public opinion of its devotion to the League of Nations; (b) conduct any matter involving Tory conceptions of British Imperial interests on the traditional lines of power-politics; (c) prevent any action being taken that might result in a Fascist regime anywhere being overthrown by social revolution. In the pursuit of these ends, first (a) has given way to (b) and (c), and then (b) has been sacrificed to (c).

It is this pursuit of contradictory objectives, and particularly the overriding at critical moments of all other considerations, including Imperial interests, by Tory class-instinct, that is at the bottom of the National Government's foreign policy. And, by the operation of a sort of vicious circle, the worse the international situation becomes, largely as a result of the Government's policy, the more reactionary the Government grows, and the more evil and hypocritical and dangerous is its foreign policy. How this process has worked, and what the ultimate consequences will be, is revealed by the following analysis of the Government's record.

### III

## THE FAR EAST

### *The Government's Record*

**T**HE RECORD of the Government in the Far East may be summarised as follows:

(1) *Inquest on Peace* makes it clear that the National Government exerted an absolutely decisive influence on the League's handling of the Sino-Japanese conflict, and used this influence in order to prevent the League applying its own Covenant and virtually to aid and abet Japanese aggression. (2) The book makes it equally clear (and supports its demonstration by quotations from such good authorities as Lord Lytton and Lord Lothian) that the Government's habitual excuse that it was unable to secure the co-operation of the United States is the exact reverse of the truth—it was the United States that was let down by our National Government. Former Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson's book has since confirmed this view. To this it may be added that the co-operation of the U.S.S.R. could easily have been secured as well—only, instead, the Government chose to sever diplomatic relations with, and apply single-handed economic sanctions to, that country because of the trial of the Vickers engineers. (3) The book quoted, and gave reasons for agreeing with, Lord Cecil's statement in the House of Lords on March 13th, 1935, that it was "fantastic nonsense" to suggest that economic sanctions, applied by the League in conjunction with the United States, would have resulted in Japan's going to war with the whole world, instead of accepting the very favourable (indeed, unduly favourable, on any long view) terms

of settlement offered her by the League. Miss Freda Utley's deadly description of the internal conditions of Japan—*Japan's Feet of Clay*<sup>1</sup>—has since adduced abundant evidence in support of this view. (4) The book showed in detail that the National Government's motive in letting down the United States, disregarding and fatally weakening the Covenant, and conniving at Japanese aggression, was two-fold. On the one hand, it believed that to encompass the defeat of Japan's Manchurian adventure would lead to a social revolution in Japan that would spread to China and make Soviet influence predominant throughout the Far East. This would put an end to the concessions, extraterritorial privileges, and "unilateral treaties" of the Western Powers in China, and threaten the colonial, Imperial, and social *status quo* throughout the East, and eventually throughout the non-self-governing parts of the British Empire. Now from the point of view of the Conservative Party, and of the capitalist vested interests which it identifies with "the nation" and "civilisation," it would be almost worth fighting a world war to avert consequences such as would flow from a social revolution in Japan; it was literally unthinkable to our propertied classes that they should incur the slightest risk of war, or even of loss of trade or investments, for a result that would at most certainly include a social revolution in Japan! Hence the violently pro-Japanese feeling manifested in the City, by most of the Government Press, and by a powerful section of the Conservative Party. It is impossible to understand the fundamental character of the Government's foreign policy, and the impossibility of changing it so long as the Government remain in office, unless it is clearly realised that, *from the point of view of a Government concerned to preserve the existing social and economic order, with its vested interests in foreign concessions and the*

<sup>1</sup> See also Tanin and Yohan's *Militarism and Fascism in Japan*, and, *If Japan Goes to War*.

*Imperial and colonial status quo, it was perfectly true that an honest and courageous application of the Covenant to the Sino-Japanese conflict would have had the gravest consequences. It was not the risk of failure ending in war that made the Government hesitate, but the extreme probability of success ending in revolutionary changes in the whole social and international status quo in the Far East.*

The other half of the Government's twofold motive for its policy was its belief that it could do a deal with Japanese Imperialism on the basis of conniving at Japanese aggression and Covenant-breaking, in exchange for Japan promising to look after British interests. This policy was virtually admitted in the Foreign Office Press *communiqué* of January 11th, 1932. The *communiqué* explained that, *because of the Japanese representative's assurances to Sir John Simon during the November-December 1931 Council meeting in Paris that Japan would respect the Open Door and British interests in Manchuria*, the Government saw no need to associate itself with the American declaration refusing to recognise the state of affairs created by Japan in Manchuria. Later, an attempt was made to exploit Japanese aggression at Shanghai in order to blackmail the Chinese into agreeing to an extension of the foreign settlements (the International Settlement and the French Concession) in return for Anglo-French "good offices" with the Japanese invaders. But this attempt was defeated by the reluctance of the French (then under a Left-Centre Government), and the resolute opposition of the Chinese, who stood on their rights under the Covenant and were backed in this by several small States in the Assembly (which was then in session) and by public opinion.

### *The Consequences*

As for the Japanese promises about the Open Door in Manchuria, the Japanese soon showed no more respect for

British Imperial interests or for their promises than our National Government had shown for the rights of the Chinese or for our treaty obligations under the Covenant. They instituted oil and other monopolies in Manchuria, overran North China south of the Great Wall as far as the Yellow River, flooded it with smuggled goods (and narcotic drugs), and have been applying increasing pressure, backed by threats of war, on the Central Government at Nanking to accept terms which would virtually reduce China to an economic and political protectorate of Japan. They have concluded the German-Japanese "anti-Communist" treaty, which is really an anti-Soviet military alliance. And they are preparing feverishly for war on a scale that means bankruptcy in a few years. The National Government passed from connivance in 1931-33 to perplexity and then to virtuous indignation in 1934-36 at the failure of Japan to confine her aggression within limits compatible with a "gentlemen's agreement" between British and Japanese Imperialism. Our Tories understood and sympathised with Japan's treatment of the Chinese and of the Covenant and Nine Power Treaty. But they were genuinely astonished and pained at the lack of respect subsequently shown by the Japanese for the "old school tie." After a vain attempt to enlist the United States Administration for an Anglo-American oil embargo against Japan as a "sanction" against the Japanese oil monopoly in Manchuria, the Government fell back on sending Sir Frederick Leith-Ross to China to give financial advice. The encouragement given to China's abandonment of the silver standard, the opening of a £10,000,000 trade credit, and the Leith-Ross mission are interpreted in diplomatic circles in Europe, America, and the Far East, as meaning that our National Government is preparing to defend British trade, concessions, and investments in Central China against Japanese encroachments. The defence preparations at Hong Kong and the

vast sums spent on the Singapore base give colour to this view. On the other hand neither Soviet nor American support is likely to be forthcoming merely to bolster up British against Japanese Imperialism. And in so far as our National Government consider it "realistic" to take any interest at all in the fortunes of the Chinese Government and national movement they are using their influence to strengthen the Right-Wing elements who wish to continue the civil war against the Communists. This will keep China weak and divided, and play into the hands of the Japanese. The logical outcome of this situation would be an Imperialist deal or bargain in which Japan would get loans and a free hand for war against the U.S.S.R., in return for "saving the face" of the remnants of British prestige and trade in Central China. But the German-Japanese treaty brings the Far-Eastern situation into such close relation with the developments in Europe, and British policy is so tortuous and confused that nothing can safely be predicted except the continued growth of Japan's aggression in China and of her menace to world peace. It is plain that the Government's Far-Eastern policy has been a catastrophic failure and a nail in the coffin of peace.

### *The Moral*

The moral of the National Government's Far-Eastern policy is that in their attempts to preserve capitalism by political means, after its partial economic and social breakdown in the great depression, the Government were faced by an insoluble dilemma. They saw one horn of the dilemma—that to apply the Covenant meant to start a revolution in Japan, with all its consequences in the Far East. But they did not see the other horn of the dilemma—that if they let Japan rip they would start the present drift toward another world war. They could not see this horn of

the dilemma, because they were utterly incapable of understanding the social dynamics of the militarist-Fascist movement in Japan and in so far as they could perceive what was happening at all they were instinctively and necessarily on the side of the Japanese War Office and big business against the Japanese masses. Consequently they treated the Japan of 1931 as though it were still pre-war Japan, with whom an Imperialist bargain could be driven on classical lines with a reasonable expectation of stability. They could not understand the fact that big business and the army had got Japan into a situation where there was no escape from increasing aggression and rearmament except through revolution or war, because they could not admit, even to themselves, that social revolution could be necessary as an alternative to war. Conservative minds are conditioned against thinking on such lines. Therefore our Tories, in order to avoid the risk to the existing social and Imperial order of a revolution in Japan, preferred to default on their treaty obligations and to connive at Japanese aggression. They thereby struck a fatal blow at the collective system, killed any chance of disarmament, and started the present drift toward a world war which, when it comes, will be infinitely more devastating to the present social and Imperial order than anything that could have resulted from applying the Covenant to Japan. The defenders of the social and colonial *status quo* were in the tragic position of "Heads you win ; tails I lose." But they felt less responsible for the ultimate catastrophe to civilisation resulting from their refusal to act, than for the immediate risk to the social *status quo* that would have resulted from their applying (instead of disregarding) the Covenant.

## IV

# ITALY AND ABYSSINIA

*Inquest on Peace*, in a detailed analysis of the Government's policy in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, shows that (a) Great Britain wielded an absolutely decisive influence on the way the League dealt with this matter; (b) the British Government knew all about Mussolini's preparations and plans for his war of conquest a full year before the war began; (c) the National Government's attempts to negotiate a settlement were based, from the beginning to the end, on the 1906 Anglo-Franco-Italian treaty and the Anglo-Italian exchange of Notes of 1925 for a deal between British, French, and Italian Imperialism for the subjugation and partition of Abyssinia; (d) the tardy and half-hearted application of sanctions was undertaken partly in an attempt to induce Mussolini to do a deal on terms satisfactory to British Imperialism instead of taking the whole of Abyssinia at once, and partly in order to win the General Election.

The book predicted that immediately after the election the Government would attempt a deal with Mussolini for the partition of Abyssinia; that sanctions would never be honestly applied and would be dropped at the first opportunity; and that the occasion would be used by the Right Wing of the Conservative Party to proclaim the end of the League as a guarantee of peace, and to press successfully for unlimited rearmament and a return to the policies of the Balance of Power. The Maffey Report, the Hoare-Laval deal, and the whole course of events after the election have confirmed to the hilt the correctness of the analysis on which these predictions were based.

*Imperialism versus the Covenant*

*Inquest on Peace* shows that the British Somaliland Administration knew of Italy's Abyssinian plans as far back as 1932. Marshal Badoglio has published a book boasting that Italian preparations for the war of conquest began two years before Italian native levies, in December 1934, started a quarrel with Abyssinian forces at Wal Wal, sixty miles within Abyssinian territory. The Abyssinian Government brought the matter before the League Council in January 1935, and gave lurid details of the engagement that had been fought, of the presence of Italian levies on Abyssinian soil, and of the menacing language of the Italian commander. In March, Abyssinia invoked Article 10 of the Covenant, and stated that the political independence and territorial integrity of the whole country was in danger, and League action was urgently required. Week after week, almost day by day, the League was bombarded with urgent appeals, and faced with ever graver facts. Yet from January to May the victim of aggression was kept away from the Council by British and French pressure, and was referred to direct negotiations with the aggressor on the basis of an Italo-Abyssinian arbitration and conciliation treaty. The Italians refused to discuss anything but the responsibility for the Wal Wal incident, and excluded from this the question of the right of their troops to be at Wal Wal. During these months Italian troops and war materials were pouring through the Suez Canal, and the officially controlled Italian Press was openly talking of the impending conquest of Abyssinia. The Anglo-Franco-Italian Conference at Stresa, in April, came and went without a word about Abyssinia (at least officially).

Why was there this long pause, between January and June 1935, when nothing was done? It is now possible, thanks to the Maffey Report, to give the answer. On

January 29th, 1935, the Italian *chargé d'affaires*, Signor Vitetti, called at the Foreign Office and proposed conversations "to consider specific agreements for a harmonious development of the Italian and British interests in Ethiopia." In the light of the 1906 Treaty and the 1925 exchange of Notes, of the Wal Wal incident and of the Italian war preparations on the borders of Abyssinia, it was perfectly plain what this invitation meant. The reply of a British Government that was honest about the Covenant would have been that: (a) Italy and Abyssinia were both parties to a conflict that was *sub judice* before the League; (b) there was reason to fear that the Italian Government contemplated aggression against the territorial integrity and political independence of Abyssinia; (c) therefore the Government must decline to discuss any matter affecting Italo-Abyssinian relations except at Geneva, and must warn the Italian Government that upholding the Covenant against aggression was regarded by His Majesty's Government as a matter of honour and vital interest. A few months later Mr. Baldwin publicly stated that any attack on the integrity and independence of Egypt would be regarded as an unfriendly act. Why was not some warning of this sort given to Mussolini about Abyssinia in relation to our obligations as a member of the League, in reply to his invitation to enter into conversations for the partition of Abyssinia?

For the simple reason that it never entered the heads of the National Government to apply the Covenant to this dispute, and that on the contrary they immediately accepted the Italian invitation to discuss the terms of a "colonial" deal. On September 17th, 1935, the *Morning Post* published an interview with Signor Mussolini in which he told of his invitation and complained that he received only an evasive reply. Next day, September 18th, 1935, under the title "British Reply to Duce," the *Morning Post* published an article by its Diplomatic Correspondent recording the

following comments of "authoritative quarters" (i.e. the Foreign Office) on Signor Mussolini's statement:

"It is conceded that Signor Mussolini correctly describes the nature of the first Italian approach on January 29th. The Italian Ambassador in London then conveyed an invitation to the British Government 'to consider specific agreements for a harmonious development of the Italian and British interests in Ethiopia.'

"The terms of this invitation, it is pointed out, suggested neither the urgency nor the extent of Italy's plans as they have now been revealed.

"In fact, however, it is understood that the British Government at once proceeded to examine the issues raised by the invitation, and to consult the various British Colonial Administrations affected. The only justification for the term 'evasive' used by Signor Mussolini to describe the British reply to the invitation that can be seen is that it no doubt conveyed the impression that the process of examination and consultation would be a lengthy one."

The results of the Government's consultation of "the various British Colonial Administrations affected," in order to "examine the issues raised by the invitation," were embodied in the report by Sir John Maffey, Permanent Under-Secretary of the Colonial Office. The report took four months—from February to May 1935 inclusive—to prepare. Although a highly confidential document a copy came into the possession of the Italian Government, and parts of it were published in the *Giornale d'Italia* on February 19th, 1936. These extracts were reproduced in *The Times* and other papers of February 20th.

These extracts state that the report was framed by an inter-Departmental Committee in order to provide materials

for a reply to the Italian invitation of January 29th. These "materials" are summed up in nine points. The first says: "Italy will during the coming years certainly do her utmost to secure control of Abyssinia, even if at the present moment she may intend only to limit her action to conquering the lowlands which border on Italian Somaliland." The remaining points discuss how to safeguard British commercial, colonial, and defence interests in the event of Italy conquering Abyssinia. Points 3 and 9 are of particular interest: (3) "Should Abyssinia disappear as an independent State the British Government should try to obtain territorial control over the Lake [Tzana] and over a corridor joining it with the Sudan"; (9) "The opportunity should be seized if possible to rectify the boundaries of British Somaliland, Kenya, and the Sudan so as to incorporate those adjoining localities which have bonds of economic and ethical affinity."

There are three interesting points about this report: the first is that Abyssinia was our fellow-member of the League that had appealed to our National Government with the rest of the League to protect it against aggression, and offered to accept arbitration and the League's decisions on any matter in dispute with Italy, as well as League assistance in modernising and developing Ethiopia, abolishing slavery, etc. Abyssinia had notably invoked Article 10 of the Covenant by which all the members of the League undertake to respect and to preserve against external aggression each other's territorial integrity and political independence.

The second observation is that the report is in the classic tradition of the palmiest days of the nineteenth-century Imperialist scramble in Africa.

The third observation is that the report is based on the proposals for an Imperialist deal adumbrated in the 1906 Treaty and the 1925 exchange of Notes, *and laid down the*

*policy which the Government in fact attempted to pursue as from June 1935 until the final collapse.* The policy was based on the idea that Italy was to be induced to take two bites at the Abyssinian cherry instead of one. In the first bite, which was to be an all-Italian affair, the lowlands (what afterwards became known as the "non-Amharic territories") were to go, in whole or in part. After a decent interval the rest of the country was to be swallowed. It was at this stage that British Imperialism was to receive its reward, in the manner suggested in points 3 and 9, for being an accessory before and after the fact.

During the months this important report was being completed the Government played for time, and successfully (with the help of M. Laval) prevented any action at Geneva. The moment the report was ready, in June 1935, Mr. Eden called on Signor Mussolini in Rome. "In these conversations, it is understood," says the "inspired" article in the *Morning Post* of September 18th, 1935, already quoted, "Mr. Eden pointed out that the situation had developed to a point at which British policy was no longer founded upon considerations of British colonial interests; but upon such wider issues as maintenance of the peace in Europe and of the authority of the League of Nations."

This is a semi-official admission that British policy during the crucial six months—January to June 1935—was indeed founded on "considerations of British colonial interests" and disregarded the Covenant. But contemporary Press accounts make it clear that the Eden proposals to Mussolini in June 1935 were on the 1906 Treaty-1925 Notes—Maffey Report basis. They consisted in trying to ascertain how much of the lowlands of Abyssinia Mussolini would content himself with if obtainable at the price of merely threatening war, and in suggesting that Abyssinia's face be saved by offering her the famous "corridor for camels" to Zeila. No doubt Mr. Eden, who is fond of making speeches

about the League, added some observations on that subject. And apparently Signor Mussolini, who wanted all of Abyssinia and likes his Imperialism neat and not diluted with cant, was rude about it.

Thereupon Mr. Eden and M. Laval, in Paris, in August 1935, went still further in "conciliation" and devised a scheme, which, as *Inquest on Peace* puts it, "would have made of Abyssinia virtually an Anglo-Franco-Italian protectorate under League auspices and with the lion's share to Italy." Unspecified parts of the lowlands were to be ceded outright to Italy—always under the face-saving formula and of "exchange of territories."

This offer was turned down by Signor Mussolini, who made it clear that he wanted the whole of Abyssinia. Part of the Government thought that in the circumstances this was going too far and was dangerous to Imperial prestige and interests. By this time, too, part of the Government's supporters began to share the indignation of public opinion at the Government's passivity in face of the approaching slaughter. The success of the Peace Ballot, in spite of their best efforts to discourage it, had impressed the Government. Serious anxiety was expressed lest the General Election might be lost if Abyssinia was betrayed before instead of after the polls. For all these reasons it was decided to apply mild sanctions gradually and to hurry up with the election.

But from the outset sanctions were looked upon, not as a means of defeating Mussolini's aggression, but of inducing him to do a deal on the basis of taking only part instead of the whole of Abyssinia, although with, so to speak, a lien on the rest. Never, from first to last, did the Government consider, or even say, that the object of sanctions was to preserve the territorial integrity and political independence of Abyssinia against aggression, as laid down in Article 10 of the Covenant. On the contrary, Sir Samuel Hoare, on

November 2nd, 1935, told the Co-ordination Committee of the League (i.e. the body for deciding on the application of sanctions), that "it is essential to act in the spirit of impartial justice towards the three parties in the controversy—the League, Italy, and Ethiopia [i.e. the policeman, the gangster, and his victim]. . . . Nothing is further from our minds than to make an agreement that is not acceptable to all three parties to the controversy." That was a hypocritical way of announcing that the object of sanctions was a deal with Mussolini at the expense of Abyssinia and of the Covenant.

The Committee of Five's report, in September 1935, at Geneva, was the next stage, after the failure of the August proposals, in the attempts to drive a bargain with Mussolini. Because of the opposition of certain members of the Council, notably the Soviet Union, and the difficulty of wholly adapting Geneva conditions to the practice of the old diplomacy on the basis of pre-war Imperialism, the Committee of Five's report was a less blatant document than the secret August proposals on which it was based. It was ambiguous about the nationality of the "advisers" the Abyssinian Emperor must appoint, and specific about the necessity for their enjoying his confidence. The August proposals had made it clear that the "advisers" must be French, British, and (mostly) Italian, and left in the dark what say, if any, the Emperor was to have in their appointment. The Committee of Five's report said nothing in the body of the text about Italy acquiring Abyssinian territory, whereas that was an integral part of the August proposals. But in the Annex to the Committee of Five's report the British and French Governments put forward, in veiled but unmistakable terms, proposals for an Italo-Abyssinian one-way "exchange of territories"—with due regard for Anglo-French interests. Later, Sir Samuel Hoare defended his "deal" on the ground that it merely applied the

principles contained in the August proposals and the September report. This is true, although they could have been applied less one-sidedly, to put it mildly.

In October 1935 a leakage in the French Press compelled the Foreign Office to admit what they at first denied, namely that their Mr. Peterson was in Paris, discussing with his opposite number M. St. Quentin, of the Quai d'Orsay, certain fresh proposals for a settlement.

On the afternoon of November 2nd, 1935, the Co-ordination Committee of the League met. Just before, Sir Samuel Hoare and M. Laval invited M. Van Zeeland, the Belgian Prime Minister, to luncheon, and explained to him that they desired him to make a "spontaneous" suggestion to the Committee that afternoon, to the effect that it should "give a mandate" to France and Great Britain to endeavour, "in a spirit of conciliation," to seek a solution acceptable to the three parties—Italy, Abyssinia, and the League.

M. Van Zeeland accordingly carried out his instructions that afternoon. The other delegates, taken by surprise and without instructions, for the most part sought refuge in silence or in amiable platitudes. The Polish delegate, however, said:

"I would point out that the previous speakers have very properly emphasised the role which devolves on the Council of the League. It will, in particular, be the Council's task to find a solution such as will restore peace. While expressing my sincere wishes for the full success of the efforts made by France and the United Kingdom in the cause of peace, I must nevertheless point out that our Co-ordination Committee cannot confer a formal mandate on those Powers, the Council being the only body competent to deal with the substance of the problem."

In view of this reference to the indisputable fact that the Co-ordination Committee had no power to do anything except organise the application of sanctions, and certainly could not interfere with the duties of the Council, there was no resolution, and the Committee merely, as the Minutes put it, "took note of the desire expressed by the Belgian delegate."

It was on the basis of this unsuccessful attempt by Sir Samuel Hoare and M. Laval to confer on themselves a non-existent League mandate short-circuiting the Council, that these worthies afterwards, until the swindle was exposed both in the French and British Parliaments, repeatedly endeavoured to represent to their public opinions that the League had asked them to go behind its own back and concoct their famous "deal."

On November 2nd Sir Samuel Hoare prepared the ground for M. Van Zeeland's "spontaneous" suggestion by telling the Co-ordination Committee that it was the League's duty not only to apply sanctions, but to strive for a "speedy and honourable settlement of the controversy. It is common talk that, during the last few days, there have been conversations taking place between Rome, Paris, and London [not including, it will be observed, Addis Ababa], on the possibilities of such a settlement. There is nothing mysterious or sinister about these discussions. It is the duty of all of us to explore the road to peace. This is what we have been doing, and this is what we shall continue to do. Up to the present, the conversations have been nothing more than an exchange of tentative suggestions. They have had, as yet, no positive outcome. There is therefore nothing to report. If and when these suggestions take a more definite form, we shall take the earliest opportunity to bring them before the Council in the most appropriate manner. Nothing is further from our minds than to make and conclude an agreement behind the back of the League. . . .

No one can prophesy whether we shall succeed or fail in our attempt to find a basis of settlement. Of one thing, however, I can assure this Committee: we shall constantly act within the framework of the Covenant and take the earliest practicable opportunity of reporting the results of our endeavours to the Council."

### *The Hoare-Laval Deal*

These manœuvres and declarations were part of the diplomatic spade-work for the Hoare-Laval proposals of December 1935. The proposals were accurately summed up as follows in an Abyssinian note to the League (C 483, M 259, December 13th, 1935):

"Ethiopia, the victim of an act of aggression which has been formally recognised as such by the Council and by the Assembly, is invited:

"(1) to cede to its Italian aggressor in a more or less disguised form and under the pretext of a fallacious exchange of territories, about half of its national territory, in order to enable the aggressor country to settle part of its population there;

"(2) to agree that the League of Nations should confer upon its aggressor, in a disguised form, control over the other half of its territory pending future annexation."

The proposals, before their publication (which again was "prematurely" forced on by a Paris Press leakage, much to the annoyance of M. Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare), were sent with covering notes to Rome and Addis Ababa. The former note entreated Signor Mussolini to be good enough to accept this offer as a basis for negotiation. The latter virtually threatened the Abyssinian Emperor with calling off sanctions and giving Mussolini a free hand to

pursue his war of aggression, if the Emperor did not agree to these proposals.

It will be observed that this transaction violated in every particular the assurances given by Sir Samuel Hoare to the members of the League in the Co-ordination Committee. So far from being within the framework of the Covenant, these proposals smashed the Covenant to smithereens. They constituted a most determined attempt to "make and conclude an agreement behind the back of the League." For if the plotters had succeeded in obtaining Italian and Abyssinian assent to their proposals before reporting the matter to Geneva, the League Council would have been reduced to the glorious role of rubber stamp. So far from being "acceptable to all three parties" the proposals were such that neither Abyssinia nor the League Council could have accepted them without committing suicide. They in fact rejected them. As for Signor Mussolini, he subsequently stated, in an interview, that he had decided to accept the proposals. But he delayed too long. He stood on his dignity until the public outcry forced M. Laval and Mr. Baldwin to abandon the proposals of which their Governments had already approved. M. Laval's majority was reduced to twenty in the process, and Mr. Baldwin was forced to sacrifice Sir Samuel Hoare and his own reputation for being an honest man. The former sacrifice was temporary.

The Hoare-Laval deal killed the prospect—which had been very favourable—of the United States joining in an oil embargo, and destroyed international confidence in the honesty of purpose of the British Government (to do M. Laval justice, he had never encouraged any illusions, either at home or abroad, as to his own honesty). It marked the end of even the pretence by our National Government of being in earnest about sanctions.

The Hoare-Laval deal was avowedly based on the 1906

Treaty and the 1925 exchange of Notes. In defending the proposals in the House, on December 19th, Sir Samuel Hoare said that

“ from all parts of the House we have heard demands for Italian colonial expansion. [Hon. Members: “ No.”] Let me say, then, from more than one part of the House. I would also remind hon. Members that by various instruments, more particularly the 1906 Treaty as regards the French and ourselves, and the 1925 exchange of Notes between ourselves and Italy, we have recognised Italian economic interests over a much wider area of Abyssinia than that comprised in this southern zone, whilst only recently we have made it clear that so far as we ourselves are concerned we have no other economic interest in the country than those centred in the waters of Lake Tsana and the Blue Nile.”

The Hoare-Laval deal, like the August and September proposals, was based on the two-stroke or “ two bites at the cherry ” principle of the Maffey Report: the lowlands were to go to Italy immediately, and the rest was to be put under Anglo-Franco-Italian tutelage in such a way as to be convenient for absorption by the three Great Powers at some future date.

### *The Killing of the Oil Embargo*

British and French public opinion, Mussolini's delay, the refusal of the Abyssinian Emperor, and the attitude of some States at Geneva killed the Hoare-Laval deal. But meanwhile M. Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare had succeeded in what was a prime object of their proposals, and that was to kill the proposed oil embargo. And they wanted to kill it precisely because it threatened to be so effective—for there

was little doubt at the time that the United States would co-operate—as to bring about the complete defeat of Mussolini's adventure. Sir Samuel Hoare practically admitted this in his apologia of December 19th. He embarked on his "deal," he explained, because

"about a fortnight ago it was clear that a new situation was about to be created by the question of the oil embargo. It seemed clear that, supposing an oil embargo were to be imposed and that the non-member States took an effective part in it, the oil embargo might have such an effect upon the hostilities as to force their termination."

The last thing the Government wanted, for reasons that will be explained below, was that sanctions should work so well as to *defeat* Mussolini, and thereby bring about the collapse of his regime. They wanted just enough sanctions to induce him to satisfy himself with part instead of the whole of Abyssinia. Hence the torpedoing of the oil embargo. Hence the Foreign Office propaganda in the ensuing months (as revealed in the "dope" handed out to, and duly transcribed by, Diplomatic Correspondents) to the effect that "mild" sanctions were working so well and the Abyssinians holding out so stoutly that no further action was required. The theory was that the rainy season would create a sort of deadlock, and that then the time would be ripe for putting over a fresh and perhaps more discreetly worded and carefully prepared version of the Hoare-Laval deal. The theory, of course, turned out to be a blunder as well as a crime. But it is necessary to realise clearly that it was a continuation of the policy pursued from the beginning, namely to use the League as a camouflage for the "Imperialist deal" policy of the Maffey Report. Instead, the Maffey Report policy turned out to be the winding sheet of the League.

*Sanctions and the Electorate*

It became clear, after Sir Samuel Hoare's admirable speech in the Assembly on September 11th, 1935,<sup>1</sup> that the Government had finally decided to apply sanctions.

The Trades Union Congress at Margate and the Labour Party Conference at Brighton promised the Government the fullest support in the application of sanctions, even if sanctions led to an attack by the aggressor and so to war.<sup>2</sup> The Government promptly proceeded to hold the General Election, and attacked the Labour Party in the election as war-mongers, because they had faced the risk of war involved in the honest application of sanctions. The Government contrasted this with their own determination to apply only such sanctions as involved no risk of war. That, of course, meant allowing the aggressor to determine what sanctions might be applied against him, by simply threatening war in case of sanctions to which he really objected.

The intellectual confusion of the Government's attitude was well brought out by Mr. Churchill's remark that Mr. Baldwin had made three statements on sanctions: the first, that sanctions meant war; the second, that he would never lead his country into war; the third, that he had decided to apply sanctions.

The moral quality of the Government's sanctions policy

<sup>1</sup> There is a story in London diplomatic circles to the effect that at a dinner early in 1936 a guest told Sir Samuel Hoare that he was happy to say he had heard Sir Samuel's magnificent speech at the Assembly. To which the ex-Foreign Secretary is reported to have replied: "That is the speech I regret more than any I have ever made." *Se non è vero, è ben trovato!*

<sup>2</sup> If Labour had refused support for sanctions, it is as certain as anything can be in politics that the Government would have betrayed Abyssinia before or during the election, and put the whole responsibility on Labour, alleging that it was our desertion of the League and of our own policy that prevented them acting on their ardent and disinterested desire to uphold the Covenant. It was a pity, though, that Labour did not attach definite conditions to their promise of support—such as those suggested, for instance, in the *New Statesman* pamphlet *Abyssinia*.

is sufficiently revealed by the facts recalled above and by the following quotations.

On October 23rd, 1935, Mr. Amery said he wished to recall

“ that part of the Prime Minister’s speech and that of the Secretary of State yesterday which many Members of the House more particularly welcomed—the declaration that war is not in question, that no measures of military sanctions or actions calculated to lead to war, like a blockade or the closing of the Suez Canal, have ever formed any part of the Government’s policy, ‘ that the actions that the Government have been considering are not military but economic. The distinction is one between a boycott and a war.’ I am glad that that distinction has been made so clear. I, at any rate, am now in a position to enter upon this Election and to face my constituents as a whole-hearted supporter of the Government’s policy of no war sanctions. . . . My old friend and colleague the Chancellor of the Exchequer upbraided me a little severely the other day for venturing to say that I would not send a single Birmingham lad to his death for Abyssinia. I accept his rebuke. I shall not offend again. I shall go to my constituents henceforward and say: ‘ You have it on the authority of the Secretary of State and of the Government, who endorse every word that he said, that they are not prepared to send a single Birmingham lad to his death, either for Abyssinia or for Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.’ I am glad that that has become abundantly clear. It will be a great relief to many of us. It will be a great relief to Europe. It eases the whole situation. Only I wonder why such a clear statement could not have been made two or three months earlier. It would have been kinder to hon. and right hon. Members opposite if that statement had

been made earlier. It might have relieved them of a good deal of internal embarrassment. I think that the Government, if I may use a colloquial phrase, have sold the Labour Party a pup. They have led them to dismiss their old and trusted leader, and to dismiss another zealous, sometimes over-zealous, champion of their cause from their councils upon a question which we are now told never was an issue, was purely academic. That was a little unkind on the Socialist Party."

Anyone who looks up the debate of October 22nd, 1935, can verify that Mr. Amery's summary of the Prime Minister's and the Foreign Secretary's speeches was correct. On June 23rd, 1936, Sir John Simon, in a speech endeavouring to justify the Government's abandonment of Abyssinia and of the Covenant, declared:

" I say quite bluntly that this Government is not prepared to invite this country to engage itself by force in that quarrel. Very ridiculous things have been said in that connection by some critics. It has been implied with a sneer, ' Are you afraid ? Do you think the British Navy would be overwhelmed ? ' I have no doubt the British Navy would give a good account of itself, but that is not the point. The point is that with the present situation in Europe and the great dangers surrounding us here at home I am not prepared to see a single ship sunk even in a successful naval battle in the cause of Abyssinian independence."

(To this Mr. Maxton asked: " Why did you not say that at the beginning ? " There was no reply.)

But perhaps the clearest evidence of the nature and motive of the Government's policy on sanctions is contained in the debate on December 19th, 1935, when the House discussed Sir Samuel Hoare's resignation amid the

tempest of indignation provoked by his "deal." In this debate the diehard Earl Winterton first renewed the election gibe at the Labour Party of being war-mongers because they had said that the loyal and effective application of economic sanctions involved the risk of an attack by the aggressor, and that it was the country's duty under the Covenant to take that risk. "Hon. Members opposite may laugh at us, the real Conservative Party, for our view, but if we thought that that was the real meaning of the Government's policy, which we do not, we would break up the National Government to-morrow." In his view [which coincided with the summary of the Prime Minister's and Foreign Secretary's view quoted above from Mr. Amery], said the noble Earl, the Government's sanctions policy consisted of bringing "every reasonable pressure to bear upon the aggressor," while never taking "action which would lead to military resistance by Italy." For instance, "if the imposition of oil sanctions led to armed resistance by Italy, it would not be in accord with the Government's election pledge." In short, the National Government were to leave it to Signor Mussolini what sanctions might be applied against him.

These quotations from statements in the House by members of the Government and their supporters suggest that the diehard wing of the Government's supporters would have been ready to revolt if they had ever suspected that the Government meant business with their sanctions policy, and tolerated it only because they knew it was little more than a mixture of bluff and swindle—a bluff as regards Signor Mussolini, and a swindle as regards the British people.

#### *The Government's Excuses*

There are three stock excuses for their Italo-Abyssinian record advanced by the Government's apologists: first, the

failure of the Laval Government to play up. This plea is untenable. It is true that M. Laval, when they met in January 1935, gave Mussolini some kind of verbal undertaking not to "oppose the extension of Italian influence" in Abyssinia (although he always asserted afterwards that he limited this undertaking to the economic sphere and expressly reserved France's rights and duties under the Covenant), and that he took advantage a couple of months later of the wave of indignation that swept over France after the Anglo-German naval agreement to conclude an arrangement by which French and Italian troops were withdrawn from their mutual frontier. It is also true that the Right in France was even more pro-Mussolini than our own Conservatives, for social as well as international reasons, and that M. Laval behaved throughout exactly as Sir John Simon had behaved in the Sino-Japanese conflict. But the very powerful left Opposition, part of his own followers (represented by, e.g. MM. Herriot and Paul Raynaud), and most of his permanent officials were strongly against him, as was a large part of French opinion. M. Laval himself was cynically frank about it that, although he would like to keep both Great Britain and Italy as friends of France, he would, if he had to choose, side with Great Britain as the stronger and less unreliable of the two. Every time the British Government really wanted something, M. Laval agreed, including the promise to use the French Navy to support the British fleet if attacked. As France had no oil she could not have resisted an oil embargo if strongly urged by Great Britain. If our Government had offered to join in an all-European mutual assistance and non-aggression treaty in exchange for the French Government going all out with us in support of the Covenant against Italy, there is no doubt at all that the Laval Government would have been overthrown (probably by M. Herriot) if it had not agreed. And it is well-nigh certain

that it would have agreed at once and with alacrity. It was precisely the failure to obtain any promises of this sort from our National Government that supplied M. Laval with his strongest argument for his abominable attitude. But the point is that the Laval Government did, with however bad a grace, give all the pledges of support for which it was asked. In the General Election the Front Populaire won on a foreign policy of "Stand by the collective system and Great Britain," and on the cry of "Down with Fascism." M. Blum lost no time in letting it be known that he would cease the obstruction practised by his predecessors and either co-operate to any extent desired in the application of sanctions, or assent to their removal, whichever the British Government wished. When he heard that the National Government were contemplating the ending of sanctions, he asked for an interview between himself and M. Delbos on the one side, and Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Eden on the other. This was refused. Instead the National Government, on June 18th, announced their decision to cease applying sanctions. These facts make it clear that the attempt to use France as an excuse for the Government's policy really will not do.

The second excuse is the suggestion that Great Britain was too weak to stand up to Italy and would have fought without support. The first point is absurd to anyone who compares the armaments and "war-potential" of the two countries. It was contradicted by Sir John Simon in the House on June 23rd, 1936, and by Sir Samuel Hoare in his speech of December 19th, 1935. As regards the second point, Great Britain had, so soon as she asked for them (when the fleet was concentrated in the Mediterranean, the Government first announced that this was done in pursuance of Imperial needs, and had nothing to do with the Italo-Abyssinian conflict; it was only much later that the concentration was even reported to the League Council),

written pledges from France, Yugoslavia, and Turkey, and assurances from the U.S.S.R. of full support (the Yugoslavs said they would go to war at once) in case of an attack on the British fleet or British possessions. The preponderance of force on the side of Great Britain was overwhelming, and an oil embargo in December 1935, plus the other sanctions, would have made Mussolini incapable of fighting even Abyssinia for longer than three months, as the reports of the League's Oil Embargo Committee subsequently revealed. In the circumstances the danger of war was not great, and if there had been war the mutinies and other signs of discontent in Italy in December 1935 would have meant defeat and revolution in a few weeks.

The third excuse is that the Covenant made it impossible for the Government to take any effective action to prevent Mussolini going to war. If true, this charge would be a final condemnation of the League as an instrument for preserving peace. But it is not true. Abyssinia invoked Articles 10 and 11 of the Covenant in the first months of the conflict. By Article 10 "the Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members. In case of any aggression, *or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression, the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled*" (italics ours).

By Article 11 of the Covenant "any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations."

In 1927 the Assembly and Council of the League adopted a report on how to interpret and apply the sanctions of the Covenant. This report says:

“ It cannot be repeated too often that it is not to place on record a breach of the Covenant that the Council should be convened in the ordinary course of things but to prevent it. It was in Article 11 that, with great wisdom, the authors of the Covenant prescribed the convening of the Council and not in Article 16. The declaration that Article 16 should take effect may, in the worst case, be the final act of the Council, but it is unthinkable, unless the League has failed in its task, that this should be its first act and that the purpose for which it is convened should be merely to accept the irremediable.

“ Between the first hostile act and a definite resort to war, a certain period of time, of varying length, will always intervene. Cases can be imagined in which that period would extend over several months, others are conceivable in which it would last but a few hours. . . .

“ Apart from the sanctions contemplated in Article 16, attention should be given to the measures for the maintenance of peace which the League is required to take under Articles 10, 11 and 13.

“ Certainly, no Member of the League could claim authority from any one of these provisions to resort, even at the request of the Council, to an act of war against another Member not guilty of illegal hostilities; it is equally certain that no Member is definitely required to accept all recommendations whatsoever which the Council might make in connection with peaceful pressure to be applied to a State endangering peace without definitely resorting to war. At the same time, it is their duty to assist so far as they are able in ‘ any action it may deem wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations ’; these measures may go to the length of a naval demonstration or a peaceful blockade, and most of the measures referred to in the 1921 resolutions as measures

to be applied in the first period—the preliminary period, so to speak—for the application of Article 16.”<sup>1</sup>

Many League precedents had established that the normal procedure of the Council in case of a dispute that threatened hostilities was first of all to bind both parties over to keep the peace, i.e. to cease military preparations and if necessary to accept League observers and a neutral zone under League supervision to ensure that these undertakings were observed.

It was not only the British Government’s right, but its duty, as the most powerful State in the Mediterranean with the greatest influence on Italy, to put forward proposals of this sort in the Council. The Government did not do so, although the Covenant, as interpreted by the Assembly and Council and applied in a number of cases, clearly called for such action, precisely because it considered it “realistic” to ignore the Covenant and to attempt to settle the matter “out of court” by an Imperialist bargain with Italy at the expense of Abyssinia’s rights and our obligations as fellow-members of the League. (*Inquest on Peace* shows in detail how and why a policy based on loyalty to the Covenant would almost certainly have succeeded in preventing the

<sup>1</sup> A 14, 1927, pp. 70 and 72. Cf. also the following from p. 70 of the same report, on how not to apply Article 16: “Article 16 deals with a contingency to be dreaded. It lays down terrible measures for the extreme case in which the pacific endeavours of the League finally fail before the criminal determination of a State resolved on war. . . . It would, moreover, be extremely unfortunate to appeal to it in vain when the intention is not to apply it or to make but a show of applying it. To say that ambassadors only will be recalled under an article which definitely requires the breaking-off of all personal relations; to say that certain commercial relations will be gradually severed when the text demands that they should *all* be broken off *forthwith* is to make an almost ridiculous use of a clause in which the peoples most exposed to aggression see their supreme safeguard. It means weakening it dangerously and at the same time weakening the whole League.” The way of applying Article 16 condemned in this report was precisely the way in which it was applied against Italy—except that ambassadors were not recalled.

Italian attack on Abyssinia—but at the prohibitive cost, from the National Government's point of view, of releasing forces in Italy that would have overthrown the Fascist regime.)

In addition to these three general apologies for their Italo-Abyssinian record, the Government have produced two excuses for specific aspects of their policy that are worth a moment's attention.

Sir Samuel Hoare, on December 19th, 1935, in his defence in the House of his attempted deal with M. Laval and Signor Mussolini, produced among other explanations the argument that these proposals were intended to save the League. If the oil embargo were applied, it would be so deadly to Mussolini that the latter had threatened to resist its application by war.

“Let me make our position quite clear. We had no fear as a nation whatever of any Italian threats. If the Italians attacked us we should retaliate, and, judging from our past history, we should retaliate with full success. What was in our mind was something very different, that an isolated attack of this kind launched upon one Power without, it may be—and I shall refer to this subject again in a minute—without, it may be, the full support of the other Powers, would, it seemed to me, almost inevitably lead to the dissolution of the League. . . . I say that again, not because we, the British Empire, are afraid of an Italian attack upon us but because without this active co-operation collective security is impossible and the League will dissolve.”

Unfortunately for this explanation, Sir John Simon, a few months later (June 23rd, 1936), in the statement in the House quoted above, bluntly said that the Government had never been prepared to risk having a single ship sunk in

order to uphold the Covenant against Italy. The unsophisticated person reading Sir Samuel Hoare's speech might expect to find that gentleman subsequently overcome with grief at finding that his proposed "deal," instead of saving the League, had dealt a death-blow to the collective system he loved so dearly. The League to-day has ceased to be a guarantee of peace, not because the National Government, in its impetuous zeal for the collective system, found itself fighting single-handed against Italy, but, on the contrary, because the National Government destroyed the collective system by refusing to apply any sanctions involving any risk of war, in spite of our plain treaty obligations under the Covenant, and in spite of receiving all the assurances of armed support from other members of the League for which they asked. Consequently the following revelation of Sir Samuel Hoare's real sentiments does not lack interest. It comes from an interview with Sir Samuel on his return from his Mediterranean tour of inspection as First Lord of the Admiralty, reported by Mr. Hector C. Byewater, in the *Daily Telegraph* of September 23rd, 1936:

"The First Lord told me quite frankly that from Britain's point of view the recent Mediterranean crisis had been 'well worth while.'

" 'It exposed weak spots in our defences and taught us how to remedy them,' he said. 'It forced us to concentrate attention on certain deficiencies which must be made good.

" 'Nor was this all. For nearly 10 months the augmented Fleet "up the Straits" had to work and operate virtually under war conditions, though without having the benefit of the extra personnel which would have been available had mobilisation been ordered.

" 'As a result of these months of intensive training

there has been an all-round improvement in the efficiency of the Fleet, which has never stood at a higher level in time of peace.' ”

The League was not so much as mentioned in the course of this interview, the keynote of which was struck in the opening statement that

“ Britain is determined to maintain in all circumstances and at all costs her position in the Mediterranean, and to modernise and consolidate her naval, military, and air defences between Gibraltar and the Suez Canal in the light of recent experience.

“ This statement was made to me yesterday by Sir Samuel Hoare, First Lord of the Admiralty.”

To complete the picture it may be added that a couple of weeks later Sir Samuel Hoare, at a by-election, made a speech asking with indignant pathos why it was alleged that the Government's foreign policy was any worse or had shown any less solicitude for the collective system than that advocated by the Labour Party. This is much as though King Herod, after an interview saying that the “ incident ” with the first-born had been well worth while because of the fine practice it gave the butchers and executioners of the country, had addressed a bereaved mothers' meeting in order to protest against the insinuation that he lacked sympathy for little children.

The second specific excuse that needs consideration is Mr. Eden's attempt, on February 24th, 1936, to explain away the Maffey Report.

In reply to a request from Mr. Dalton that the report be published, and a question as to whether its conclusions had been accepted by the Government as the basis of their policy, Mr. Eden said :

“ I deprecate . . . any suggestion that the document is in itself, and particularly at this date, of an especially secret character, the disclosure of which can be a source either of any great embarrassment to His Majesty’s Government, or of any danger to the interests of the country. Still less is there any justification for the suggestion which has, I understand, been put forward in Italian newspapers that its contents are such as to establish either the variability or the insincerity of the policy followed by His Majesty’s Government in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute.

“ I will tell the House precisely how the report embodied in the document originated. Towards the end of January 1935, when the Abyssinian situation was already a cause of preoccupation to His Majesty’s Government as a Member of the Council of the League, an enquiry was made by the Italian Government as to the nature and extent of British interests in Abyssinia. An inter-Departmental Committee was thereupon set up, under the chairmanship of the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, for the purpose of estimating British interests in Abyssinia and of attempting an appreciation of the extent to which these interests might be affected by external events. I must make it clear that it was in no sense the task of this Committee to deal with His Majesty’s Government’s obligations under the Covenant or to attempt to frame a policy for His Majesty’s Government in what had by that time come to be the possibility of serious trouble between Italy and Abyssinia. Had it been otherwise, the Committee would have been differently constituted. It was merely concerned to establish facts.

“ The Committee’s investigation naturally occupied some time, and in the ultimate event no specific reply was returned to the Italian enquiry, owing to the fact

that by the time the examination was completed the rapid development of Italian activities in regard to Abyssinia was beginning to raise the whole question of the integrity of Abyssinia, as to which any personal interests were naturally subordinated to our obligations as a member of the League. The Committee reported to my right hon. friend the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on 18th June last, and its report was to the effect that there was no important British interest in Abyssinia with the exception of Lake Tsana, the waters of the Blue Nile, and certain tribal grazing rights. This, I may say at once, is precisely the consideration which has underlain every authoritative statement of the policy of His Majesty's Government in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. That policy has been inspired by no selfish or ulterior motive, but solely by consideration of the duties incumbent on His Majesty's Government as a member of the League of Nations and as whole-hearted supporters of the doctrine of collective security.

“After a full review of all these circumstances I have come to the conclusion that no useful purpose would be served by publishing this document as a White Paper.”

This explanation is not in accord with the known contents of the Maffey Report. For the report did not merely “establish facts.” It made very definite suggestions as to the conduct of British policy on the basis of “colonial considerations.”

The explanation leaves unexplained the known facts of British policy, which as the account given in *Inquest on Peace*, and summarised and supplemented above clearly shows, consisted of a long series of attempts to strike a bargain with Mussolini on the lines suggested in the Maffey Report and in entire disregard of the Covenant.

The explanation is in flat contradiction with the Government's refusal to publish the report. Why keep it secret, if, as Mr. Eden alleged, there was nothing especially secret in it? Its publication could not embarrass the Government nor hurt the interests of the country, nor justify the charge that the Government's policy had been variable and insincere. Surely, if these statements were true, the Government had every interest in publishing the report.

The only explanation that fits the facts is unfortunately that the Government did not dare to print the report, for the real text would have caused a storm in the country, and a "cooked" text might have led to the publication of the genuine text at Rome. It would be interesting to know whether the Mediterranean "gentlemen's agreement" included an undertaking by Mussolini never to divulge the contents of the copy of the Maffey Report in his possession.

It must be remembered that the Government have persistently refused the demand of Mr. Dalton and other Labour leaders that a White Book be published containing the whole of the diplomatic correspondence and proposals exchanged between London, Rome, Paris, and Addis Ababa from December 1934 to the application of sanctions. It was contrary to all precedent not to publish these documents in the circumstances. It is difficult to escape the conviction that the Government themselves believe that their proceedings throughout this business could not bear the light of day.

### *The Real Motives of the Government's Policy*

The plea of entire disinterestedness in their policy in the Italo-Abyssinian war, made so often by the Government's apologists, is as hollow as their other professions.

It is of course true that they did not bargain with Signor Mussolini in order to get parts of Abyssinia for the British

Empire. The eventual reversion to the Empire of fragments of Mussolini's second bite at the Abyssinian cherry that was contemplated in the Maffey Report, and the Anglo-French share in running Abyssinia in the August and September schemes, were merely incidental. The object of the Maffey Report was to enquire whether British Imperial interests permitted the National Government to be generous and conciliatory in offering Abyssinia to Mussolini, either for immediate delivery or on the instalment plan. The Maffey Report concluded that we could afford this vicarious generosity, assumed that Mussolini would help himself in two instalments, and suggested certain territorial and economic safeguards and compensations for British Imperial interests.

But it is axiomatic that in power politics and Imperialist bargaining, no one sells anything—not even his honour and his neighbour's life—for nothing. What, then, was the *quid pro quo* the National Government sought in return for its “disinterestedness” with regard to Mussolini's adventure? Sir Samuel Hoare dropped some broad hints as to the Government's motives in his speech of December 19th, 1935, already quoted. A month later the *Morning Post* (January 16th, 1936) crossed the t's and dotted the i's of Sir Samuel Hoare's statement in an article explaining “this country's position in the present international situation. . . . The facts are grave and unpalatable, but they have been collected from unimpeachable sources.” Anyone who compares the statements in the article with the hints dropped by Sir Samuel Hoare on December 19th, 1935, will observe a similarity so close as to leave no doubt that the article really does state the Government's views accurately. This is the explanation given:

“Twenty-four hours before Mr. Baldwin made this pronouncement in the House of Commons [the “sealed

lips" statement of December 10th, with the dark hint that could he make a case for the Hoare-Laval deal "I guarantee that not a man would go into the lobby against us"], the Cabinet had endorsed the ill-fated Hoare-Laval peace terms.

"Following are the principal reasons that inspired them to do so. They constitute the 'case'—referred to by Mr. Baldwin—which, if it had been known at the time, would have given pause even to those who disliked the terms in themselves and were most eager to criticise the Cabinet for endorsing Sir Samuel Hoare's action in putting the terms forward.

"Great Britain was—and still is—faced with an international situation of great gravity. That is the considered opinion of those in the best position to judge.

"Potential developments in the Abyssinian war constitute the immediate danger, not so much in themselves, but because of their probable sequel.

"At no time have the Government doubted the ability of our defence forces to deal with any situation that might arise immediately out of League of Nations action in connection with the Abyssinian conflict; although it has been realised for some time that the brunt of any such action would fall on Great Britain.

"But such is the deplorable condition of our defences to-day, and so certain is it that other members of the League would be unwilling or unable to provide effective help, that even the losses such action would inevitably entail—relatively small as they might well be—would leave this country perilously weakened.

"It would take her time to repair her losses and to increase her strength; and during that time she would be at the most serious disadvantage should any aggressive

Great Power select the moment to make demands, territorial or economic."

If the sanctions policy were pushed to extremes, the support of France would be jeopardised, and Italy would "become an open and active antagonist. Whatever the outcome—and the possibility is that Italy would collapse into chaos or Communism—the future support of a powerful ally with two million bayonets would be lost beyond recall."

"Inspired" leaders and Diplomatic Correspondent articles in the Government Press (also the articles of the *Manchester Guardian* Diplomatic Correspondent, which have proved exceptionally well informed and accurate in reflecting the views held in official quarters) for months emphasised the view that Italy as a "factor for preserving order" in Central Europe would be gravely weakened if sanctions were pushed too far and the country became a "prey to chaos" in consequence. The argument that to lose even a few ships in the Mediterranean would weaken us unduly in the North Sea appeared in several papers. The fear of revolution in Italy was a very present terror. The City was as pro-Italian as it had been pro-Japanese.

In short, the Government were anxious to win Mussolini as an ally against Germany and to preserve the Fascist regime against social revolution. The Stresa Conference represented the beginning of the attempt to conclude an alliance with Mussolini. Nothing was said about Abyssinia at Stresa because that country was to be sacrificed to Mussolini as part of the deal with Italy in preparation for the next world war, just as Morocco was sacrificed to France in concluding the Anglo-French Entente, and Persia was divided into zones of influence in concluding the Anglo-Russian Entente before the last war. Or, if one likes to put in that way, the Government would not stop Mussolini's

war because they thought that would interfere with their own preparations for war against Hitler. Having won the General Election by saying that the collective system was the only hope of averting a world war, they proceeded to destroy the collective system in order to make Mussolini an ally when the world war came—and then made him an ally of Hitler instead.

The Government were also—we have the information from Sudan and Kenya officials—very much afraid that, if Italy suffered defeat, the Abyssinians would take the credit to themselves of having vanquished an imperialist white Power. This would make them more “uppish” and “difficult” than ever. They would become a sort of black Piedmont in the eyes of neighbouring negro populations. A black nationalism might arise that would be extremely dangerous to the colonial *status quo*, just as a revolution in Italy would be dangerous to the social *status quo*. (That the latter would also be fatal to the Hitler regime was still more distasteful to our Tories, for they are just as anxious to preserve Hitler from social revolution as they are to prepare for war against him. See below.)

The Right Wing of the Conservative Party went even further and argued that to apply the collective system against Italy at all was dangerous to British Imperialism. This view was stated very frankly by the *Morning Post* on May 25th, 1936. An article by its Rome correspondent on Anglo-Italian relations observes that :

“It is . . . obvious that adherence to the collective system in Europe is going to be a handicap rather than a help as soon as England is involved in extra-European questions affecting Arabia, Egypt, or India. In these cases, the principles which have dictated our Abyssinian policy will be turned against us.

“The Italian Government sees this anomaly, and is

making full use of every opportunity of aggravating the position in which we have placed ourselves. The meaning of the Arab revolt will not be felt until it spreads to the frontiers of Aden. The ultimate dismissal of the Sikhs from the Legation at Addis Ababa will not have its real repercussions until these great warriors appear in India, as living advertisements of the hitherto undreamed-of subservience of the British Raj.

“The ordering out of British correspondents from Ethiopian territory cancels the lesson of General Napier in more than European calculations. . . . Italy sees that there must surely be trouble ahead on account of this double role of London—openly collectivist and covertly Imperialist.”

In a leading article on this subject the *Morning Post* (May 25th, 1936) comes to the following conclusion:

“We are debarred by so-called ‘collective’ obligations from striking with Signor Mussolini a private bargain such as might at one and the same time preserve the peace and protect our vital Imperial interests. We have gained none of the advantages of the new system and lost all the advantages of the old. What we require is to divest our diplomacy of cant, metaphysics, and the jargon of collective security, and to begin talking to Mussolini in terms of *Realpolitik*. There is some evidence that he might be ready to listen.”

From all this it is clear that the Government's policy throughout was based on the belief that it could manipulate sanctions and the League so as to win the election and use Abyssinia as a bargaining counter with Mussolini in such a way as to safeguard British Imperial interests, preserve Fascism as a bulwark against Socialism, and secure Italy

as an ally against Germany. The latter calculation was based on the further belief that Mussolini was speaking the truth when he said Fascist Italy would be a "satisfied" Power after conquering Abyssinia, would not raise a black army in that country, could never agree with Hitler over Austria, and would co-operate in maintaining "law and order" in Europe.

### *Failure of the Government's Policy*

The Government's policy pursued too many conflicting aims simultaneously to have any real hope of success. The Abyssinians, killed in their ignorance like fur-bearing animals, could not stand being bombed and gassed as long as was required by the nice calculations of the Foreign Office. British and foreign public opinion passed from bewilderment to indignation, and from indignation to contempt, as the full dishonesty of this Government's policy, and the really staggering hypocrisy of Sir Samuel Hoare's great Assembly oration of September 11th, 1935, were revealed. Signor Mussolini, in three months after the ending of sanctions, began raising a black army in Abyssinia<sup>1</sup>; encouraged the Arab troubles in Palestine with clandestine arms and money and open wireless propaganda; came to an agreement with Hitler over Austria; and engaged in a joint policy with Germany of stirring up a Fascist rebellion

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lord Strickland, former Governor-General of Malta, House of Lords, November 18th, 1936: "The principal reason for which Abyssinia has been conquered, is the acquisition of prestige and the command of cheap man-power. . . . Magnificent strategical roads have been constructed by General Balbo in Libya from Tripoli right up to the Egyptian Sudan in a most careful and able manner . . . and should war come—I do not believe it will happen till some exceptional opportunity may offer in a few years—then it will be possible to ship competing African troops across the Mediterranean from the East as well as from the West. . . . Italy can now promise to bring into Europe hundreds of thousands of men of the best fighting material from East Africa across Libya into Sicily. That is the master key of future Mediterranean strategy—the ability to add to man power from Africa . . . by air"

in Spain. Our "realists" in the Government and Foreign Office have never grasped that Hitler and Mussolini are even more afraid of each other's regimes being overthrown by revolution, and even more conscious of their social interdependence, than is the case with our National Government in respect to the Fascist States. Therefore the attempt to enlist Mussolini as an ally against Hitler is hopeless. In the case of Mussolini, too, our "realists" discovered with pain and astonishment that the Duce had no more respect for our National Government than it had shown for the Covenant or for the rights of Chinese and negroes.

The net result of the Government's Italo-Abyssinian policy was to kill the collective system; to lower British prestige and make the British Empire relatively weaker and less respected than before; to bring Hitler and Mussolini together; to encourage both to commit further aggression; and to give a powerful impetus to the drift to war.

## V

### SPAIN

**H**OW COMPLETELY the collective system had been destroyed by the betrayal of Abyssinia speedily became apparent when the rebellion of Fascist generals broke out in Spain. Three facts about the rebellion stood out clearly within a few days of its outbreak on July 18th.

The first was that it was not a purely or even predominantly a Spanish affair at all, but essentially a further development of the international Fascist offensive against Socialism and democracy. The crashing of several Italian army planes in French Morocco, on July 30th, gave proof positive of what the Press had been reporting for some time previously, namely of Italian assistance to General Franco. *The Nazi Conspiracy in Spain* (Victor Gollancz) gives a mass of evidence of the extent to which Germany was behind the rebellion from the first moment, and, indeed, helped to prepare it.

The second fact was that the remilitarisation of the Rhineland, the Italo-German Entente and Italo-German intervention in Spain were the direct outcome of the sabotage of League sanctions against Italy, just as the Italian adventure in its turn was the result of the conditions and atmosphere engendered by the failure to stop Japan and by the subsequent collapse of the Disarmament Conference.

The third fact that became tragically clear was that the British and French Governments had no intention of making the least attempt to uphold international law, still less to apply the Covenant against Fascist aggression.

Under international law the lawful Spanish Government, which, it must be remembered, was a democratically elected constitutional Government of a mildly Liberal character, had a right to buy arms and munitions from all States. To deprive it of this right in the circumstances was not a breach of international law by the Western democracies. But it was politically tantamount to an unfriendly act. And this was done as a result of the threat of the Fascist Powers that unless the democracies deprived the Spanish Government of its right to buy arms and munitions the Fascists would supply the rebels in violation of international law. The only proper reply to that threat would have been for France, Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R. to say jointly that (a) they proposed to allow the Spanish Government to exercise its lawful rights in buying arms and munitions; (b) if the Fascist Powers supplied the rebels, this would be regarded by the democracies as not only a violation of international law, but as constituting external aggression against the territorial integrity and political independence of Spain. In that case the very least the democracies could do in fulfilment of their duty under Article 10 of the Covenant was to bring the matter before the Council of the League, and there press for a joint policy of supplying the Spanish Government free with all the arms, munitions, aeroplanes, instructors, and volunteer airmen, naval officers, etc., it required.

That was the only policy compatible in the circumstances with the obligations of France, Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R. under the Covenant. It would have meant no Fascist intervention and the end of the civil war in a month. The legend that Germany and Italy would have been prepared to fight France, Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R. jointly for the sake of supporting General Franco is a baseless and fantastic fabrication for which no shred of evidence has ever been submitted. Months after the Fascist Powers

had been immeasurably encouraged by the pusillanimity of the British and French Governments they nevertheless did nothing when the U.S.S.R. alone started providing the Spanish Government with arms and munitions. When the French Government, with British participation, held a little informal naval demonstration off the coast of Spanish Morocco, and warned the Germans that the landing of troops would not be tolerated, the German invasion of Morocco, which had already begun, was called off at once. As Mr. Vernon Bartlett puts it in the *News Chronicle* of February 10th:

“The strong Anglo-French reaction to reports of German penetration in Morocco led to an immediate moderation of German policy there. But no attempt has been made to show similar vigour on behalf of Spain, with the result that men and munitions are being rushed to that country to help General Franco win his rebellion.”

The final acceptance by the Fascist Powers of the scheme for an embargo on volunteers and for international control is attributed in French and British official quarters to the threat of the French Government that it would otherwise send two divisions to Spain and end the civil war in a fortnight. In this connection the *Manchester Guardian* of February 16th, Paris Correspondent, reports a speech by M. Blum to the National Executive Committee of the French Socialist Party, according to which he said that:

“France was conscious of her strength. If necessary she would again say ‘no,’ as she had already said on a certain recent occasion—when faced with the threat of a landing of German troops in the Spanish zone of Morocco.”

In fact, it seems much more likely that the Fascist Powers agreed to stopping "volunteers" because they had already sent sufficiently large forces to Franco to make his victory certain, in their opinion, provided the Spanish Government were now isolated. But if this Anglo-French official version be accepted there is no answer to the following comment of the *News Chronicle* of February 17th :

"There is one other lesson in this business. One reason for the sudden agreement is undoubtedly the growing impatience of the French Government, followed in the rear by Whitehall, with the palpable insincerity and bad faith of the Fascist Powers. They made it clear at last that they were determined to insist on an immediate decision. Though ever so faintly, the whip was cracked and the result has been instantaneous.

"The tragedy of this demonstration is that it shows so dramatically what might have been effected by a little courage and resolution at an earlier stage. The whole squalid, bloodstained history of foreign intervention in Spain might never have had to be recorded, and the rebellion itself would long ago have been crushed, if Britain and France had had the courage to call the bluff of the Fascist Powers at once. Now it has been called, with immediate success; but now it may be too late."

But, instead of doing what political wisdom and their own duty under the Covenant plainly demanded, the British and French Governments preferred to deprive the Spanish Government of its rights because of the Fascist Powers' blackmailing threat that they would otherwise break international law by supplying the rebels. The very fact that this threat was made, coupled with the record in treaty-breaking and aggression of these Powers, made it clear beyond any doubt that it was impossible to rely upon

their good faith and that the only thing that could stop them sending arms and munitions to the rebels, in spite of any promises, would be a drastic scheme of international control. Meanwhile the democracies should in no circumstances begin applying an embargo to the Spanish Government until the Fascist Powers not only agreed to an embargo, but a control scheme was in operation.

Instead, however, of taking this view the British and French Governments applied a unilateral embargo against the Spanish Government pending their negotiations with the Fascist Powers, which dragged on for weeks before the latter accepted the embargo on paper—and continued to send arms and munitions as before.

This one-sided embargo produced the monstrous results described by Mme. de Palencia to the Edinburgh Conference of the Labour Party. The Government forces went to battle with only one rifle and half a dozen cartridges to every three men, against rebel forces lavishly supplied with all the latest war material. British and French non-intervention against the Spanish Government, coupled with Fascist intervention on the side of the rebels, was within an ace of ensuring the victory of the latter when the Soviet Union at last lost patience with the cynical farce of "non-intervention" and started supplying the Spanish Government with arms, munitions, and aeroplanes, including some hundreds of technicians and pilots. M. Maisky invented the brilliant formula, in the Non-Intervention Committee, that his country would henceforward respect non-intervention in the same way as it was being observed by other Powers.

But the French and British Governments continued to cling to the fiction of "non-intervention," and the U.S.S.R. was left to act alone. The result was that the Fascist Powers, waxing ever bolder, began to send large numbers of troops (thinly disguised as "totalitarian volunteers") to Spain and

virtually to blockade the part of the coast held by the Spanish Government. The present situation is summed up as follows by the always well-informed Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* of February 17th:

“The Italians are now conducting major military operations in Spain with at least 50,000 men [next day the Diplomatic Correspondent revised his estimate and made it nearer 60,000. A few days later he reported the landing of a further 10,000] and ample supplies of war material. . . . The Italians have despatched a formidable expeditionary force to Spain during the last few weeks. Units of all categories and vast quantities of war material have been streaming into Spain from half-a-dozen Italian ports. The Spanish civil war has become mainly an Italian campaign against the Loyalist Party. Even the Germans, who were so conspicuous for a while (especially in the air), are now playing a minor part.”

Italian and German troops, he adds, number at least 70,000 and have an enormous superiority in war materials. In short, “non-intervention” has kept the civil war going for six months of unspeakable cruelty, anguish, death, and ruin, and has encouraged Germany and Italy to send armies for the conquest and occupation of Spain.

How and why have these things come about, and what will be the international consequences? A joint policy by France, Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R. could have prevented this situation arising. What then was the policy of these three countries and its motives?

The simplest case is the U.S.S.R. M. Litvinov stated at the League Assembly on September 28th that:

“The Soviet Government adhered to the agreement for non-interference in the affairs of Spain only because a

friendly country feared the possibility otherwise of an international conflict. We acted thus, in spite of the fact that we consider the principle of neutrality inapplicable to a war levied by rebels against their lawful Government, and, on the contrary, to be a breach of the principles of international law—on which point we are in full agreement with the views of the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Soviet Government understands that this unjust decision was imposed by those other countries which, considering themselves to be the champions of order, have established a new principle, fraught with incalculable consequences, according to which it is permitted openly to assist rebels against their legitimate Government.”

Subsequently the Soviet Government took independent action which alone prevented the Franco-British policy of starving the Spanish Government of munitions from bringing about the latter's defeat at the hands of the rebels supplied so lavishly by the Fascist Powers. The U.S.S.R., in other words, although geographical and political circumstances make it difficult and dangerous for her to take the initiative, has no use for non-intervention. (These are the circumstances that make a Soviet initiative hazardous: the difficulty of getting supplies to Spain all the way from the U.S.S.R. ; the danger lest if she acts alone her ships may be sunk in the Mediterranean by Italian submarines ; and that her acting independently would be used by the British Government and by the Nationalist opposition in France, as well as by certain elements, e.g. M. Daladier, in the Blum Government, for pressure to denounce the Franco-Soviet Pact.)

What is the position of the French Government ? In the first place it should be remembered that it is not a Socialist Government, but a Socialist-Radical (i.e. mildly Liberal)

coalition. In the second place, as already made clear in the description of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, the French Government has always played second fiddle to Great Britain everywhere outside the Continent of Europe, and notably in the Mediterranean, and ever since the rise of the Nazi menace has been bound by the closest ties to Great Britain. No French Government for many years has acted on any important matter without ascertaining Great Britain's position. Since German rearmament, France and Great Britain, although there may be friction, as in the time of M. Laval, have never acted independently of each other on a first-class issue, and throughout Great Britain has been the dominant partner. M. Blum, after winning his election on a foreign policy of supporting Great Britain and the collective system, decided to follow the British lead whichever way it led in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict. He did so because of the emphatic advice of his officials, and of his own Cabinet, that France could not afford to quarrel with Great Britain and face a hostile Germany and Italy alone. Therefore everything else must be sacrificed in foreign policy to good relations with Great Britain. Rightly or wrongly that is the policy which the Blum Government has pursued since the first day of its existence. In diplomatic circles here, Foreign Office officials are quoted as saying gleefully that they have never had French Ministers so easy to deal with as MM. Blum and Yvon Delbos.<sup>1</sup> In Paris diplomatic circles a somewhat bitter Quai d'Orsay jest goes the rounds, to the effect that M. Delbos is M. Alexis Léger's (the French Permanent Under-Secretary's) secretary, and M. Alexis Léger is Sir Robert Vansittart's secretary—Mr. Eden being that gentleman's other secretary.

<sup>1</sup> The story also appears to be current on the Continent. Cf. Mr. Robert Dell, Geneva correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, in a letter to *Time and Tide* of February 20th: "After the visit of M. Blum and M. Delbos to London last year, one was told that the Foreign Office had never had to do with French Ministers so easy to deal with."

This diplomatic gossip no doubt exaggerates and simplifies the situation. But the picture it conveys is not very far from the truth.

The Fascist rebellion in Spain began on July 18th, after the Blum Government had been in office a month. It is surely highly improbable that the Blum Government, which had adopted a line of complete subservience to British policy in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, should strike out a line of its own on the Spanish issue without consulting our National Government. In point of fact it did no such thing. This is what happened:

On July 23rd and 24th M. Blum and M. Delbos were in London, discussing the possibility of a new "Locarno" Conference with Germany. Diplomatic Correspondents' and other articles bearing all the stigmata of Foreign Office inspiration that appeared in the Government Press at the time emphasised the belief of the British Government that strict neutrality should be observed in the Spanish conflict, lest Europe should be divided into two camps and the Locarno Conference thereby be made impossible.

The *Daily Telegraph* Paris Correspondent, in a despatch appearing on July 27th, stated:

"The Royalist *Action Française* alleges that during the recent visit to London of M. Blum and M. Delbos, the Foreign Minister, they were warned by Mr. Eden of the very serious consequences which might result from French participation in the Spanish civil war."

The best information available is that the subject was not in fact officially discussed at all, but that M. Blum and M. Delbos got a very clear impression from private conversations, reports by their Ambassador, etc., of the strong opposition of the British Government to the sale of arms and munitions to the Government of Spain.

On July 25th, i.e. one day after M. Blum's and M. Delbos' return from London, the French Government held a Cabinet meeting, which was described as follows by the Paris Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, July 27th, in the despatch from which we have already quoted:

“ A special Cabinet meeting was held yesterday. Later it was announced officially that the Government would adopt a policy of ‘ strict neutrality ’ towards the conflict in Spain. The Cabinet meeting which made this decision was stormy. . . . It is thought that the fear of arousing Conservative opinion in Great Britain, and so compromising Franco-British relations, told powerfully on the Cabinet. . . . ”

The despatch records the attitude taken by different Ministers at the Cabinet meeting, and again, so far as information is available, it confirms the accuracy of this report. This information also stresses the point that the argument that the British Government would disapprove of France supplying the Spanish Government with arms and munitions, and would leave her to face the possible consequences alone, was used with decisive effect by M. Delbos, who backed it with a threat of resignation. It was precisely the same argument that determined the attitude of the Blum Government toward the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, and it prevailed again, as it had on that occasion.

Three days later, on July 30th, came the crash of Italian army planes in French Morocco, on their way to the rebels, and at the very moment Signor Mussolini was denying vehemently that he had sent any aeroplanes at all. This event so stirred up French opinion that when, on August 4th, two envoys from the Spanish Embassy called on M. Daladier, the War Minister, and presented him with a cheque in execution of a contract for arms and munitions

that had been made before the outbreak of the rebellion, the cheque was accepted and the consignment was shipped to Bordeaux, where it awaited a Spanish steamer. The view taken by the French Government then was that until the Fascist Powers had accepted and were applying the embargo it would be inequitable to apply it unilaterally to the Spanish Government. In the Chamber M. Delbos expressly reserved France's liberty of action pending general acceptance of her proposals for non-intervention.

But when a Spanish Government steamer arrived at Bordeaux unexpected difficulties arose about the loading of the arms consignment. Upon the Spanish Embassy then making enquiries at the Quai d'Orsay they were told that representations had been made by the British Ambassador, warning the French Government that if they got into trouble with Germany and Italy, as a result of supplying arms and munitions to the Spanish Government, they would be left to face the consequences alone, and arguing that, since France had proposed non-intervention, she should apply an embargo on arms immediately in order to set an example.

The French Socialist weekly *La Lumière*, of the beginning of September, mentioned this *démarche* of Sir George Clerk, and fixed the date as August 7th.

The *Manchester Guardian* of September 17th publishes a despatch from its Paris correspondent, reporting a speech by M. Zyromski, a member of the Executive Committee of the French Socialist Party, in which he made "serious allegations" against the British Government, namely:

"All the Socialist members of the French Government, M. Zyromski said, 'felt exactly as we do' about the Spanish Republic; but if at the dramatic Cabinet meeting of August 8th the Government ultimately agreed to submit to the Powers its non-intervention proposal, and

decided to cut off immediately all deliveries of arms to the Spanish Government, it was because before this Cabinet meeting the British Ambassador had called at the Quai d'Orsay and had 'uttered some very grave words.' He added:

" ' Most of us believed until now that Portugal was little short of being a British protectorate. Yet she has been claiming complete freedom of action and has defied everybody with impunity. Why should France not be entitled to the same freedom of action as Portugal ?

" ' Only, Britain must be asked whether she would consider her Locarno guarantee invalid if we were to restore normal commercial relations with the Spanish Government.'

" M. Zyromski's phrase clearly suggested that according to his information Britain had threatened to suspend the Locarno guarantee in the event of a German attack on France resulting from their ' competition ' in Spain. In other words, a German attack on France in the circumstances would not have been ' unprovoked.' "

On August 8th the French Cabinet held a meeting at which it decided to apply the embargo on arms to the Spanish Government immediately and without waiting for the replies of the Fascist Powers.

Now in official quarters in this country it is denied that any British *démarche* was made before the August 8th French Cabinet meeting. This probably means that the views of the British Government were conveyed in the course of a conversation on some other subject, i.e. not as a "*démarche*" or "representations," but in a technically different form. Unfortunately it is necessary to be extremely wary of official *démentis* by the National Government, because of

the excessively pragmatic view of truth it has displayed on many occasions, some of which are recorded in the chapter on the Italo-Abyssinian conflict. In any case, whatever the technical details, there is little doubt that the original French decision, on July 25th, on non-intervention was taken in deference to what were (correctly) believed to be the British Government's views, and that the subsequent decision, on August 8th, to apply non-intervention immediately and unilaterally was taken under direct British pressure. Since then, as the *Manchester Guardian* of September 10th reported from Paris, the French Government has been under such constant British surveillance and pressure over "non-intervention" that there is some resentment in French official quarters at what is regarded as almost an interference in French internal affairs.

On September 14th *Le Temps* reported a speech by M. Yvon Delbos, in which he explained the reasons (among which he adduced the attitude of the Labour Party !) why the French Government had adopted the policy of non-intervention. He gave the stock arguments—that to raise the embargo would be doing a disservice to the Spanish Government and imperilling peace, and added:

"Finally we knew that there were friendly nations which would not have approved a policy of intervention by the supply of arms and which, consequently, would not have supported us in facing the possible consequence of such a policy."

This is a direct and official statement by the French Foreign Minister that the final reason prompting the French Government to adopt "non-intervention" was the knowledge that "friendly nations"—which is obviously a euphemism for the National Government—would have left them in the lurch if threatened with war by Italy

or Germany as a result of allowing the Spanish Government to buy arms and munitions. But by doing so France would have done nothing either contrary to international law or to the provisions of the Covenant. M. Delbos's statement, therefore, is tantamount to a serious charge against the British Government.

The French Government can hardly escape censure for a display of cowardice and pusillanimity. It should have had the courage to call our National Government's bluff. For, after all, Great Britain needs France as much as France needs Great Britain, and it is inconceivable that the threat to repudiate Locarno and the Covenant would really have been carried out if France had exercised her rights under international law and taken a bold view of her duty under Article 10 of the Covenant, to help preserve Spanish territorial integrity and political independence against Fascist aggression. But at any rate there is no doubt that the whole of the French Government ardently desires the victory of the Spanish Government and has no use whatever for the Spanish rebels. There is a good deal of force in the French argument that so long as their own Nationalist opposition and Right-Wing supporters knew of the British Government's attitude (which was made much of in the French "Right" Press) they had an argument in their hands so strong that the Radicals would dare not to break up the Government on it.<sup>1</sup> Nor must it be forgotten that the Blum

<sup>1</sup> After writing this chapter we have read Mr. Alexander Werth's *The Destiny of France*. His chapter (XXII) on French policy with regard to Spain constitutes a detailed confirmation, by an independent and exceedingly well-informed authority, of the account given above. The gist of it is contained in the following quotation:

"It was obvious that . . . Blum's alleged belief in Hitler's and Mussolini's international conscience and sense of fair play was not the real reason—or, at any rate, not the only reason—for the unilateral non-intervention decision that the French Cabinet took at its famous meeting of August 8th. One reason for this decision was British pressure; the other reason, equally important, was the determination

Government have tried within the limits of the non-intervention policy to counteract British attempts to apply it with glaring inequity. For instance, the French Government refused to follow the British example of putting a unilateral embargo on volunteers to Spain. With Russian help the French representative on the Non-Intervention Committee defeated Lord Plymouth's disgraceful attempt to accept the suggestion of the Fascist Powers that the Committee should discuss the sequestration of the Spanish Government's gold reserves. When things looked bad for Franco last December the National Government became very enthusiastic about a policy of mediation. This was opposed by the French, who insisted upon subordinating it to the effective application of non-intervention (the British idea of mediation, as expounded by Lord Cranborne at the League Council meeting of December, was an armistice and then mediation, leaving vague whether or not Franco

of M. Delbos and certain other Radical Ministers to adhere wholly to the British policy of abstention. In the course of the discussions M. Delbos actually threatened to resign if any other course were taken—and so to break up the Government.

“ There is, of course, not the slightest doubt that, about August 1st, the British Government clearly intimated to the French Government that if, as a result of her ‘ competition ’ with Italy and Germany in sending arms to Spain, France were attacked by the Fascist countries, Britain would not consider the attack an unprovoked one, and *the Locarno guarantee would not come into operation.* . . .

“ The other story, which was current for a long time among French Socialists—namely, that the British Government told the French Government at the beginning of August: ‘ If you support the Spanish Government, we shall support the Rebels, ’ is much more doubtful; and I have never had the actual words confirmed. ‘ No, they didn't put it quite *that way,* ’ a French Minister told me.

“ It must be said that this irresistible British pressure has been emphasised and over-emphasised by French Socialists for the obvious purpose of justifying the ‘ monstrous ’ decision of August 8th in the eyes of the Socialist and Communist rank and file. Thus, M. Zyromski said on September 16th, that, while he was in total agreement with the Communist point of view, ‘ he did not wish to throw any stones at the Blum Government, for it was the British Government which had placed them in such an impossible position. ’

“ The British pressure is undeniable; but it seems that on that

was to go on receiving supplies from the Fascists while recovering his strength, or whether non-intervention was to be made effective first). The French also, through their delegate on the International Relief Union, a body with an Italian chairman and a German member, no funds and no experience, killed the fantastic British proposal that this body should be used for giving humanitarian assistance to Spain (the British Government maintained this proposal, and called an extraordinary meeting of this body, in Paris, *after* Señor del Vayo had declared emphatically at the December Council meeting that his Government would have nothing to do with it, and wanted League help or none). On December 5th, in the Chamber of Deputies, M. Blum made the following declaration :

occasion the Blum Government displayed an even more than usual eagerness to please the British Government. Why did it not, instead, do on that occasion what it did in the case of the anti-Italian sanction : let Britain take the initiative ? Why this hurry to blockade the Spanish Government, without any certainty that the non-intervention agreement would be concluded, still less, observed ?

" The answer is, as it was already on March 7th, when Sarraut and Flandin refused to call the German bluff: fear, and the determination to avoid the risk of war at *any* price.

" Actually, the chances are that if the French Government had hastened to help the Spanish Government at the end of July and beginning of August, instead of stopping all supplies, the Rebellion might have been speedily suppressed. But M. Delbos did not want to take any such risks nor did England. And time worked for the Rebels."

It may be added that, just as French Socialist leaders tended to defend their support of " non-intervention " to their own rank and file by putting the whole responsibility on Great Britain, so some of our own Labour leaders were prone to seek refuge behind what might be called the dogma of the spontaneous generation and immaculate conception of the Blum Government's foreign policy. The truth, as so often happens, was less simple than either extreme version, and lay somewhere between them. But the French version was nearer the truth than the British. Mr. Arthur Greenwood hit off the situation neatly in the House when he suggested that they all knew the French Government was the mother of " non-intervention," but they all suspected that our National Government was the father and wanted it to come forward and accept its responsibility, instead of skulking in the shadows and denying its paternity.

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“ I repeat, after the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that in Spain there is for us one legal Government, or, to express myself better, only one Government. The principles of what we might call democratic law coincide in this respect with the indisputable rule of international law. I recognise that the direct interest of France includes and calls for the existence on Spanish soil of a friendly Government and of a Government independent of other European influences.

“ I agree without hesitation that the installation in Spain of a military dictatorship, bound by too close ties of gratitude to Germany and to Italy, would represent not only a blow to the international cause of democracy, but a source of anxiety—I do not wish to say more—for French security, and consequently a menace to peace.”

This attitude is in striking contrast to the British Government's invariable placing of the rebels and the Spanish Government on the same footing. One may deplore the weakness of French policy, but there cannot at any rate be any suspicion that the French Government are in whole or in part secretly in sympathy with the rebels.

Unfortunately it is precisely this suspicion which does arise when considering the policy and professions of our National Government.

The official attitude, as expressed, for example, by Sir Samuel Hoare, is that this is a struggle between two extreme parties with which we have no concern. This means putting the democratically elected and lawful Government on the same footing as the rebel generals. It further means assuming an attitude of “ neutrality ” towards the attempts of the Spanish Government to preserve the territorial integrity and political independence of Spain against Fascist aggression fomented, supported, financed, armed, and led by Italy and Germany. That

means treating the Covenant of the League as a scrap of paper.

But in private the official attitude of the Government goes one degree further than its public professions. Thus, for instance, one British official document to the Non-Intervention Committee referred to the rebels as "the Spanish National Government." A Labour question in the House brought out the interesting fact that the Government have been negotiating with General Franco about British trade in the part of Spain held by the rebels and have accepted the General's promises about payment in sterling. Madame de Palencia, on her way to address the Edinburgh Conference, was held up at Croydon for five hours, in spite of having a diplomatic passport, of being the Minister-designate of the Spanish Government to the Scandinavian countries, and of being accompanied by Señor Ximeno de Asua, from the Spanish Embassy in Paris, who was also armed with a diplomatic passport. Similar treatment has been meted out to other representatives of the Spanish Government, some of whom were refused entry to the country. Father Lobo was refused permission to enter England last November to make a speech of thanks for the medical aid given to Spain. More recently the representative of the autonomous Basque Government accredited to the Spanish Embassy was refused permission to enter the country for two days, and then only allowed to take up his post in London after lengthy negotiations and being provided with a diplomatic passport. This treatment of the envoys and loyal subjects of the Spanish Government is in marked contrast to the freedom given to representatives of the rebels, such as, for instance, the Marquis Merry del Val, who addressed a meeting of members of the House of Commons, the Marquis del Moral and the Duke of Alba, who conduct propaganda in the Conservative Press.

The greater part of the Conservative Party and the

Government Press, under an ever thinner pretence of "neutrality," are passionately on the side of the rebels. The attempts of the *Observer*, the *Sunday Express*, the *Daily Mail*, etc., not to mention other newspapers, to make out that Franco and his Moors and foreign troops represent the cause of religion and patriotism have been as grotesque as they are sinister. The *Morning Post* of October 10th, in condemning the Labour Party's repudiation, at Edinburgh, of the cynical farce of "non-intervention," delivered itself of the following sentiments:

"All kinds of quibbles were raised, about democracy, about the rights of Constitutional Governments, about the prescriptions of international law, in order to justify intervention by Great Britain in the Spanish Civil War."

Similar sentiments have been expressed, with a greater or less degree of frankness, in a number of letters in *The Times* by prominent and titled Tories.

Mr. Winston Churchill, in articles in the *Evening Standard*, drew the logical conclusions from the prevailing Tory view with his usual incisive clarity. It was all nonsense, he asserted, to talk about the Spanish Government standing for the democratic principle. The Spanish civil war was an open and direct outbreak of the class struggle. On the one side Spanish workers fighting for Communism, and on the other Spanish capitalists fighting for Fascism. One might have sympathies on one side or the other. But no question of legality could arise, for once the issue of property was at stake such abstractions as democracy and legality necessarily faded into the background.

The *Manchester Guardian* on two occasions reported that money was being raised in the City for Franco and was being described as "insurance against Communism." Mr. Francis Williams, on the City page of the *Daily Herald* of September 15th, 1936, writes :

“ One thing, too, strikes one at once in conversation with people in the City.

“ That is the strengthening of the pro-Spanish rebel feeling which I noted here before I went away. A month ago there was a certain sympathy to be found in the City with the Spanish rebels, but it was not very openly acknowledged, and among the more intelligent it was kept in check by realisation of the effect a Fascist victory in Spain would have on Britain’s Imperial communications and influence in world affairs.

“ To-day the sympathy is openly acknowledged, and the danger of a rebel victory to British Imperial interests, if still acknowledged, is apparently regarded as less disturbing to the vested interests of finance than a victory for Democracy and Socialism.

“ It seems clear, further, that whatever may be the British Government’s sincerity in a policy of non-intervention in Spain, many influential supporters of the Government in the City only believe in non-intervention in so far as it is to the advantage of the rebel forces and to the disadvantage of the Spanish Government.”

Anyone who believes that our governing class care any more for democracy than they do for the collective system when the interests of capitalism are at stake must have been rudely disillusioned by the attitude adopted by the propertied classes toward the Spanish civil war.

Mr. P. J. Noel-Baker, at the Edinburgh Conference, quoted a remarkable article by Mr. Vernon Bartlett, the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *News Chronicle*, on his return from Spain, in which he wrote that “ Whitehall has been more misled on Spain than on any international question since the Russian revolution.”

The implied comparison is disquieting, but just. For in the Russian revolution the National Government of that

day, under the inspiration chiefly of Mr. Churchill, spent £100,000,000 of the taxpayers' money in backing the Molas and Francos of Russia, and in blockading our former ally, for the crime of making a revolution, so strictly that even medical supplies were kept out, and the wounded Reds in the civil war had to be operated on without anæsthetics. To-day public opinion is more critical of this sort of thing, the Spanish Government is a member of the League, etc., so that a new kind of policy has to be pursued, consisting in a kind of division of labour with the Fascist Powers by which the latter help the rebels while our National Government prevent the Spanish Government from getting any assistance, or even from exercising its right under international law to buy what it needs. Certain diplomatic representatives who enquired at the Foreign Office as to the Government's attitude to the Spanish civil war were told that, since a victory for the Government would mean the triumph of Communism in Spain, one must hope that the Fascists would win, or, better still, that there would be a deadlock and that by mediation or some other means an unspecified *tertium quid* would emerge as an alternative to the two extremisms. It is no wonder, in the circumstances, that the general belief in diplomatic circles, both here and on the Continent, is that the British Government may or may not like Franco winning, but certainly ardently desire that the Spanish Government should lose, and have shaped their policy accordingly. The rebel wireless and Press have boasted that Great Britain, as well as Italy and Germany, is on their side.

Two outstanding facts lend support to this view:

The first is the case of Portugal. This country, which has been described as "Britain's oldest ally" and as an economic dominion, was for weeks used as a channel of communication for the supply of arms to the rebels, and is even to-day being used as a kind of reserve for circumventing

the control arrangements, if it should be found, contrary to the expectation of the Fascist States, that the amount of troops and war stores they have already sent to Spain should prove insufficient to conquer that country. It is simply incredible that, if the British Government had really wanted non-intervention to work, it should have been unable to put the requisite pressure on Portugal. Portugal's prolonged recalcitrance alone amounts to something like proof of the bad faith of the National Government's policy towards Spain.

The second fact arises out of the antecedents, nature, and consequences of the so-called "gentlemen's" agreement between the National Government and Signor Mussolini. Here are the salient facts that cast a peculiar light on that transaction:

(1) At the League of Nations Council meeting at Geneva, early in December, a resolution was passed containing the following passage: "The Council . . .

" Bearing in mind that it is the duty of every State to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of other States, a duty which, for Members of the League of Nations, has been recognised in the Covenant:

" Affirms that every State is under an obligation to refrain from intervening in the internal affairs of another State."

This passage is all that survived of a much stronger text recalling the obligations of Article 10 of the Covenant that was proposed by M. Sandler, the Swedish Foreign Minister. Now the interesting point is that, in the private discussions between the members of the Council preceding the adoption of this resolution, Lord Cranborne expressed his readiness to accept reference to respect for the territorial integrity of Spain, but strongly objected to any reference

to respect for that country's political independence. This was regarded, at the time, by the other members of the Council as indicating that the British and Italian Governments were in agreement about a formula concerning the integrity of Spain, but that the British Government did not wish to commit itself to any statement about Spain's political independence, for it knew that this would not be acceptable to Italy.

(2) The next step was Mr. Eden's speech at Bradford, on December 14th, when he referred to:

“ The deep interest we feel in the maintenance of the integrity of Spain and Spanish possessions. For I need perhaps hardly say that it is a consideration of great moment to us that when Spain emerges from her present troubles that integrity should remain intact and unmenaced from any quarter.”

(3) The third step was the publication of the “ gentlemen's ” agreement. The *Manchester Guardian* of January 4th, in a leading article, summed the situation up as follows:

“ The British Government asks for and the Italian Government gives a written assurance to implement its verbal statements that

“ so far as Italy is concerned the integrity of the present territory of Spain shall in all circumstances remain intact and unmodified.

“ This, in view of Italian action in the Balearic Islands and the threats in the Italian Press against any ‘ Communist Government at Barcelona,’ is extremely important. It is a promise, which will at least carry more weight than those given in diplomatic conversations, that Italy will not annex or take any share of Spanish territory

in Europe, Africa, or in the islands that lie between. But it is not by any means a promise that Italy will cease giving help to General Franco's rebels. It suggests that Italy will have less interest in a rebel victory, as her satisfaction in it could only be political, but it does not mean that she will not continue to work for that victory."

It very soon became apparent that the official interpretation at Rome, as recorded in the controlled Italian Press and as given out by the Italian Press Bureau to foreign correspondents, confirmed in every particular the suspicions expressed by the *Manchester Guardian*. Thus the *Daily Mail*, January 5th, Rome Correspondent reports :

"The Anglo-Italian agreement signed at Rome on Saturday, by which both countries bind themselves to maintain the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, is interpreted here as meaning that the establishment of a Soviet republic in Catalonia or in any other part of Spain would be opposed by Great Britain no less than by Italy. This same clause, it is declared here, also means that England and Italy would be united in their opposition if Germany were to attempt to profit by the present state of affairs in Spain to set her foot permanently in the Mediterranean."

*The Times*, January 5th, Rome Correspondent reports that :

"Dealing with the interchange of Notes on Spanish territorial integrity, one commentator declares bluntly that 'what it is important to emphasise is that the respect of Spanish national integrity by Italy confers upon her a greater right to the thesis she has continually upheld—that it is necessary to prevent disruptive forces foreign to Spain from interfering with the liberty and unity of this

noble nation. Spain, the whole of Spain, for the true sons of Spain. This is the motto of Fascist Italy. Consequently, there is no hidden thought of a territorial character, but at the same time there is absolute opposition on Italy's part to the installation of Moscow under the form either of the 'Third International or of a Soviet fleet in Spanish waters.' ”

On January 18th, the *Manchester Guardian*, in a Berlin despatch, reports that :

“ An interpretation of the Anglo-Italian ‘Gentlemen’s Agreement’ upon the Mediterranean is given by Signor Mussolini in an interview in the *Völkische Beobachter* to-day. The Italian dictator declares in almost as many words that the establishment of the *status quo* means that the Government of Madrid must be defeated and a Fascist regime under General Franco set up in Spain. A Soviet in Spain—the forces of Madrid are always regarded as those of Bolshevism here—would in Mussolini’s view constitute an infringement of the *status quo*. Mussolini regards the Anglo-Italian agreement as strengthening the attitude of Italy and Germany. . . . Mussolini begins by . . . attacking Parliamentary government and Bolshevism. In his new-found anti-Bolshevism Mussolini is beginning to equate the two conceptions of democracy and Bolshevism just as Herr Hitler does.”

This was the interview in which Signor Mussolini observed that “ democracy is done for. Consciously or unconsciously, democracies are the source of infection, the carriers of bacilli, the handymen of Bolshevism. That is one group—we are the other. Democracies—they are like sand, like quicksand. Our political ideals form a rock—a granite peak.”

The day before the signature of the “gentlemen’s”

agreement Signor Mussolini landed 4,000 troops in Spain; the day after he landed another 6,000.

(4) The next peculiar circumstance was Mr. Eden's speech in the House on January 19th, which was a kind of reply to Signor Mussolini's interview. In this speech Mr. Eden explained with reference to the conclusion of the "gentlemen's" agreement that:

"As the Spanish conflict was actually raging at the moment the negotiations were proceeding, and a number of disquieting reports had reached us about the Balearic Islands, we thought it right to make use of this opportunity to clarify the attitude of both our Governments towards the integrity of Spanish territory. While, therefore, the text of the actual declaration completely covers Spain in itself, we thought it desirable to emphasise this fact in an exchange of Notes in which the Italian Foreign Secretary, on behalf of the Italian Government, states that so far as Italy is concerned the integrity of the territory of Spain shall in all circumstances remain intact and unmodified. . . .

"There is no word, no line, no comma, in the Anglo-Italian Declaration which could give any foreign Power a right to intervene in Spain, whatever the complexion of the Government in any part of that country."

Now the peculiar part about this explanation is that it evades the real issue. After all, it was not a question of whether the Anglo-Italian Agreement gave anyone the right to invade Spain, for neither Great Britain nor Italy can give each other any such right. The real point is that the Anglo-Italian Agreement did *not* contain any undertaking by Mussolini to refrain from invading Spain, and did not pledge him to respect that country's political independence as well as its territorial integrity. Mr. Eden's

excuse in his speech in the House was that non-intervention was much more than an issue between England and Italy, and that:

“ To have attempted by ourselves to secure a solution of the problem would not only, I am convinced, not have achieved results, but might very well have further complicated an already sufficiently complicated situation.”

It is obvious, therefore, that the agreement purposely ignored intervention in Spain, and thereby deliberately left the door open to the interpretation which Mussolini in fact put upon it, and to the further action which Mussolini promptly took. It was a flagrant case of silence giving consent—and events proved that silence really did mean consent. For, as we have seen, the conclusion of the “gentlemen’s” agreement was immediately followed by the virtual cessation of German assistance to the rebels and by the pouring into Spain of an Italian expeditionary force of nearly 70,000.

The only explanation that fits these facts is that the Government have been playing the same game over Spain as they did over Abyssinia. In the case of that country they manipulated the proceedings before the League and the whole issue of sanctions in an attempt to make them subserve a policy of using Abyssinia as a pawn in an Imperialist bargain with Mussolini that would enlist him as an ally against Germany. In the case of Spain the Government have manipulated non-intervention so as to load the dice against the Spanish Government, and to give Mussolini a free hand for helping the Spanish Fascists to victory, in return for Italian promises not to create any naval bases in the Balearic Islands, to keep German influence out of Spain, and eventually to become an ally of British Imperialism against Hitler.

In Mr. Eden's speech, in the House, of January 19th he referred to the impossibility of keeping the Spanish people under any foreign rule. In private, official opinion is that if Franco wins he will need money and can therefore be bought away from German or Italian control and made amenable to us by a loan. In the closing phases of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict exactly the same airy references were made in official quarters to Mussolini's need for a loan which would be supplied by France and Great Britain and thereby make possible renewal of the Stresa front. After the reoccupation of the Rhineland there was also much official propaganda to the effect that Mussolini was now anxious to close down his Abyssinian adventure on moderate terms in order to keep his end up in Europe against Hitler.

Our "realists" first indulged in precisely the same sort of propaganda, before the "gentlemen's" agreement, as to Mussolini getting tired of the Spanish adventure, and then after that agreement consoled themselves with dreams of separating Italy from Germany and of double-crossing Mussolini by lending money to Franco. The *Manchester Guardian*, March 13th, Diplomatic Correspondent, in a striking article, both accurately describes the Government's view and hints his concern at its fatuity and inhumanity. The following extract shows the nature of the illusions cherished by the "realists" in the Foreign Office: "It is believed that when Franco has won the war . . . Spain will have been totally ruined and exhausted and will need the help of countries like Great Britain and France, which are wealthy enough to give it. It is also believed that the countries that tried to stave off foreign intervention (though not very successfully) will have a high prestige in the eyes of the Spanish people." The National Government's prestige in Spain to-day is as high as it is in Abyssinia and China, and for the same reason—that cowardice has been invoked as a plea to excuse treachery.

And, just as in the case of Abyssinia, our "realists" have been completely diddled by Signor Mussolini. It now appears plain that the despatch of the Italian expeditionary force and the slowing down of German assistance was agreed upon between Germany and Italy at the time of General Goering's visit to Rome, that in return Signor Mussolini promised friendly neutrality in case of a German adventure in Czechoslovakia, and that the British Government were cheated and treated with sovereign contempt. After taking so much trouble to make themselves crooks, they were made fools of to boot for their pains. Our "realists" cannot get into their heads the simple fact that nothing will separate Italy and Germany, for Fascism in one would fail if the other were defeated, and both have a common hatred of the democracies and the working class in Europe. Moreover both want to plunder the effete democracies of their big empires.

The consequences in Spain of using "non-intervention" as a cover for conniving at a Fascist war of conquest have so far been a tale of anguish, death, and ruin that should wring the heart of a stone, but that leaves our governing class unmoved. Fascist victory would mean sickening slaughter, followed by nightmare reaction. And if the Fascist Powers win, it means, of course, that both Italy and Germany will acquire naval and air bases in the Western Mediterranean, that Spain will be under their control, and that consequently France's communications with her African colonies (on which she relies for troops) and our communications through the Mediterranean will henceforward be at the mercy of the Fascist dictatorships. Gibraltar will become useless. But the internal consequences for France will be even more serious, for there will be a tremendous impetus to reaction and Fascism in that country. France may easily within the next two years become so rent by an internal struggle between Right and

Left as to be reduced to impotence internationally. In that case Great Britain will be left to face Germany and Italy alone, with Japan in the background.

But it would be wrong to give up hope of the victory of the Spanish Government. The Fascists may win their campaign (although even that is very far from certain), and they may for a time hold down Spain by terror and a foreign expeditionary force. But ultimately the Spanish workers and peasants will win, although at a staggering cost. Meanwhile the bad faith of our National Government and the pusillanimity of France with regard to Fascist intervention in Spain have brought Europe a further step on our Rake's Progress toward the next world war.

## VI

### GERMANY

GERMANY IS TO-DAY the chief enemy against which the Government are rearming on such a gigantic scale and with such feverish haste, although Japan and Italy have become pretty formidable contingent liabilities. We have seen how the Government's policy encouraged Japan and Italy to become major menaces to world peace, and to draw closer to Germany. The purpose of this section is to examine whether, and if so how, the Government's policy has helped to make Nazi Germany what she is now, namely Public Enemy No. 1 of world peace.

*Inquest on Peace* shows how at the Disarmament Conference German and other plans for solving the problem of equality of rights by general disarmament and French plans for organising collective security were alike stone-walled by our National Government. It further demonstrates that the continual postponements and evasions of this crucial issue, in which Sir John Simon displayed such virtuosity, were due to the opposition within the Conservative Party and the vested interests behind them, particularly the arms manufacturers and fighting services, to reducing armaments or to accepting any security obligations. Finally, it shows how this attitude, coming on top of the lesson taught by Japan's successful challenge to the collective system, helped to supply the Nazis with arguments for preaching their policy of defiance and to prepare public opinion to listen to such arguments (the prime cause of the Nazi success, however, was the social and economic strains set up by the

great slump; all international matters were but a secondary factor).

*Inquest on Peace* further reveals how since the Nazis came to power our National Government have wavered between two policies, that of conciliation and that of firmness, and have never adopted either, but on the contrary performed a series of zigzags between both and indulged in brave words followed by capitulations. The policy of firmness led to the Stresa Conference, where Germany's violation of the Versailles Treaty by illegal rearmament was strongly condemned, the sanctity of treaties was emphasised and an attempt was made to lay the foundations for an Anglo-Franco-Italian alliance (it was for this cause that Abyssinia was sacrificed). Immediately after Stresa, the exactly opposite policy of conciliation got the upper hand and took the form of the Anglo-German naval agreement, which was an Anglo-German violation of the disarmament chapter of the Versailles Treaty, and created such bitterness in France as to prepare French public opinion for M. Laval's pro-Italian policy. Since then there have been more waverings, although on the whole a drift toward a policy of opposition to German expansion, at least in West Europe.

On the face of it, it is a curious fact that the National Government, which showed itself so excessively conciliatory to Japan and Italy, in spite of the absence of any popular demand for such conciliation, should have failed to produce any big policy for a settlement with Germany, in spite of the undoubtedly widespread demand for such a policy. It is true Mr. Eden, in his speech at Bradford on December 14th, 1936, produced an unexceptionable statement of the main lines of such a policy in the following words:

“ Let me emphasise once again, it is not in our minds, nor, I am convinced, is it in the minds of the French  
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Government, to seek to come to any exclusive arrangement. Far from it; we desire, and should cordially welcome the co-operation of Germany not only in a Western agreement, but in European affairs generally. This country has made that clear many times in these post-war years, not only by words, but by deeds. So far are we from wishing to encircle Germany that we seek for her co-operation with other nations in the economic and financial as well as in the political sphere. We want neither *blocs* nor barriers in Europe, nor, we are convinced, were there freedom of thought, of speech, of trade across the frontiers would there be any. . . .

“The world would act wisely were it to turn from armaments competition to economic co-operation. That is a change which we wish to see and to which we are prepared to contribute our share. We showed by the part we played in the recent three-Power Monetary Agreement the basis upon which we thought progress was possible. We are anxious to see those lines followed up, and to see international conditions created in which economically all nations can have greater opportunities, can hope to raise their standard of life. If a lasting settlement of world difficulties could be reached, including—and this is indispensable—an arms agreement, our help would be willingly and indeed whole-heartedly given. But—and this is fundamental—this country cannot be expected to render help to others either in the economic or in the financial sphere if the only result of such action is to be a further piling up of armaments and a consequent further stress and strain upon the fabric of world peace.”

Unfortunately the Government's policy seldom bears even a remote relation to Mr. Eden's speeches, which have on the whole maintained a high level of verbal statesmanship in the last three years. On the political side the

Government have always refused to take any part in an all-European Treaty of Arbitration, Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance, and thereby compelled the French to attempt, first through a general East European Pact, which Germany would not enter, and then through the Franco-Soviet Pact, to which Germany objects, to counteract Hitler's policy of dividing Europe into two halves with a free hand to make war in the eastern half. The chief reason for the Government's refusal has been the desire of a considerable part of the Cabinet to do a bargain with Hitler on the "one-way war" basis he desires and to give him a veto on any alternative solution. On the economic side Mr. Neville Chamberlain and the Government Press have made it clear that they will not abate one jot of their Imperial preference and tariff policy, and have thereby closed the door to any policy of conciliation in that direction. In his speech to the Second Committee of the Assembly on October 5th, Mr. W. S. Morrison explained the motives for the Government's attitude with almost startling candour. He paid a striking tribute to the general idea of reducing tariffs, and strongly urged that France and other countries should go ahead and reduce theirs. He then observed:

"It is at this point, no doubt, that some members of the Committee will say to themselves, 'What you are in fact proposing is the abandonment by a number of States of measures which rightly or wrongly they have taken in what they felt was their own interest, in order that benefit may accrue to all. What, however, we would like to know is what contribution Great Britain intends to make to this general policy of far-sighted renunciation?'"

To satisfy the curiosity of the Governments he was exhorting, Mr. Morrison then explained at length why the

Government believed that their own policy was so excellent that they need do nothing more until the other States had first reduced their tariffs.

“When, therefore, the question is asked, what contribution can Great Britain make to the general effort towards economic recovery, the answer is this: His Majesty’s Government will continue to the limit of their capacity to carry out the non-exclusive trade policy which they have adopted up to now.”

Not content with asking other countries to do something for nothing, Mr. Morrison then proceeded to give a warning. He said:

“His Majesty’s Government will undoubtedly be faced, as I have already mentioned, by the strongest pressure on the part of particular interests at home to take measures to counteract the intensified competition which will result from the devaluation of other countries’ currencies. That pressure will in any case be very difficult to resist, and I do not exaggerate when I say that it may well become irresistible if we cannot show that the Governments of the devaluing countries are, for their part, acting upon the urgent advice of the Economic Committee in withdrawing their exceptional restrictions notwithstanding the pressure which they too will no doubt encounter from particular interests.”

This is the frankest possible confession that the Government’s international economic policy, like its domestic policy, is determined by the pressure of capitalist vested interests which will not hear of any reversal of the policy of economic nationalism into which they pushed the Government in their efforts to escape from the effects of the great

slump, which itself is a symptom of the partial breakdown of capitalism.

On the side of colonial policy the Conservative Party Conference in October 1936, and various debates in the House of Commons and the House of Lords (e.g. February 17th in the latter), have made it clear that the Conservative Party will not tolerate any discussion of the colonial problem either in terms of giving Germany the mandate over her former colonies, on condition she accepts political and disarmament obligations, or in terms of extending and further internationalising the mandates system so as to cover all non-self-governing colonies. Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, replying to a speech by Mr. Herbert Morrison at the Brighton Conference in 1935, made the motive for the Government's negative attitude clear: he said that any extension of the mandates system could not be considered, because people who had invested, or were about to invest, money in British colonies would object. Once again capitalist vested interests are the determining factor in the Government's policy.

The reasons why the alternative policy of firmness, which was initiated at Stresa, has also failed are equally clear. It failed for two reasons: in the first place because of the attempts to detach Italy from Germany, which, for the reasons already explained, are doomed to failure; and, second, because of the Government's consistent refusal, chiefly due to its class antagonism to the Soviet Union, to accept any obligations for resisting German aggression in East Europe. That has given the German Government every facility for delaying and wrecking tactics, and promoted the demoralisation and disintegration of the Central European groups of States.

To complete the picture, it is necessary to remember that from the outset a large part of the City has given every support and encouragement to German rearmament. Good

money has been thrown after bad in a number of loans and credit schemes to release the so-called "frozen credits" from before the slump. Aeroplane engines were sold in large quantities to Germany at a time when the Disarmament chapter of the Versailles Treaty was still supposed to be valid. Partly all this was done under the slogan "Business is Business" and "The City has Nothing to do with Politics." But this pretence was frequently dropped.

Thus we find Sir Arthur Balfour, Chairman and Managing Director of Arthur Balfour & Company Limited, Capital Steel Works, Sheffield, and Chairman of High-Speed Alloys, saying, as reported in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* of October 24th, 1933:

"With regard to Germany, something was bound to happen. The people there lost everything in the war. While Germany was wonderfully equipped, scientifically and industrially, she had no working capital, and the prospects of the young people since the war have been almost nil. Either they were to have Communism or something else. Hitler has produced Hitlerism as we see it to-day, and of the two I think it is preferable. Will the Germans go to war again? I don't think there is any doubt about it, and the curious thing about it is that I am almost persuaded that some day we shall have to let the Germans arm or we shall arm them. With the Russians armed to the teeth and the tremendous menace in the East, Germany unarmed in the middle is always going to be a plum waiting for the Russians to take, and which we should have to defend if the Germans could not defend themselves. One of the greatest menaces to peace in Europe to-day is the totally unarmed condition of Germany."

This statement clearly contemplates arming Germany for a holy war against Russian Communism, and this is the

policy for which powerful elements in the City and the F.B.I. have for long been pressing. On the whole this pressure is weakening. But as late as December 1936 Sir Henry Deterding announced a big loan to finance a scheme for encouraging the exchange of Dutch agricultural products for German manufactured goods, and urged it on the ground that it was necessary to help and strengthen the Nazi regime as a bulwark against Communism.

In February 1937 the *Banker* published a striking number exposing the evil politics and disastrous economics of the Nazi regime. The Foreword observed that:

“ We regret to have to admit that from a small, but rather influential circle in the City of London there flows a constant stream of propaganda in favour of credits for Germany. . . . The notion that English money would stem the tide of Communism flowing into Germany is inherently ridiculous. English money is far more likely to be used for the creation of poison gas and other delectable munitions. . . . Apart from the fact that it is contrary to the public interest to grant credits to Germany, the writers of our survey have made it very clear that from the standpoint of the investor Germany is a bottomless pit. And the bluster and bad faith which have been the main ingredients of German foreign policy have also characterised all Dr. Schacht's dealings with the English bankers and bondholders who have been foolish enough to put their trust in German promises.”

This quotation shows that there is at last a revolt in the City against the policy of throwing good money after bad into Germany on class-war grounds. After all, financing our own war preparations pays better ! But it may be hazarded that if and when the Nazi regime showed any serious signs of internal collapse there would be an

immediate recrudescence of the argument that money must be loaned to Germany to prevent that country becoming the prey of Communism.

The divisions in the City show the profound division within the governing class with regard to Germany. One wing, typically represented by Lord Londonderry, is for a deal with Germany that will give Hitler a free hand in East and Central Europe, on the ground that Herr Hitler is the saviour of civilisation from the Communist peril. The lengths to which these people carry their views found curious expression in Lord Londonderry's famous speech in the Upper House on May 22nd, 1935, when he expressed his pride at the fact that he had, although with the utmost difficulty, succeeded in defeating the attempts of other nations at the Disarmament Conference in 1932, to bring about the total abolition of air forces. But famous as the speech is, a passage not quoted hitherto really deserves equal immortality. It is this:

“ I felt certain that when the ideals of abolition were examined practically they would be discovered to be inapplicable in the state of the world to-day. . . . I am indeed gratified to find in Herr Hitler's words a definite acceptance of this doctrine.”

On the face of it, it seems insane that an Air Minister, when reporting the tremendous efforts being made to rearm in the air, should not only add his pride at his success in placing his country in the situation where this rearmament was necessary, but his satisfaction at the agreement with his views displayed by the potential enemy against whom we are rearming !

But it must not be forgotten that in Lord Londonderry's mind Herr Hitler is not a potential enemy, but, on the contrary, a future ally.

The other wing of the Conservative Party is represented in its extreme form by Mr. Winston Churchill, who is so anxious to build up a powerful coalition for the defence of British Imperialism that he is even prepared to lump Soviet Communism and to include the U.S.S.R. in his coalition. But his policy is stultified by the vain attempts to include Italy, by approval of the policy of sabotaging sanctions in order to do a deal with that country, and by further approval of conniving at Fascist aggression in Spain under the guise of "non-intervention." Thus Mr. Churchill, with the one hand, on class-war grounds, makes impossible the policy he is trying to build up with the other hand, on the grounds of Imperial defence.

The great bulk of the Conservative Party and the Cabinet do not go so far as either Lord Londonderry or Mr. Churchill. On the whole their hostility to Germany on Imperialist grounds is increasing, but so also is their dislike and fear of the U.S.S.R. on class-war grounds (the recrudescence of anti-Soviet feeling in Conservative opinion is a quite striking phenomenon since the Spanish civil war; the Moscow trials have supplied those who feel this way with the opportunities they wanted to stir up hostility).

The net result of these cross-purposes is the almost total disappearance of any policy whatever, except heavy rearmament and a fairly clear intimation that the Government would fight if Belgium or France were the victims of what it at the time considered "unprovoked" aggression, but would regard itself free to act as it saw fit if Germany went to war in East or Central Europe.

The lesson of the Government's policy towards Germany was accurately summed up by Mr. Attlee at Gorton on February 14th, 1937. He said that the Government watched German rearmament and took no active steps to save the world from the consequences. They did not try to make disarmament a success. They neither enforced the

Treaty of Versailles nor pursued the policy of international co-operation and peace. "The fact is that the National Government has connived at German rearmament because of its hatred of Russia. It has sown the wind and is reaping the whirlwind."

## VII

### THE COLLECTIVE SYSTEM, DEFENCE, AND PEACE

WHEN THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT came to power, in the autumn of 1931, the British Empire was so secure that defence estimates were based on the assumption that we need not reckon with the contingency of a great war within the next ten years. Like all other countries Great Britain had carried out considerable reductions of her defence establishment when she changed over from war conditions to a peace basis in 1920, and had been constrained to make a slight reduction in defence expenditure during the worst of the great slump. But nearly £2,000,000,000 since the Armistice had been spent on armaments by 1932.<sup>1</sup>

By 1931 the army had been largely mechanised and possessed four times its pre-war striking power; the navy was incomparably stronger than any possible hostile fleet or combination of fleets in Europe. War was ruled out as a possibility between us and the United States and between us and France. Germany had no navy or air force and a tiny army; she was a member of the League and still a democracy. Japan, too, was a member of the League, and

<sup>1</sup> This ought to dispose of the utterly baseless legend fabricated by the National Government that Great Britain had attempted to set an example by unilateral disarmament. This is just sheer bunkum. As Sir Francis Acland pointed out in the House of Commons on March 19th, 1935, the arms budgets of France, Great Britain, Italy, and the United States in 1933-34 each showed roughly a 50 per cent increase over the respective expenditures of these four Powers in 1913-14. Thus, as he observed, is well known abroad, and, therefore, "the general idea that we alone have cut to the bone is one that it is not easy to get other people to believe with the intensity with which we believe it ourselves."

Italy followed any Anglo-French lead at Geneva. The United States and the Soviet Union were co-operating with the League to an ever greater extent. The League had gained immensely in prestige and power since the accession of the Labour Government in 1929, and largely as a result of the lead given by that Government at Geneva. The Labour Government had carried out eight of the nine promises in foreign policy which it had made to the electorate. As to the ninth point—the conclusion of a disarmament convention—it had completed the preparations for the Disarmament Conference, fixed its date for February 1932, and secured the appointment by the League Council of its President, who was the Labour Foreign Secretary, the late Mr. Arthur Henderson.

How then have we sunk from that secure and commanding position into the present arms race and the over-shadowing fear of war, and what part did the National Government's foreign policy play in promoting or checking our decline? The previous chapters have given some inkling of what the Government's policy actually did accomplish in this connection, and what were the social and economic forces released by the great slump that underlay these events and ultimately determined this country's foreign as well as its domestic policy. In this chapter we shall examine the bearing of these events more particularly upon the collapse of the collective system and the consequent arms race.

In order to avoid all vagueness and misunderstandings let us begin by stating precisely what is meant by the collective system and by saying that it has collapsed. The collective system means the treaty obligations of Articles 10–17 inclusive of the Covenant, for refraining from aggression or resort to war; submitting all disputes to some form of pacific settlement; and cutting off all relations with a State that resorts to war in disregard of these obligations or against a State which has accepted a duly

rendered pacific award. The collective system is alive so long as States base their policies on the assumption that these treaty obligations are valid and will give them protection against aggression if they observe them. To-day there is no Government in the world which would be reckless enough to rely in any way whatsoever upon these treaty guarantees, for the fate of China, Abyssinia, and Spain has been decisive. As a corollary of the collective system the Covenant includes the obligation to reduce and limit armaments, for it is obvious that the lower the general level of armaments the more effective purely economic means of coercing an aggressor become and the less danger there is of an aggressor retaliating by making war on those who sever economic relations with him. To-day's arms race is a symptom of the total collapse of the collective system, in the absence of which, as both the Government and the Opposition have repeatedly declared, war is sooner or later inevitable, and no amount of national armaments can confer safety or preserve peace.

What were the steps by which we passed from the strong collective system and bright hopes for disarmament of 1931 into the valley of the shadow of death along which we are wandering to-day?

The first step was taken in the Far East. The Chinese put their trust in the collective system. The whole world knows what happened. The major responsibility of the National Government for the abandonment of the Covenant and China, in face of Japanese aggression, has been indicated in the first chapter of this book. The result was to destroy the collective system in the Far East and to weaken confidence in it everywhere. Lord Lytton, who spoke with triple authority as an eminent supporter of the Government, as the President of the League Commission which investigated the Sino-Japanese conflict, and as a leading member of the League of Nations Union, spoke on the Government's

record in this matter, with particular reference to its effect on the collective system and the prospects of the Disarmament Conference. This is what he said :

“ The most deplorable feature of the present situation is the line of defence taken by our own Government against those critics who have urged them to play a more leading part at Geneva. This line of defence has had two features, both of which show a failure to appreciate the obligations of League membership.

“ The first is the claim that we have done all that the League has called upon us to do. This argument is really a very insincere excuse, because it suggests that the League is an entity apart from the States that compose it. The Executive of the League is the Council, and of the States which occupy a permanent seat on the Council, Great Britain is obviously the one most interested in this particular issue, and the one, therefore, from which leadership is naturally to be expected. . . .

“ The second line of defence taken by the Foreign Secretary in his speeches in the House of Commons is that he has been careful throughout to prevent this country from becoming involved in the Sino-Japanese dispute.

“ That line of argument is absolutely destructive of the whole basis of collective security and has stultified all the efforts which Sir John Simon is making to bring about an agreement on disarmament. The only possible justification for a general measure of disarmament is the knowledge that if a State is attacked it can rely on the combined forces of all other States Members of the League to defend it. Though we have all to contemplate the possibility that one Member may at some time under pressure of national interests violate its international obligations and attack a neighbour, it is reasonable to argue

that all the other States Members may be relied upon to honour their obligations. But the argument of the Foreign Secretary, which has always been loudly cheered in the House of Commons, is that though it would be dishonourable to attack a neighbour, for the sake of national advantage, there is no obligation on us to come to the aid of a victim of aggression, if national interests make it expedient to keep out of the quarrel. Is it surprising that the man who has used this argument so confidently should be finding it difficult to persuade the French to give up the only security of which at present they have had any experience? . . .

“ You will perhaps feel disposed to criticise me for being too theoretical, too idealistic, shall we say, for a practical world. It is true that I have spoken of principles, but they are not abstract principles, they are treaty obligations. It is the business of statesmen to find practical means of giving effect to principles which they have accepted; and it is not justifiable or statesmanlike to abandon principles whenever you find them inconvenient. I say this of our own country as much as of Japan ” (quoted in *Inquest on Peace*, pp. 29-30).

There could hardly be a severer condemnation from a better qualified source.

*Inquest on Peace* also traces how the Government took a leading part at the Disarmament Conference in turning down American, German, Italian, and Russian proposals for giving Germany equality of rights by general disarmament, and French and other proposals for organising collective security. That was the second step in our Rake's Progress. Part of this record and its consequences is described in the previous chapter. *Inquest on Peace* also describes how when the Conference opened the Government had no policy whatever, whereas the fighting services, as revealed

by the First Lord of the Admiralty and in Lord Londonderry's famous boast of May 22nd, 1935, of how he had killed air disarmament, had from the very outset of the Conference been grimly bent on sabotaging any attempts at disarmament because they had ambitious programmes of rearmament which they were determined to put in hand regardless of the proceedings of the Conference. *Inquest on Peace* ended its analysis of the Government's record at the Conference with the following remarks:

“ The Government were fatally half-headed and half-hearted at the Disarmament Conference because they were torn between the belief of the great majority of the members of the Government and of the Conservative Party that preparation for war is the way to preserve peace—a belief encouraged and fomented by the fighting services and arms manufacturers, towards whom the Conservative Party feel a peculiar tenderness and a special responsibility—and the necessity for putting in an appearance at the Disarmament Conference and indulging in gestures that would placate public opinion at home. . . .

“ Moreover, as time went on, their policy at the Disarmament Conference became not only weaker and weaker, but more and more disingenuous. On the one hand, the worsening political situation and the pressure of the economic crisis made the vested interests in war preparation—the fighting services and the arms manufacturers—more and more anxious to get on with rearmament, and more and more restive at all the talk about disarmament. On the other hand, the pressure of public opinion on the Government at home, and of other States at the Conference grew steadily. The resultant of this struggle has been a wavering and shifty policy in which there were some elements of honest endeavour, others of sheer bewilderment, but a strong and growing infusion

of tactical considerations—the desire to put the blame for failure on other countries, and to prepare home public opinion for rearmament, rather than any whole-hearted desire for an agreement on disarmament” (pp. 84-5; 103).

Since then there has been official confirmation of the exceedingly grave charge made—to wit, that the Government were using the Disarmament Conference not in order to bring about disarmament, but in order to make public opinion at home believe that the failure of disarmament was not the Government’s fault and that rearmament was a necessity. Here is the proof: in the defence debate on March 10th, 1936, Sir John Simon told the House that since the World War the annual service estimates had been framed on the assumption that:

“The British Empire would not be engaged in any great war during the next ten years. . . . The Disarmament Conference met in February 1932, and that was the very year in which the ten-year rule had to be abandoned.”

This is a confession that in the opening year of the Disarmament Conference the Government had made up their minds to begin preparing for a great war within the next ten years (of which five have now elapsed).

The proximate cause, no doubt, was the Government’s betrayal of the collective system in the Far East. But what a foreign policy—on the one hand they let the aggressor rip and smash up the collective system on Imperialist and class-war grounds, and on the other they then set to work to sabotage the Disarmament Conference in order to prepare for the great war which they themselves realised their policy of betrayal had made highly probable.

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Mr. Baldwin, in his famous "appalling frankness" speech of November 12th, 1936, went a good deal further. Frequently, he observed, he had stated that a democracy was always two years behind the dictatorships.

"I believe that to be true. It has been true in this case. I put before the whole House my own views with an appalling frankness. From 1933, I and my friends were all very worried about what was happening in Europe. You will remember that at the time the Disarmament Conference was sitting in Geneva. You will remember at that time there was probably a stronger pacifist feeling running through this country than at any time since the war. I am speaking of 1933 and 1934. You will remember the election at Fulham in the autumn of 1933, when a seat which the National Government held was lost by about 7,000 votes on no issue but the pacifist. You will remember perhaps that the National Government candidate who made a most guarded reference to the question of defence was mobbed for it.

"That was the feeling in the country in 1933. My position as the leader of a great party was not altogether a comfortable one. I asked myself what chance was there—when that feeling that was given expression to in Fulham was common throughout the country—what chance was there within the next year or two of that feeling being so changed that the country would give a mandate for rearmament? Supposing I had gone to the country and said that Germany was rearming and that we must rearm, does anybody think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to that cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain.

Again the only comment is—what a policy! Here we have the Prime Minister confessing that from 1933 they

clearly realised that Germany was rearming. It might have been possible to prevent that by trying to make a success of the Disarmament Conference in 1932, but, as we saw, they were so busy preparing for war, that they instead chose to sabotage it; after that it would have been possible either to make a resolute attempt to organise collective security in Europe or to come to terms with Germany, or better still to combine the two policies, so as first to build up a strong collective system group, and then, jointly with Russia and France, to take matters up with Germany, who at that time was in no position to resist a strongly backed demand that she cease her illegal rearmament and come to terms. The Government did neither, as we have seen from the previous chapter, for a mixture of Imperialist and class-war motives. Instead it resorted to its sovereign panacea—preparing for war—and with considerable cunning and pertinacity it set out deliberately to delude and cheat the electorate. This policy involved some unblushing mendacity at the 1935 election, when the Government gave most explicit assurances that they were not contemplating any large-scale rearmament, but were merely intent on “filling gaps in our defences.”

The Far-Eastern betrayal and the sabotage of the Disarmament Conference produced conditions in which Mussolini was emboldened to embark on the conquest of Abyssinia. This was the third step toward the next world war. How this business was handled has already been made clear in this book. We find once more a mixture of Imperialist and class-war motives at the bottom of the Government's half-hearted and double-faced policy. From the point of view of the disintegration of the collective system the pretence of applying sanctions and the belying of the Government's brave words did more to destroy confidence in the Covenant than even the refusal to apply it at all in the Far East. The Government itself, it will be remembered, took

the line from the beginning that they would apply only sanctions to which Italy would not retaliate by threatening war; this virtually made Mussolini the invisible but all-powerful president of the Sanctions Committee. The Government furthermore took advantage of Labour's offer of national unity and loyal support to hold a snap election and to accuse the Labour Party of war-mongering, because the latter had pointed to the risk of war involved in the loyal and effective application of the Covenant and had declared its readiness to support the Government in facing that risk. A large part of the Government Press and the Conservative Party went further: they proclaimed loudly that the British Navy was unable to defend itself against the Italian air fleet, and that the British people would not fight in such a quixotic cause as the defence of the collective system. Now under the Covenant a State against which the members of the League are applying sanctions must be held to be committing acts of war against all the members of the League. Therefore, the Italian Government were the King's enemies so long as we were applying sanctions, and the Tory patriots and Press lords who took this line were committing treason by giving aid and comfort to the King's enemies. There is no doubt that they did everything they could to encourage Signor Mussolini to threaten war.

The final stage in the collapse of the collective system was the failure even to mention it, let alone apply it against international Fascist intervention in Spain. Señor del Vayo, the Spanish Foreign Minister, told the Assembly that a collective system that did not apply to the new form of aggression that was being committed against Spain was useless, for we had seen the last of the "classical" wars and what was happening in Spain was nothing less than the beginning of the next world war. The only reply to that statement was a reiteration of the British appeal not to

divide Europe into two camps and to observe neutrality towards the conflict of rival ideologies. The Government's view is that the Covenant does not apply to "social" conflicts, but only to "international" conflicts. This means, in practice, neutrality toward Fascist aggression against Spain and toward German aggression against the U.S.S.R.

It is clear that the National Government's foreign policy has played a prominent part at all the main stages in the piecemeal destruction of the collective system since 1931, and that that destruction is now complete and the collective system no longer exists. But we may go further and say that the Governments dominated by the Conservative Party have never since the war shown that they understood and accepted the obligations of the collective system (i.e. of Articles 10-17 inclusive of the Covenant), and that they have on the contrary frequently adopted policies tantamount to the repudiation in practice of the collective system. Thus the Conservative Government which succeeded the first Labour Government rejected the Geneva Protocol on grounds that were really a repudiation of the treaty obligations of the Covenant. The arguments used by the Conservative Government for the Locarno settlement were also tantamount to repudiating the obligations of the Covenant as regarded Central and Eastern Europe. At the time of the adoption of the Kellogg Pact, in 1928, Sir Austen Chamberlain, as Foreign Secretary, attached an interpretation to that instrument which reserved the right to use war as an instrument of national policy in unspecified territories outside the British Empire whenever the Government considered that vital British interests were at stake. This was a claim to resort to war in circumstances where it would be forbidden by the Covenant, and might, were the aggrieved party a member of the League or accepted the obligations of the Covenant for the purposes of the dispute, render Great Britain liable to sanctions as an aggressor.

If further proof be required of the assertion that the Conservative Party and the Governments they dominate have never been honest about the collective system, and that the National Government has always been thoroughly dishonest about it, it was supplied by Mr. Amery, speaking as a supporter of the Government in the House on October 23rd, 1935. In this speech he complained that the "unsatisfactory situation" in which they found themselves (i.e. applying sanctions to Italy) was due:

"To the abandonment by the Government of the policy towards the League of Nations, and more particularly towards Article 16 of the Covenant, which they pursued for some ten years, and to the adoption of a policy which, up to the last few months, they repudiated and even treated with scorn. From the speech of my right hon. friend the Secretary of State one might have thought that it was all so simple, a mere question of fulfilling our loyal obligations to the League, and of fulfilling the Covenant in the letter and in the spirit. The matter has never been as simple as all that. From the very outset there have been two schools of thought about the League and about our obligations under the League. There has been the school to which I belong, and to which for years, I believe, the Government of this country belonged, that regards the League as a great institution, an organisation for promoting co-operation and harmony among the nations, for bringing about understanding, a permanent Round Table of the nations in conference, a standing machinery for conciliation for the benefit of all who were willing to be conciliated, the centre and focus of innumerable beneficent international activities, growing greatly in authority and influence and in universality, but provided always it did not have at the background the threat of coercion.

“There is the other school which thinks that the actual Articles of the Covenant, concocted in the throes of the peace settlement and in that atmosphere of optimism which led us to expect £10,000,000,000 or more in reparations from Germany, constitute a sacrosanct dispensation which would have introduced a new world order, and, if they were only loyally adhered to, abolish war for good and all. . . .

“The letter of the Covenant is the one thing which is likely to kill the League of Nations. . . .

“There were those, the believers in the League of coercion, who endeavoured to see whether the policy of the League, from their point of view, could not have been made good, and who endeavoured to find ways and means of making its action swifter and more efficient. They embodied therein what is known as the Geneva Protocol. The Government of which I had the honour to be a Member, as well as my right hon. friend here, with the complete support of all the Dominions, unhesitatingly rejected the Geneva Protocol. The reasons for rejecting that Protocol were reasons which in fact and in substance were a rejection of Article 16, just as much as they were the rejection of the Protocol itself. . . .

“The case I wish to put to the House is that the stand taken by His Majesty’s Government then and the arguments which they used were not arguments merely against the Protocol, but arguments against the whole conception of a League based on economic and military sanctions. But His Majesty’s Government were not content with that. They were prepared with their alternative, and the alternative was, admitting the impossibility and undesirability of sanctions imposed universally in any and every case, and to substitute the co-operation of particular nations for a definite purpose, for particular tasks of peace. That was the policy of

Locarno, and the policy of Locarno, if I may venture to say so to my right hon. friend, was not merely an alternative to the Protocol, but an alternative to Article 16. After all, unless it was that, it was meaningless. The obligations under Locarno are the same in essence as the obligations under Article 16. If Article 16 was still in full and literal effect—and no one has suggested enforcing it literally to-day—Locarno was purely superfluous. . . .

“That was the policy consistently followed and followed with success by His Majesty’s Government. Locarno was only one of a series. It was followed up by steady efforts to bring together nations in similar arrangements, and in turn to link these arrangements with each other, until we came at Stresa within sight of a general linking up of groups, each responsible for its own tasks, which would have been a real measure of security. . . .

“The Government by its actions, which speak louder than words, showed that it did not regard itself pledged in honour to literal fulfilment of Article 16.

“Mr. MASON: Quote.

“Mr. AMERY: Japan in Manchuria and Shanghai. If it were a matter of a pledge of honour we were just as much obligated then as now. The reason why the British Government refused to be obligated was not cowardice on the part of the Government, but because it did not take the view of the obligations of the Covenant which hon. Members opposite take and which apparently has been taken by the Government in the last few months. If hon. Members want quotations I will give them a few; I am only too happy to do so—quotations to show that the Government repudiated the whole idea of what is called the collective peace system. On November 23rd, 1934, the Prime Minister said:

“ ‘ It is curious that there is growing up among the Labour Party support for what is called a collective peace system. A collective peace system in my view is perfectly impracticable in view of the facts to-day, that the United States is not yet, to our infinite regret, a member of the League of Nations, and that in the last two or three years two Great Powers, Germany and Japan, have both retired from it. It is hardly worth considering, when these be the facts, whether a collective peace system could be undertaken.’

“ The Prime Minister may dismiss that as having been academic. On March 11th last he said :

“ ‘ What people so often forget, when they talk airily about collective security and sanctions, the Covenant and so forth, is that the membership of the League is not universal. . . . Until a time, which we hope may come, when a system of collective security may be devised, what else is left but to try to secure this corner and that corner in the different parts of Europe.’  
(Official Report, March 11th, 1935: Vol. 299, col. 47.)

“ And then he went on to explain the whole policy of Locarno as a clear alternative. That was on March 11th, six weeks after Signor Mussolini first informed us of his intentions about Abyssinia, three weeks after the demonstrative departure of two Italian divisions for Africa. It was hardly an academic statement then, but a statement that must have been made with full knowledge of the situation that was growing up in connection with Abyssinia.”

Mr. Amery then mercilessly proceeded to quote from Sir Austen Chamberlain's speech in the House on March 11th, 1935, where he had declared that, provided neither party wanted to go to war, there was no more potent

instrument than the League for preserving peace, but that the League was no use at all where there is a real danger caused by one nation's determination to commit aggression, and that the Covenant had shown that obligations which were universal were, in the nature of things, obligations which people were not very ready to fulfil.

The rest of the speech was devoted to arguing for regional pacts. Sir Austen concluded by observing that there was "a good deal more to be said for the balance of power than it is popular to say to-day," and with a full-blooded plea for preparing for war as the best way for preserving peace.

But to go back to Mr. Amery in the House on October 23rd. Mr. Amery continued:

"Two days before July 29th, Lord Londonderry, who speaks for the Government in the House of Lords, said:

"'In the Government's view the League was no new federation or confederation of States for the purpose of imposing its will upon any single nation or group of nations by the exercise of physical force. It existed for the pacific settlement of international disputes—not for the abolition of war by means of war. On the other hand, the Socialists' view was nothing more or less than the employment in the last resort of compulsion by force of arms.'

"That is the view adopted by the Socialist Party; that is the view somewhat hesitatingly in the face of direct questions which the leader of the Liberal Party adopted. But for ten years at any rate the view that we were under an obligation to carry out Article 16 of the Covenant, to carry out sanctions, has been repudiated by the British Government in action and speech. . . .

"Of course that policy has had its advocates. It was championed by France. . . . It has been believed by all

those small nations who look to the League for a permanent guarantee for their territorial acquisitions. It is also represented by that curious crowd which always gathers around at Geneva and gives it an air of unreality. . . .

“ I know that view is also held in this country. Lord Cecil has taught that view persistently throughout. It has been supported by a good many on the other side of the House of Commons. In the peace ballot last year he was able to launch a direct challenge of the whole position taken up by the Government. I wish the Government had answered that challenge by direct argument as it answered the Protocol. Instead, it took the line of saying the way in which the questions were put was misleading. The Conservative Central Organisation, the National Unionist Association, were not prepared to co-operate with the peace ballot, but made it clear that in their opinion the questions were misleading, because it was impossible to vote for question (a), economic sanctions, without being ready to vote for question (b), military sanctions. That was the view taken then. In further reply to Lord Cecil, Colonel Herbert said:

“ ‘ Supposing the economic blockade was not enough. Is it suggested that the nations of the world should then withdraw from the blockade ? That would mean a collapse of international action in support of peace.’

“ That suggestion has now become a fact. The criticisms of Colonel Herbert were moderate. We had them in much stronger language from my right hon. friend the Home Secretary. My right hon. friend the Member for West Birmingham said, with regard to the framing of the questions by the authors of the peace ballot:

“ ‘ No graver mis-statement of the issues at stake

has ever been perpetrated even by a reckless partisan in the heat and fury of a contested election. The result will be proclaimed by its promoters as a national verdict. To me it appears to be little better than an attempt to obtain subscriptions by a fraudulent prospectus.'

" (An Hon. Member: 'Hear, hear.') I hope that my hon. friend will not cheer too soon. If he will refer to the 'Hints for Speakers' issued from the Central Office on October 17th, and available for his use, he will find that, after some chaff about the Socialist leaders, it says:

" 'The National Government gave real and united expression to the views of the people as expressed in the ballot.'

" 'The Conservative Party has been carried fast and far in the last few months!'"<sup>1</sup>

There surely could not be a more devastating exposure by a prominent supporter of the Government of the complete and utter dishonesty of its pretence of support for the collective system. Mr. Amery shows remorselessly, and in detail, that the whole thing was simply a gigantic electoral swindle.

That the Government's real view of the League is really that which Mr. Amery attributed to the Government was made perfectly clear in the defence White Paper of March 1935, where the League was defined as "essential

<sup>1</sup> The *Morning Post*, February 22nd, 1937, in a jubilant leader on the £1,500,000,000 Arms Bill, observes: "There has been no sort of outcry against their measures, although the notorious Peace Ballot is still such a recent memory." Hitherto Conservatism had feared to stand up to the propaganda of the Socialists. Responsible statesmen had "bowed before the blast of the Peace Ballot. Maybe they bowed 'in silent, deep disdain'; but they did bow, and they were silent." Tories are now throwing off the mask!

machinery for promoting the preservation of peace by facilitating and regularising the means of international co-operation." This White Paper mentions a number of treaties "designed to produce collective security and a sense of security among the nations." The Locarno treaties appear in this list—but not the Covenant. For the rest the White Paper is based on the assumption that there is no connection between the treaty obligations of the collective system\* on the one hand, and, on the other, the uses to which British armaments may or must be put and the assistance which Great Britain may expect from other nations for joint defence against aggression. As is shown clearly by the analysis in *Inquest on Peace* (pp. 258–71) the whole of the White Paper is based on the assumption that the League is merely machinery for conciliation, and that each nation must look for its security to its own national armaments alone.

That the Government have never for a moment based their policy on the view that the obligations of Articles 10–18 of the Covenant have any connection with our defence policy, has been made clear in a series of official statements.

Thus Mr. Baldwin, in his explanation to the House on December 19th, 1935, on why the Government had first for a whole week accepted the Hoare-Laval proposals and then rejected them and temporarily sacrificed Sir Samuel Hoare, observed:

"I would like to make clear that never throughout that week had I or any one of my colleagues any idea in our minds that we were not being true to every pledge that we had given in the Election. (Hon. Members: 'Oh!')

It would seem incredible, if it had not been stated officially by the Prime Minister, that neither he nor any

other member of the National Government had realised that in proposing to partition the victim of aggression [Abyssinia] they were not being true to their election pledges to uphold the Covenant, which includes the duty to preserve Abyssinia's territorial integrity and political independence against external aggression. It is surely obvious that a Government which can seriously put forward such an explanation does not regard treaty obligations as binding at all. Its international morality is that of Sir Arnold Wilson, who, in the course of a striking tribute in the House to the career as Foreign Secretary of Lord Grey, said that he would "go down in history as a man who was the foremost in keeping the bond of this country when he thought that the interests of the country required it."

On March 9th, 1936, Mr. Baldwin, in explaining the proposals in that year's defence White Paper, said:

"The defence proposals will be strictly confined to what is required to fulfil our obligations towards the League of Nations, and, in the possibility of the principle of collective security not being achieved, to make our country and our Empire safe against aggression."

That is an open confession that the Government's arms programme is independent of any collective security policy. For if there were a collective security policy rearmament would be based upon agreement with other States, determining what armaments each State should possess and how these armaments should be used for joint defence.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain inadvertently revealed the Government's real mind on the collective system and defence in an unpremeditated reply, on February 17th, 1937, to Mr. Arthur Henderson's deftly put question:

"Whether the Government in assessing the strength of the armed forces of our country, are working on the

assumption that we are fighting our own battles, or on the assumption that we form part of a system of collective security? ”

To this Mr. Chamberlain replied :

“ I do not think that it would be in the public interest to set out a theory of whom we are going to fight, or who might be our allies in the event of our having to fight.”

He then proceeded to describe the £1,500,000,000 Bill for armaments in the next five years as : “ A measure for the preservation of peace,” because

“ Everybody knows that the British Empire stands for peace, and that it will never use its forces for aggressive purposes. On the contrary, it will exert all its influence to preserve peace not only for itself, but for others as well. We know from our own experience that our influence waxes and wanes in proportion to our strength. The strength that we are now rapidly gaining from day to day and from week to week is in itself a steadying factor in international affairs, and probably the greatest bulwark in the world to-day.”

Sir Archibald Sinclair then demonstrated conclusively that the line just taken by Mr. Chamberlain was in flat contradiction to Mr. Eden’s professions as to the nature of the Government’s foreign policy, and was quite irreconcilable with even the pretence of basing our policy on the League Covenant. He demanded that the country should be informed what the policy of the Government really was.

“ Faced with the dangers which we know to expect, with the possibility, let us say, for example, of a triple attack upon the British Empire, in the Far East, in the Mediterranean, and a knock-out blow aimed at the heart

of the Empire here, is your policy collective security; or is it military alliances, and, if so, with whom; or is it isolation? If it is either of the first two, say so. Tell us frankly, and tell us what steps you are taking to make it effective, so that the help is forthcoming if and when the emergency should unfortunately arise."

The Government were so completely caught out on this occasion that Mr. Chamberlain felt it necessary to attempt to reply as follows:

"I might perhaps make one remark in answer to the repeated criticism that we have not explained how our Defence programme is related to our foreign policy. That appears to me to contemplate that our foreign policy in relation to Defence is of a comparatively simple character. If it were in fact contemplated that, in considering what Defence measures were necessary for the safety of this country, we had to take an enemy A and consider how we could defeat that enemy with the aid of the B and C Powers with whom we were in alliance—if that were what we had to consider—it would be comparatively easy to draw up a Defence programme and to show how it was directly related to the problem we have to solve; but, of course, that is not the case. We have not to single out a particular Power as the enemy, nor are we, as a matter of fact, in alliance with other Powers on whose aid we could count in that particular case. What we have had to do is to consider a whole series of hypothetical emergencies in which we might be opposed to this or that Power, or this or that group of Powers, and in which we might find ourselves fighting alongside other Powers or groups of Powers."

This reply obviously was felt, even by the Government, to be unsatisfactory, and so Sir Thomas Inskip was put up

the next day to attempt to demonstrate that the Government were still devoted to the collective system. This was the best Sir Thomas could do :

“ I have heard a great deal in this debate about the relation of our defences to the question of collective security. What does it mean ? . . .

“ The fact is that on the whole question of the relation of this programme to our foreign policy, though I recognise that the Members opposite would never admit that this Government has any real zeal or conviction in the idea of the League of Nations, that is the ideal to which we are working, and meanwhile we will not neglect that which will be necessary, whether we have collective security or not.”

This, it will be admitted, is not a very convincing attempt either. But it must be remembered that the unfortunate Sir Thomas Inskip had artlessly revealed his real mind on the question as far back as the debate on July 20th, 1936, when he said :

“ The Government are asking for an accession to the Territorial Force of men even up to fifty years of age, and particularly those who are familiar with, and have had some experience with, gunnery, for the simple purpose—it has nothing to do with foreign policy—of defending their own homes and their own employment. What has that to do with foreign policy ? . . .

“ I have referred already to what is the purpose of this rearmament. Defence is its purpose, and I repeat that over and over again. Defence is the purpose of all our strategic plans, and that knocks the bottom, incidentally, out of what is now becoming a commonplace in the propaganda of the party opposite and in the Press when they ask: ‘ What is the use of all this armament ? ’ Its  
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use is the defence of your homes, of your food and your sustenance.”

From these quotations it is at any rate perfectly clear that the collective system—that is, the treaty obligations of Articles 10–18 inclusive of; the Covenant—have no place whatever in the Government’s minds nor even the remotest connection with their defence policy. It is true that Lord Halifax, at a League of Nations Union meeting on February 24th, 1937, had the hardihood to assert that the Government’s enormous rearmament programme was for the purpose of upholding the collective system. But the Government have already destroyed the collective system precisely by refusing to take even the slightest risk of war in its defence, and have always refused to consider that the Covenant bound them to take any such risk in any circumstances. As though to emphasise this fact, Lord Mottistone, chairman of the meeting at which Lord Halifax produced his audacious statement, pleaded for abolishing the sanctions obligations of the Covenant ! Those obligations in the five years of the Government’s policy have always been regarded as scraps of paper with the solitary exception which proved the rule of the Italo-Abyssinian affair. The plain truth is that this Government have never believed that the collective system was any use for preserving peace, and have thereby killed that system; but they think its ghost is still good for kidding the British people to support another war. And that is about all the use they have for the League of Nations.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain, on June 10th, 1936, demanded the raising of sanctions against Italy and announced that henceforward the British Government should accept treaty obligations to oppose aggression only in areas where British national interests were involved. The Government have already killed the collective system *de facto* by acting

precisely on the view of their obligations set forth by Mr. Neville Chamberlain.

For what purpose, then, are the Government making these huge war preparations? What do they mean by "national interests"? What is it they understand by "defence"?

The defence White Paper of March 1936 gives a fairly clear general picture of the Government's mind on these questions. The paper states that:

"It should be emphasised that in questions of defence our situation is different from that of most other great nations. Their forces can without risk be concentrated in limited areas near their own shores. Our world-wide responsibilities render this impossible. . . . It is essential, therefore, that the relation of our own armed forces to those of other Great Powers should be maintained at a figure which will be high enough to enable us to exercise the influence and authority in international affairs which are alike required for the defence of vital British interests, and in the application of the policy of collective security."

The navy is to maintain "free passage between the different parts of the Empire of troops and supplies of all kinds." The army, in addition to home defence and garrisoning different parts of the Empire, is "in time of emergency or war to provide a properly equipped force ready to proceed overseas wherever it may be wanted." And, lastly, "the prime function of the Royal Air Force is to provide an effective deterrent to any attack upon the vital interests of this country, whether situated at home or overseas."

(In his speech of July 20th, quoted above, Sir Thomas Inskip said not only that defence had nothing to do with foreign policy, but also that "if anything is true defence it is our Air Force.")

From these quotations it is perfectly clear that what the Government mean by defence is the use of the threat of war in order to make their view prevail in disputes with other nations, and the use of war itself as an instrument of national policy to uphold the National Government's view of British honour and vital interests not only in any part of the Empire, but anywhere in the world. And their view of national interests is roughly identical with the City's and the F.B.I.'s view of their own interests. In official circles it is freely said that in another year or eighteen months rearmament will have reached a stage where the Government will begin to assert itself internationally and to stand no nonsense. It is then that the risk of war will become acute.

We get a fuller picture of just what this very wide conception of defence involves in the following official statements. On March 26th Mr. Eden told the House of Commons that :

“ We have never been able in all our history to dissociate ourselves from events in the Low Countries, neither in the time of Elizabeth, nor in the time of Marlborough, nor in the time of Napoleon, and still less at the present day, when modern developments of science have brought striking force so much nearer to our shores. It is a vital interest of this country that the integrity of France and Belgium should be maintained and that no hostile force should cross their frontiers. The truth is, and I say it with apologies to my right hon. friend the Member for West Birmingham [Sir A. Chamberlain], there was nothing very new in Locarno.

“ SIR AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN: Hear, hear !

“ MR. EDEN: It was a new label, but it was an old fact, and that fact has been the underlying purpose of British foreign policy throughout history. . . .

“ But it may be that those who urge that we should

disentangle ourselves from Europe have something in mind rather different, or very different, from what I have just described. They may be thinking of another situation when, owing to obligations elsewhere, our neighbours may become involved in conflict and may call for help in a quarrel that is not ours. That I believe to be a general apprehension. The people of this country are determined that that shall not happen, and that is the view of the Government. We agree with it entirely. Our obligations are world-wide obligations, are the obligations of the Covenant, and we stand firm in support of them, but we do not add, nor will we add, one jot to those obligations, except in the area already covered by the Locarno Treaty. Let us make our position on that absolutely clear. We accept no obligations beyond those shared by the League except the obligations which devolve on us from Locarno."

This statement is interesting because in one and the same breath it asserts that the Government remain loyal to the obligations of the Covenant and that they propose to leave Hitler a free hand to make war in East Europe. It is an admirably clear demonstration of the Government's consistent view that the sanctions obligations of the Covenant mean nothing in particular except in so far as the Government may consider it expedient from the point of view of national interests to take them seriously in any given case. More than that the statement contains a plain intimation that if France, in pursuance of the Covenant and of her obligations under the Franco-Soviet or Franco-Czech pact, went to the assistance of a victim of aggression in East Europe, the British Government reserve the right to threaten her with a repudiation of our obligations under Locarno. This, in fact, was precisely the line the Government took when the French Government wished to allow

the Spanish Government to buy arms and munitions, as we have seen, and it sufficed to bring the French into line over "non-intervention."

The second statement was made by Mr. Baldwin, in the House, on February 18th, 1937. He said he wished to quote from a recent announcement by the Foreign Secretary, as it put the views of the Government very clearly, very fairly, and succinctly. He said:

"It may be asked, for what purpose will these arms be used? Let me once again make the position in this respect perfectly clear. These arms will never be used in a war of aggression. They will never be used for a purpose inconsistent with the Covenant of the League or the Pact of Paris. They may, and if the occasion arose, they would, be used in our own defence, and in defence of the territories of the British Commonwealth of Nations. They may, and if the occasion arose they would, be used in the defence of France and Belgium against unprovoked aggression in accordance with our existing obligations. They may, and if a new Western European settlement can be reached they would, be used in defence of Germany were she the victim of unprovoked aggression by any of the other signatories of such a settlement. Those, together with our Treaty of Alliance with Iraq and our projected Treaty with Egypt, are our definite obligations. In addition, our armaments may be used in bringing help to a victim of aggression in any case where in our judgment it would be proper under the provisions of the Covenant to do so. I use the word 'may' deliberately, because in such an instance there is no automatic obligation to take military action. It is, moreover, right this should be so, for nations cannot be expected to incur automatic military obligations save for areas where their vital interests are concerned."

The Government's object, added Mr. Baldwin, was to maintain peace, and they were seeking to build up an international structure for that purpose. That international structure had recently collapsed.

"We are now devoting our efforts to bringing about a pact to take the place of the old Locarno Pact with the old Locarno Powers.

"I think myself, it may well be in the immediate future that the most hopeful prospect is the prospect of regional pacts. It is worth anything, it is worth everything in Europe to-day to get a feeling of security, at any rate in one part, from which that security, if once attained, may spread to other parts of Europe. We regard regional pacts as of the greatest importance, but the Committee must recognise, and no one who has to deal with these things practically can fail to recognise, as has often been said from this Box, that the League differs from the League originally contemplated, and the difficulties which will lie in the way of those who try to work for collective security in a League in which some of the most powerful and highly armed nations in the world are outside, are almost insuperable. . . .

"Let us ask ourselves for a moment what is the object of collective security. You want to get by collective security this, that the forces of order are stronger than the forces of disorder. And more than that, the object is not merely to win a war should one break out. If any war breaks out in Europe now it is not going to be a localised war. It will run through Europe—the most terrible thing you can conceive—and, if the forces are fairly even, you may have a repetition of 1914 with all its horrors. The idea of collective security was that there should be so overwhelming a force on the one side that no aggressor could start war. . . .

“Were there a pact—and I am not speaking of collective security through the whole of Europe—for mutual defence between the nations of Western Europe, I hope and believe—and the committee hopes and believes—that such a pact would maintain the peace.”

Here again it is stated clearly and deliberately that the Government's purpose is in alliance with France to prevent German aggression in Western Europe, but to do nothing whatsoever to check aggression in Eastern Europe—except if it suits them at the time. At the same time Mr. Baldwin admits that once a war begins anywhere in Europe it will run through the whole Continent.

On December 14th Mr. Eden made a speech in which, after repeating once more the Government's desire for a West European security arrangement, he went on:

“If I were to say that Britain's interests in peace are geographically limited, I should be giving a false impression. If our vital interests are situated in certain clearly definable areas our interest in peace is world-wide and there is a simple reason for this. The world has now become so small—and every day with the march of science it becomes smaller—that a spark in some sphere comparatively remote from our own interests may become a conflagration sweeping a continent or a hemisphere. We must therefore be watchful at all times and in all places. We cannot disinterest ourselves from this or that part of the world in a vague hope that happenings in that area will not affect us. We must neither mislead others nor be misled ourselves by any of those comfortable doctrines that we can live secure in a Western European glass-house.”

Here again, it may be observed, is the curious combination of refusal to accept any obligations to preserve peace

outside Western Europe while admitting fully that peace is indivisible and war cannot be isolated.

The Government gave the same explanation of its policy in the foreign affairs debate in the House of Lords on February 24th, 1937. As the *Manchester Guardian* (February 26th) put it:

“ At present the vital question in foreign policy, which underlies all talk of collective security and the League of Nations, is whether Britain would act with France (and possibly with Russia) in defence of France’s allies in Central Europe. Lord Plymouth managed to express the Government’s attitude to this question with considerable delicacy: ‘ It cannot and must not be ruled out that we might help the victim of aggression in a case where in our judgment it would be proper under the provisions of the Covenant, though I do want to point out that in such an instance there would be no automatic obligation to render military assistance.’

“ The future of Europe,” comments the *Manchester Guardian*, “ may depend on the interpretation of that sentence.”

Unfortunately its meaning, taken in conjunction with the Government’s record, is only too clear.<sup>1</sup> It means that the National Government will first, on isolationist and class-war grounds, encourage Hitler to isolate France from the

<sup>1</sup> And was confirmed by Mr. Eden’s speech in the foreign affairs debate at the beginning of March. As *The Times* put it, with uncompromising lucidity and unconscious humour, on December 12th, 1936: “ Mr. Eden has nothing to subtract from, or to add to, the familiar doctrine in which the British contribution to security has been made known to all the world. We pledge ourselves to resist immediately and to the utmost any assault upon the Empire or upon the integrity of the settlement in Western Europe. We do not pledge ourselves to remain indifferent to aggression anywhere. Our interests in peace, as Mr. Eden says, cannot be ‘ geographically limited.’ More than that will not be undertaken. And less than that cannot be undertaken.”

U.S.S.R., to break up the Little Entente, and to establish Nazi hegemony over Poland and all Central Europe, in close alliance with Italian Fascist hegemony in South-East Europe. When in due course—say, two or three years—the Nazi-Fascist alliance has by these means made itself supreme over a large part of Europe, and France has been reduced to impotence aggravated by a bitter internal struggle between Left and Right, the “big war” for which we are all preparing will begin. And then our National Government will find itself constrained, on Imperialist and balance-of-power grounds, to join in that war—and will tell the world it is fighting for democracy and the collective system. What that war will be like, in the circumstances created by the National Government’s foreign policy, will be considered below.

What do these various statements on defence mean? In the first place it is necessary to be quite clear about the fact that Mr. Eden’s assurance, repeated with such satisfaction by Mr. Baldwin on February 18th, that “these arms will never be used in a war of aggression; they will never be used for a purpose inconsistent with the Covenant of the League or the Pact of Paris,” means nothing at all.

When the 1928 Baldwin Government signed the Pact of Paris it interpreted it to mean that every Government was sole judge of when it should make war in self-defence, and that “self-defence” included the right to use war for upholding the Government’s view of vital British interests in unspecified territories outside the British Empire. It was on the occasion of this interpretation of “self-defence” that the Belgian Socialist Senator, M. Louis de Brouckère, observed that the whole world was henceforward under the menace of British protection.

The treaty obligations of Articles 10–17 of the Covenant used to mean something, for under them a State that went to war on its own judgment of self-defence risked being

declared an aggressor and having sanctions applied by the rest of the League. But the National Government have changed all that. They have helped to reduce these obligations of the Covenant to scraps of paper, and no Government in the world to-day, including our own, pays the slightest attention to them when deciding whether or not to make war in "self-defence." As set forth in the defence White Paper of March 1936, what the National Government mean by self-defence is the use of war as an instrument of national policy to uphold their views of British Imperial rights and interests in any part of the world against any challenge. The Eden-Baldwin assurance quoted above is therefore merely humbug intended to delude those who are still unsophisticated enough to believe that the Government care a jot about the collective system they have destroyed; it is a classical case of hypocrisy as the tribute paid by vice to virtue.

But what do the Government's statements on defence mean in concrete and positive terms? They mean, as regards Europe, that the Government regard the invasion of Northern France and the Lowlands as a direct menace to our security and have for that purpose converted Locarno into an alliance. But they reserve the right to interpret "unprovoked aggression" under that agreement in such a way as to leave the French to their fate if they attempt to help an East European victim of aggression or to take action, such as, for example, helping Spanish democracy against Fascist aggression, which our National Government dislike.

Outside Europe the "defence" policy is no less than preparation for fighting single-handed against any Great Power anywhere in the world in order to retain all the far-flung possessions of the British Empire and virtual protectorates, such as Egypt and Iraq, as well as to defy any challenge to exclusive economic policies, such as those adopted at Ottawa.

Is this policy feasible? In the House of Commons, on July 20th, 1936, Mr. A. V. Alexander observed:

“ Even with armaments at double the strength we are being asked for to-night, unless the Government work through the League and for collective security they must know or they ought to know perfectly well that they cannot defend the British Empire.”

Returning to this subject in the debate on February 18th, 1937, Mr. Alexander said:

“ If you are really trying in this policy to arm this country on a unilateral defence basis, and suggesting that we can vote the money and organise to defend the British Empire, all that I can say is that you are exceedingly foolish. You have never fought a major war yet without allies, and powerful allies, and you have no hope of defending the whole of the far-flung stretches of the British Commonwealth with unilateral defence. If that is the line that hon. Members take when they say, ‘ Will you defend your own country ? ’ they are backing a very poor horse indeed.”

On March 11th, 1937, Mr. Alexander spoke even more strongly on this subject. Replying to Sir Samuel Hoare’s announcement that eighty new ships were to be built, and that naval expenditure this year was to be £105,000,000 (£3,000,000 more than all three fighting services together in 1932; Sir Samuel added that “ the navy, like the Air Force, believes that the best form of defence is a bold offensive ”), Mr. Alexander pointed out that the Government’s policy was apparently that Britannia had to rule all the waves on both sides of the world, at whatever cost in money and hatred. “ If the policy of the Government is the building of a navy capable of defending the entire

British Empire in both hemispheres on a unilateral basis, I say that along this road lies the beginning of the end of the British Empire. It is an approach to national madness and national suicide instead of real preservation of the Empire."

In the *Daily Herald* of February 18th, in an article entitled "Preparing for the Last War," Lord Strabolgi makes the same assertion, namely that it is physically impossible for this country single-handed, however much it piles up national armaments, to defend the whole British Empire in the present state of the world.

Are these charges true? It is imperative to find out, for, if so, their gravity cannot possibly be exaggerated. Let us examine the facts:

Suppose the Satsuma or Navy clan in Japan were to get the opportunity, for which they have long been chafing, to rival the deeds of the Choshu or Army clan on the Continent by embarking on a bold policy of expansion in the Pacific and along the coast of Asia. This would mean landing Japanese marines in some British colony or concession on one of the usual pretexts—an insult to the Emperor, "lack of sincerity" on the part of the local authorities, banditry, peril to the lives and property of Japanese subjects, etc. Would we be able to send the Fleet and the Air Force to fight them? No, because of what Germany would do in Europe, and Italy in the Mediterranean and Africa. Would France be willing to face the danger of war with Italy and Germany for such a cause? If the National Government's policy of favouring the Fascist conquest of Spain succeeds, France would be militarily unable to carry out such a policy and, politically, so rent with dissension as to be impotent. Even to-day the Left in France, which was prepared to take risks for the collective system, would scarcely tolerate the country's risking a war against both Italy and Germany in order to allow our National Government to make war in the Far

East for the retention of a colony or concession. Would the Soviet Union help us? No—why should it? The National Government keep on trying to isolate Russia on the pretext that they do not wish to take sides in the ideological conflict. Why, then, should the Soviet Union take sides in an Imperialist conflict, where the “ideology” would be the same on both sides? Are Australia or New Zealand likely, in the circumstances, to try to fight Japan for us for such a cause? Obviously not. And what about the British people? The Tories, during the Sino-Japanese conflict, explained *ad nauseam* that Japan was invulnerable, and that it was madness to risk war against her. They never tired of accusing the Labour Party of war-mongering, because we asked them for the sake of the Covenant to take the risk, together with the League and the United States, of applying economic sanctions to Japan. Is it really conceivable that the workers of this country would now back these same Tories in a single-handed war against Japan for keeping some colony or concession in the Far East?

Let us take another case: supposing Germany demanded her colonies back and the Government wanted to risk a war rather than surrender them. Japan is now Germany's and not our ally in the Far East. In case of war in Europe we should have to pay Japan heavily, in colonies and concessions, for her staying neutral, and we should probably find that, having obtained all she could by way of bribes to stay neutral, she would then discover it expedient to help herself to the rest by force. With a potentially hostile Japan dominating their lines of communication, Australia and New Zealand would not dare, even if they wished, to send any considerable number of troops to Europe. As for Fascist Italy, with her control of naval bases and of a Fascist Spain at one end of the Mediterranean and with her Abyssinian Empire dominating the outlet of the other end, she, too, would be out to use the occasion for increasing the new

Fascist Empire at our expense. She would stir up trouble among the Arabs in the Near East and the negroes in Africa, and seek an occasion to use her big new black army from Abyssinia for a war of conquest. Here, too, we should have to pay very heavily indeed for Italian neutrality, and then probably find ourselves double-crossed in the end, just as Germany and Austria-Hungary were double-crossed by Italy (who was then their ally) in 1915. It is in the highest degree unlikely that any French Government would wish to risk a war with Germany in order to help us retain our colonies. Their whole desire would be to effect a compromise, and, if they possibly could, to keep out—particularly if flanked in the south by an Italo-German controlled Fascist Spain. They would be apt to argue that Locarno did not apply to extra-European issues, and that a war arising out of a dispute about the return of Germany's colonies could not be regarded as a case of unprovoked aggression. As for the Soviet Union, it would, of course, remain neutral in what would appear to the U.S.S.R. as a mere sordid clash of rival Imperialisms.

And what about our own people? Here, again, the Conservative Party has indulged in the most reckless pacifist propaganda and charges of war-mongering to support its view that we should not take the slightest risk of war, even in conjunction with all the members of the League, in order to uphold the Covenant and to stop the Abyssinians being bombed and gassed and subjected to the nightmare reign and wholesale butcheries of their Italian conquerors. There will certainly be many who will say to-day: "If you Conservatives did not want to take the risk of war for the sake of the Abyssinian negroes merely because of their League membership, we are not going to take the risk of war for the sake of the negroes in any colonies merely because of their membership of the British Empire. If you think such a cause is worth a world war, it will be our turn

to charge you with war-mongering. If you are pacifists about the collective system, we propose to be pacifists about Imperialism.”

Now let us take the third case. Sir Samuel Hoare, in the interview quoted above, said that the Government were determined to uphold our position in the Mediterranean at any cost and in any circumstances. Since then the Government's policy of favouring the Fascist conquest of Spain bids fair to make it a physical impossibility to maintain our position in the Mediterranean in case of war. But apart from that, supposing Italy were to threaten Iraq or Egypt, or some colony adjacent to Abyssinia. Are we to engage in a single-handed war for that cause? If so, what about the danger from Germany which was declared prohibitive when it was proposed to apply economic sanctions effectively to Italy? And what about Japan profiting by the situation in the Far East? Is France likely, now that we have destroyed the collective system, to feel obliged to fight so that we should keep the oil of Iraq? The U.S.S.R. would, of course, remain neutral. And what about our own people? The Conservatives treated the Covenant as a scrap of paper and refused to take the risk of effective economic sanctions, even in conjunction with the whole League and backed by many pledges of military support against attack. They accused Labour of war-mongering for wanting to take that risk out of loyalty to the Covenant. Is it conceivable that the British people should now look upon the treaties of alliance with Egypt and Iraq as so much more sacred than the Covenant that they would back a single-handed war against Italy in such a cause, with all the accompanying risks from Germany and Japan, and no promises of military support?

The National Government have helped to push the U.S.A. back into isolation, by rebuffing her attempts at co-operation over the Far East and at the Disarmament

Conference. That means no loans or munitions and perhaps no war materials from the U.S.A. in case of another world war.

Mr. Alexander made another remark in the course of his noteworthy speech in the House on February 18th, 1937. He observed that:

“ I do not know yet whether the Government realise, when they talk about the defence of the Commonwealth, how much their policy has undermined the feeling in the Dominions—very seriously undermined it.”

Is this true ? Let us examine the facts.

At several Imperial conferences Ireland has warned Great Britain and her fellow Dominions that the collective system was the only possible basis on which she could co-operate within the Empire. Since then the Government's destruction of the collective system, by its persistent bad faith in the Far East and the Mediterranean, and Mr. Jimmy Thomas's trade war have made it unlikely, to say the least, that the Irish Free State would rush to arms to help our Tories engage in a world war for the sake of some remote colony or concession.

Australia and New Zealand will be immobilised by the fear of a hostile Japan, as explained above.

As for Canada, she has been so disgusted by the National Government's foreign policy in general, and its Abyssinian betrayal in particular, that Mr. Mackenzie King has now adopted a policy of isolation and neutrality with wide support.

South Africa has been so embittered by the Abyssinian betrayal, against which it protested in the League Assembly in the strongest terms, and is so alarmed at the prospect of a great Italo-Abyssinian black army breaking loose in Africa and kindling sparks that may light the flame of black nationalism, that the South African Government are

concentrating on home defence and will not take part in a European war.

British loss of prestige in India through the Far Eastern and Abyssinian betrayals has been incalculable, and nothing is more probable than that there will be a tremendous stirring of Indian nationalism and demands for independence in case this country becomes involved in war.

On the whole, then, the facts would seem to justify the conclusions expressed at the unofficial but authoritative Imperial Conference at Toronto in 1933, organised under the auspices of the Canadian and British Royal Institutes for International Affairs. The report of this Conference stresses the impossibility of solving the question of neutrality or participation in war by the Dominions except on the basis of the collective system—that is, of the common obligations of the Dominions and the Mother Country under the sanctions articles of the Covenant. The report also quotes two remarkable statements, one by an Australian group and the other by a Canadian group. The Australian statement reads as follows:

“ It is time we began to see that the pre-eminent position which Great Britain occupied for so long during the nineteenth century belongs to an age that is past. Recognition of this kind is not ‘defeatism.’ A variety of historical factors led to the emergence of Great Britain first among the industrial countries of Europe and America. But the world has grown up to ourselves. If we still desire to be first, we must remain first among equals. Economic facts, financial influences, and industrial growth all alike prevent us from maintaining that primacy based upon predominant force which we occupied for so long. Similar situations have occurred frequently enough in history before. Generally, a pre-dominating Power has learnt its lesson of changing

circumstance by ultimate defeat in war alone. If we persist in clinging to theories no longer consistent with facts, the only upshot will be a repetition of the same disaster. But the wider possibility is open to us: to recognise the new world situation, to adapt ourselves to the changed circumstances. And by taking the lead in an organisation of a new system of freely associated nations we should demonstrate again what is the proudest boast of British people, namely, the practicality and common sense with which they have developed their political institutions" (p. 50 of *British Commonwealth Relations*).

The Canadian paper puts the same point even more forcibly:

"As the great experiment of the British Commonwealth faces the future, it is reasonably apparent that its disintegration or permanence, reduced to the simplest terms, is disintegration in a War World, or continuance in a Peace World. It is not necessary to labour this point; for, given a Peace World, we have no insurmountable problem; but, given a War World, such problems are many and disintegration becomes merely a matter of time.

"This being so, the establishment of a Peace World becomes the dominating necessity for the Commonwealth as such, and our ideal as world citizens. Empire foreign policy, therefore, should be unalterably dominated by the objective of a Peace World, and Commonwealth co-operation in every sphere should never be such as to be detrimental to the cause of international understanding and World Peace" (p. 51).

Both these papers concluded, as did the whole Conference, that the collective system is the only common

objective and common basis for the foreign policy of the members of the Commonwealth and indispensable for maintaining the unity of the Commonwealth.

In short, our National Government, by destroying the collective system, have put this country in a position where it has become physically impossible to defend the Empire, and where the war toward which the Government are drifting bids fair to break up the Empire altogether. This is the more serious in that, as Mr. Attlee said of the Government's defence White Paper, in the debate on February 18th, 1937:

“Every sentence in this White Paper contemplates war, not as a possibility, but as a certainty. Every word in the speech of the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence was directed, not to the possibility, but to the certainty of war.”

## VIII

### CONCLUSIONS AND FORECAST

**T**HIS REVIEW of the Government's record in foreign policy suggests certain conclusions.

In the first place, there is no doubt that British foreign policy, now as ever, is a decisive influence for good or ill on the course of world events. This fact cannot be obscured by the Government's technique of sheltering behind the U.S.A. in the Far East, behind France over Abyssinia, and behind France and the U.S.S.R. in the case of Spain, as well as going to Geneva and blocking any decision in the Council of the League, and then returning home to explain that it has done all that the League asked.

The second conclusion that emerges from this review is that the Government's international influence has been almost wholly disastrous. The Right Wing of the Conservative Party has been openly and brazenly on the side of every aggressor and treaty-breaker since 1931. The Government as a whole have destroyed the collective system by defaulting on their treaty obligations under the Covenant.

The third conclusion, which is worth a little explanation, is that it is inadequate and misleading to talk of the Government's policy in terms merely of "muddle," "chaos," "feebleness," "vacillation," "poltroonery," etc. These charges are at best half-truths, like saying that the British Empire was acquired in a fit of absence of mind, or that it is to-day a sated Empire. It took something tougher and more aggressive than absence of mind to bring one-quarter

of the world under our rule—whatever the mixture of qualities they were positive, not merely negative, to accomplish such results. It was said before 1914, just as confidently as to-day, that our rulers were wholly pacific because the British Empire was sated and wanted no more territory. Nevertheless we went to war with Germany, and emerged from the war with a good deal more territory. If the Maffey Report deal with Italy had come off, bits of Abyssinia would have been added to the Empire. In the next world war the Empire will either break up or emerge with more territory. It is, of course, true that our rulers do not want war to enlarge the Empire. They are preparing for war only in order to uphold their own view of their rights and interests in the Empire—one-quarter of the world—against any rival view. As the Conservative interpretation of the Kellogg Pact and the March 1936 defence White Paper show, they are also preparing to use the threat of war in order to enforce their views about British interests outside the British Empire. All this seems to our governing class to be profoundly pacific, but it does not necessarily seem so to other countries, and it leads automatically, sooner or later, to a war in which both sides believe they are defending themselves, and in which each side is in point of fact attempting to impose its will on the other, and will, if victorious, dictate a one-sided and annexationist peace.

Of course there are plenty of mistakes and muddles and good intentions behind the Government's policy. There are also divisions within the governing class. But when every allowance has been made, and all these contrary impulses and forces have cancelled each other out, there is a hard core or net result left, and it is precisely that which constitutes the Government's policy. And it is something positive, something that tends in a certain direction—the muddle, so to speak, is a one-way muddle; the chaos is a

biased chaos. Somehow the mistakes of the Government never by any chance work out in favour of the under-dog, but are always to the advantage of Fascism, reaction, and aggression.

The more the Government's record is studied the more clearly the impression emerges that it is composed of men who are struggling in the grip of forces that they can neither understand nor control, but in regard to which they are prejudiced. They are merely tools of capitalist vested interests, the purblind instruments of a greedy, frightened, and wholly blind propertied class.

The Far-Eastern crisis broke on them unawares, and they had to improvise. But they instinctively, under the pressure of their own supporters and of the vested interests behind them, had a fellow-feeling for Japanese Imperialism and hostility to Chinese nationalism, just as they had an instinctive repugnance, on class-war grounds, to anything that might lead to the spread of Communism.

In the case of Italy, there was some attempt at carrying out a deliberate policy, also prompted by the same mixture of Imperialist and class-war motives. Spain, again, necessitated improvisation. This time class-war motives rose triumphant over everything else, even Imperialism.

But it is really necessary for an understanding of the Government's policy to realise that on every one of these occasions the governing class were faced with a dilemma which in its nature was insoluble within the framework of the existing social order. By stopping aggression they would have weakened capitalism; by letting the aggressor rip they started the drift to world war. The way to peace to-day lies along paths which are literally unthinkable to believers in the necessity for preserving capitalism.

The point is put very clearly by the great Liberal economist, Mr. J. A. Hobson, in his latest book, entitled *Property and Improperly*, as follows:

“ The plain recognition that international conflicts, whether in the shape of barriers upon trade and immigration, competing armaments, hostile alliances (falsely named defensive), are rooted in the excessive productivity of modern technique under capitalist control compels all who favour a league of nations, or other forms of political internationalism as instruments of peace and co-operation between nations, to perceive the necessity of establishing economic peace at home as a prior condition to the attainment of peaceful internationalism.

“ The disposition, not only of bellicose nationalists, but also of pacifists, to close their eyes to this prior condition is mainly responsible for the present drift towards catastrophe. For it is no use for free traders to preach the pulling down of trade barriers, for economists to lament the waste of money upon competing armaments, for democrats to bewail the collapse of popular institutions before the rise of despots, for rationalists to appeal to the material and real advantages of a world pooling of raw materials, science, and social co-operation, so long as the real source of trouble lurks unrecognised in the background, viz. the insistence of the owning classes in each nation to cling to their ‘ rights of property ’ and to utilise those rights in such ways as to breed class and international discord.”

The state of mind of the propertied class to-day is accurately summed up by Mr. F. L. Lucas, in the course of a burning protest in the *Manchester Guardian*, February 16th, 1937, against connivance at Fascist intervention in Spain masquerading under the term “ non-intervention ”:

“ As over Ethiopia our policy is palsied by one fundamental thing. More and more it stands out over every other factor. A large section of English opinion is obsessed with a delirium tremens which sees everywhere

the red rat of Bolshevism gnawing its way into its bank cellars. Hitler may arm to the teeth, bstride our trade routes, yell for colonies; no matter, this agony about their beloved bank balances blinds these people to all else. Hitler, they think, may save them from being plundered by 'the Reds.' He well may—to do it twice as effectively himself. Nothing will get done till we are cured of this ignoble paranoia."

These words get close to the psychological essence of the Government's foreign policy. How it works out in practice, and is "rationalised" in the minds of the "realists" in charge of our destinies, is summed up very well in the following extract from an article by Mr. John Strachey, in the *Left News* for February 1937:

"Nothing . . . would be more foolish than for a writer in the camp of the working class to gird at his own Imperialist Government for having undertaken a 'mistaken' policy. The British Government certainly knew what it was about when it embarked on its long retreat before the Fascist offensive. It is clear that the National Government has steadily preferred to sacrifice important, but still secondary British Imperial interests in the Far East, and in the Mediterranean, rather than to face the only alternative which presented itself. That alternative involved opposing the Fascist States. It would have involved joint action by this country, America, and the States Members of the League—against Japan in 1931, against Italy in 1935, and against Germany and Italy over Spain and Morocco to-day. The British Government will not undertake such action for two reasons. In the first place it fears the Fascist Empires. It takes the view that the British Empire is now so fragile an organisation that, even in association with what is on paper an overwhelming coalition of forces, it cannot face the risk of

war with any one of the three Fascist powers. But, on the whole, I think, the predominating influence which has determined the policy of the British Government has been, not the strength of the forces which it would have had to oppose, but the character of the forces with which, had it not retreated, it would have found itself associated.

“ If Britain had opposed the Japanese conquests on the mainland in 1931, she would have strengthened, indirectly but inevitably, both Chinese nationalism and the Soviet Union. If Britain had effectively opposed Italy in 1935, she would have strengthened European democracy in its struggle against Fascism, and run the severe risk of actually destroying one Fascist State. Finally, to-day she can only resist German and Italian encroachments in the Western Mediterranean at the cost of enabling Spanish working-class democracy to triumph.

“ These are the costs which the British Government has been unwilling to pay. British Ministers are even more frightened of the consequences of success, if they should stand up to Fascist encroachments, than of the consequences of failure. The National Government has felt that it would rather see even a gravely disquieting change in the balance of power between Britain and Japan in the Far East, and between Britain and Italy and Germany in the Mediterranean, than encourage the fundamentally anti-imperialist forces of the world.

“ I imagine that British Ministers are under no illusion that either Japan, Italy, or Germany has any reverence for the integrity of the British Empire; they must realise that the only Fascist response to concessions is instantly to ask for more. But, after all, from the point of view of the British governing class, these rival imperialist powers are forces which can be understood. The British Cabinet can do a deal with a dictator. No doubt it hopes and

believes that it can go on making concessions long enough, at any rate, to secure a breathing space for intensive rearmament. Then, if and when the rival Fascist States make a demand which cannot be yielded to, another straightforward, orthodox, imperialist war can be entered into with quite good chances of success.

“This, though no doubt a hard prospect for the British governing class, is evidently far more attractive to it than is the alternative. For that alternative involves giving encouragement to the anti-imperialist forces. If Japan were prevented from expansion in the Far East, or Italy in the Mediterranean, or Germany in Europe, then, the British Government evidently feels, forces which it could not control, which it does not understand, and which it passionately hates, would be let loose in the world. Anything rather than that. Anything rather than the triumph of democracy in Spain, than a united and independent China and a strengthened Soviet Union.

“This then is the policy of the National Government. Nothing could be more foolish than to suggest the Government is ‘blundering.’”

In short, the determination of the governing class to do nothing which might help opponents of capitalism and Imperialism is the constant factor that underlies all the Government's muddle and vacillation and ultimately (often, no doubt, only subconsciously) shapes its policy.

This third conclusion of ours, if it is adequately grasped, also casts light upon the psychological mystery of the Government's persistent bad faith. Honest Mr. Baldwin, bluff Sir Samuel Hoare, well-meaning little Mr. Eden, plain-spoken Mr. Neville Chamberlain, and all the rest of them are, as private persons, without a doubt sincere, upright gentlemen, profoundly devoted to their country's best interests

as they see them. But if, as directors, they had dealt with the shareholders of a company and with a contract in the way they treated the British people and the Covenant over Abyssinia, they would all be breaking stones on Dartmoor to-day. The Tory super-patriots that are gaining control of the Government have time and again been traitors to their country by turning against the League, of which Great Britain is the chief member. By siding with the aggressors that their own Government was supposed to be endeavouring to stop, they have again and again shown themselves the friends of their country's enemies. By sabotaging the League until collective security was destroyed, they have made it impossible to defend the British Empire, and are drifting rapidly toward a war which will probably smash it up altogether. In fact, it is the peculiar distinction of this National Government of Imperialists that it has been a Government of national betrayal and Imperial disruption. But why all this folly and baseness? What can they be thinking of to do these things? After all, they don't do it on purpose!

The answer is that we are not living in normal times. We are in the midst of a world crisis arising out of the partial breakdown of the social and economic order founded on capitalism. There is no way out of this situation compatible with the preservation of the social *status quo*. And that is a fact which it is impossible for a Conservative to see and remain a Conservative—and so they shut their eyes. The purpose in life of a Conservative is precisely to maintain the existing class structure of society. He sincerely and passionately identifies the protection of capitalist interests with the survival of the nation and the saving of civilisation. The propertied class are to him “the whole nation,” and a Government that represents them is a National Government. His sense of honour is similar to that of the Regency bucks who paid their gambling debts to their friends and

bilked their tradespeople. His public morality is that of the public-school boy against "outsiders" and "cads" from grammar schools. In other words, both the honour and the morality of the National Government operate only as within the ranks of the governing class and not in its relation to the common people. Hence the Government's pragmatic view of such things as honoured truth.

Honest Mr. Baldwin has twice publicly confessed to this kind of pragmatism (the rest of the time the Government act in accordance with its dictates without confession). The first occasion was on December 19th, 1935, when honest Mr. Baldwin was endeavouring to explain why the Cabinet had first adopted the Hoare-Laval plan, and then, in deference to the storm in the country, had thrown the plan and Sir Samuel Hoare overboard:

"I was not expecting that deeper feeling which was manifested by many of my hon. friends and friends in many parts of the country on what I may call the ground of conscience and of honour. The moment I am confronted with that I know that something has happened that has appealed to the deepest feelings of our countrymen, that some note has been struck that brings back from them a response from the depths."

In other words there was nothing to honest Mr. Baldwin's mind intrinsically dishonourable in sacrificing the wretched Abyssinians who had trusted the Government's word, and in double-crossing the electorate which had committed the same solecism. The test of honour was purely pragmatic: if what the Government did, aroused such a tempest of indignation as to threaten it with really serious trouble, then what it was doing was dishonourable and must be abandoned. But, contrariwise, anything it can get away with by bamboozling, bluffing, or bullying the electorate is

honourable. In the "appalling frankness" speech of November 12th, 1936, honest Mr. Baldwin applied the same pragmatic test to truth. The truth in this view is simply what the British people will stand at any given moment. So long as Mr. Baldwin thought that they would not stand unlimited rearmament he concealed his intention to plunge into an arms race, and instead devoted his talents and reputation for honesty to misleading the confiding electorate on this issue.

The Government, in short, have the supreme egotism and self-confidence of the governing class. *That is their strength.* They have the will to power, and the habit, the settled expectation, of power. It never enters their heads that any responsibility can attach to them, for the failure of their foreign policy. They manage at one and the same time to boast of Great Britain's unparalleled influence in world affairs since they came into power and to regard the ever-worsening world situation, as Mr. Attlee once observed in the House, as though it were a thunderstorm into which they had walked from outside. A reviewer of the German ex-Kaiser's memoirs said that the author appeared to be firmly of the opinion that the war had been started against him by his wicked enemies and lost for him by his ungrateful people. This is the governing class mentality. The Government have precisely this attitude toward what is happening in the world --largely as a result of their policy. Nothing can shake their blind, monumental self-righteousness. The dirtier their record the cleaner their consciences. The more disastrous the consequences of what they are doing the firmer their conviction that it is their sacred duty to save the country and that they must stop at nothing in order to retain power. This is an "after-us-the-deluge" Government - of rain-makers. And the deluge which they are making inevitable will be a deluge of blood.

Obviously it is useless to endeavour to influence a

Government that proceeds on these pragmatic lines, and which exists for the purpose of preserving capitalism, at any cost and by any means, in the face of the social and economic forces released by the great slump, by appeals to abstractions like election pledges, honour, justice, mercy, principles, treaty obligations, etc. All that to our rulers with their present sense of emergency is only words, to be met by more mendacious promises and assurances, or by debating points, or by falling back on appeals to panic and to patriotism. Only resistance counts with this "pragmatic" Government. If popular indignation at the fate with which the Government's foreign policy is threatening this country assumes forms that look like ending in serious trouble, the Government may change their mind or lose their nerve. If not, not.

How is the situation likely to develop? One thing on which it is necessary to be absolutely clear is that the arms race will not stop of itself this side of a world war. As Mr. Winston Churchill observed in the House on April 23rd, 1936:

"The Chancellor of the Exchequer used an argument about how expenditure would rise to a peak, then fall a little and remain level but at a much greater height than at the present time. That is not the future as I foresee it. I cannot believe that, after armaments in all countries have reached a towering height, they will settle down and continue at a hideous level far above the present level, which is already crushing, and that that will be for many years a normal feature of the world's routine. Whatever happens, I do not believe that will. Europe is approaching a climax. I believe that that climax will be reached in the lifetime of the present Parliament. Either there will be a melting of hearts and a joining of hands between great nations which will set

out upon realising the glorious age of prosperity and freedom which is now within the grasp of the millions of toiling people, or there will be an explosion and a catastrophe the course of which no imagination can measure, and beyond which no human eye can see."

The arms race is not like a football match where the referee blows the whistle at half-time. There is no referee and no whistle. Our present armaments programme has already been enlarged several times in the last two years. The monstrous bill for £1,500,000,000 in five years is accompanied by the warning that it may not be enough. Already other States (notably Italy and Japan) have taken it as a signal that they must speed up their own war preparations. And so the devil's dance will go whirling on faster and faster until it ends in a crash. There is no "ceiling" in arms expenditure, no end to the process of everyone trying to out-arm everyone else. A quarter of a century ago our then Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, gave the country a solemn warning that the arms race was bound to end in bankruptcy and revolution or in war. Two years later the World War proved him right. To-day the infinitely more terrible arms race in which we are engaged can end only in major political and social upheavals or in a world war infinitely more hideous than the last. The collective system was a third and less forbidding alternative. There is still time to rebuild the League on lines that will make it capable of stopping the arms race and making peace secure. But the Government have smashed the collective system and they have no glimmer of a policy for reconstructing what they have destroyed. On the contrary, it may be safely predicted that if and when the Government produce any plan for the "reform" of the League, the plan will bury *de jure* the remains of the collective system they have already killed *de facto*, by proposing

the excision of Articles 10 and 16 (probably also 19) from the Covenant.

Meanwhile what is to happen as we continue with the arms race? In its 1936 "Remarks on the Present Phase of International Economic Relations" the League of Nations Economic Committee strongly urged the necessity for a stabilisation and devaluation of currencies. But it added that it did not consider that "an attempt at currency adjustment can bring about any lasting improvement in the economic situation unless it is accompanied by a relaxation of direct and indirect import restrictions." The rest of the report emphasises that the measure of "prosperity" attained so far will remain subject to relapse, and peace will be endangered so long as economic nationalism does not yield to freer trade. The economic disadvantages and political dangers of the arms race are also emphasised. The 1935 Report of the same Committee also strongly emphasised the urgent necessity of reviving international trade if the world was not to suffer another disastrous slump. It pointed out that:

"Everyone would be glad to see the disappearance of monetary instability and foreign-exchange control—two conditions which affect the nation as a whole, and allow of Government action based on general principles. But it is a very different matter when it is a question of particular measures affecting different categories of producers.

"In the sphere of commercial policy (apart, of course, from a series of other causes, national or international, monetary or commercial, which may influence or even determine this policy), Governments have to count with the resistance of individuals and groups who, while they are quite ready to talk of the interdependence of peoples, are naturally not concerned with anything but the

interests of their own particular branch of production. It is from this necessarily one-sided standpoint that these individuals and groups continually demand the enforcement of the measures, the paralysing effect of which on international economic relations has been summarised above.

“ For the same reason, the parties concerned see in these measures at the outset only the momentary advantages to their own particular business, while they fail to perceive or disregard the direct or indirect repercussions by which other categories of producers and traders will be primarily affected. The latter will in their turn invoke Government help; and there will thus arise in the national sphere between the different classes of producer the very same process of spontaneous generation which has already been observed as between countries in the international sphere. . . .

“ In all this (which is no more than the everyday record—the eminently human everyday record—of the commercial policy of most countries and which creates considerable difficulties for the negotiators of commercial treaties) there is nothing which can be said to be of decisive importance in periods when international trade is not arrested by insuperable barriers, but in spite of Customs duties pursues its upward way.

“ But when a situation develops as serious as the present, where *the restarting of the international machinery takes precedence of all other needs*, it is easy to see the possible consequences of this failure to distinguish clearly between individual interests and national interests. The position calls for the adjustment of a certain number of national policies. That is difficult in itself; but it becomes a desperate undertaking if each of these national policies, instead of being based on general principles, takes the

form of an inchoate series of separate, and frequently inconsistent measures." (Italics in text.)

"That is why," concludes the League Economic Committee,

"the re-establishment of the essential minimum flow of international trade which alone can arrest the world on the steep slope down which it is slipping to disaster *presupposes nowadays in Governments, especially in creditor countries, a very lofty sense of their responsibility, much firmness and a determination not to allow private interests, however reputable, to paralyse the great work which is indispensable in the interests of the nation.*" (Italics in text.)

At the 1936 League Assembly the Anglo-Franco-American agreement concerning the devaluation of the French franc was hailed as affording a great opportunity to start a move for lowering trade barriers. The French made a beginning; and the Americans have for some time been anxious for freer trade—for these two Governments are sufficiently far to the Left to stand up to the capitalist vested interests (at least to some extent). But as we have seen from Mr. W. S. Morrison's speech at the Assembly, quoted on p. 99, our National Government coolly announced that it would do nothing and might even have to yield to the demand of vested interests for more trade barriers. That nipped the whole movement in the bud.

The consequences of a currency adjustment agreement unaccompanied by a general lowering of trade barriers, that were predicted by the League Economic Committee, are already making themselves felt. Prices are rising and boom conditions are appearing in France, Great Britain, and the U.S.A.

Rising prices in the United States are leaving nearly nine

million unemployed, and have led to a wave of strikes (which are also concerned with the attempt of the American workers to secure full recognition of their right to organise in trade unions).

In France prices have risen nearly 30 per cent. The employers are now strongly organised, and they and the banks are attempting, by starving the Government of credit and fulfilling factory orders as slowly as possible, to bring down the Blum Government. On the occasion of the first big attack in the French Chamber, the *Morning Post* of February 27th, wrote that M. Blum had committed himself to the policy of "no retreat from the Popular Front programme" (which is a moderate programme of social reform only). This is the *Morning Post's* (February 27th) comment:

"A few weeks ago it had appeared as though M. Blum was contemplating a rather more conciliatory attitude towards the employing and capitalist classes who had been antagonised by his policies and whose antagonism was one of the forces holding up recovery." Apparently this belief was mistaken. "This is unfortunate, since it can hardly fail to apply a renewed check to recovery. . . . Confidence is seriously lacking among those sections of the community who are most able to assist revival—the *entrepreneurs* and the holders of hoarded capital abroad."

On March 2nd the *Daily Herald* observed editorially that M. Blum's fall would "disturb peace, destroy stability, check recovery. Yet through partisan hate or partisan fear—or through sheer stupidity—certain French interests are working to shake confidence and to bring about a financial crisis that would wreck the Blum Government. And it is rumoured that for this folly they are getting support in the

City of London. In these circumstances the British Government has a clear duty: for the Blum Government is an international asset. A plain declaration by Britain that the necessary financial support will be given until the temporary difficulties are surmounted would prevent all possibility of a crisis."

Most unfortunately, the City and the National Government are more class-conscious than the *Daily Herald*. The Blum Government has already asked for, and been refused, further financial assistance in London. The City and the National Government will do nothing drastic to kill the Blum Government. But they are certainly not going to strive officiously to keep it alive.

M. Blum has replied to the attacks on him from the Right by saying that he would not "do a MacDonald" on the workers and put the country into the hands of reactionaries under the specious plea of national unity. This might send up securities on the Stock Exchange for a short while, but it would split the country and lead to an embittered struggle, for the workers were not in the mood to tolerate reaction. The French trade union movement, which is organised on the basis of complete unity between Socialists and Communists, now numbers nearly six million and has some pretty resolute leaders. A Fascist victory in Spain would probably be the signal for a reactionary offensive in France, with much open sympathy from our Tories and a biased ambiguity on the part of the National Government. But if and when it comes, the Left will meet it strongly organised and in a militant mood.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written the Blum Government have accepted the chief demands of the *rentier-banker-entrepreneur* class on financial policy. The following two Paris despatches of March 8th tell the story and need no comment:

The *Morning Post*, Paris Correspondent, in a despatch summarising M. Blum's broadcast speech on the Government's new financial policy:

"The most delicate point in his speech was the change in policy toward gold-holders. M. Blum explained to his supporters that to

In this country, too, prices are rising, and there is widespread fear of a new slump. The Government have aggravated these conditions by their vast arms expenditure, to be financed largely out of loans, and thereby putting as much of the burden as possible on the shoulders of the poor. And here, too, the "boom" threatens to leave something like 1,500,000 unemployed and a good third of the population too poor to feed themselves and their children properly.

Moreover, conditions are, we are told by our rulers, to get worse and not better, pending their "inevitable" war. On May 20th, 1936, Mr. Neville Chamberlain told the House that the Government could not afford to increase social expenditure, because all the money would be needed for armaments and he was not one of those who believed the present favourable economic situation would last

bring back the fugitive capital he had to choose between constraining the capitalists and attracting them. Once acts of constraint were adopted it was impossible to say how far the Government would be drawn along a path which ran counter to the affinities and necessities of France's international policy."

*The Times*, Paris Correspondent :

"It is known that the Treasuries of Paris, London, and Washington have been in close consultation during the last few days, and that the greatest interest is taken in the French position by British and American financial circles. . . . The belated action of the French Government in giving the franc some liberty of manœuvre has the full approval of the British Treasury, which wishes to keep in close touch with developments in Paris and to give any assistance that may be needed."

*The Times* Paris correspondent adds, in the same despatch, that while leading members of the Centre and Right Parties approve of what the Government have done, they show

"an inevitable tendency to ask for more. M. Blum, they say, has come to his senses in the matter of finance; let him now give proofs of repentance in his general policy. In other words, let him throw his Social programme after his financial programme, cease to be 'the poor man's friend,' and ally himself comfortably with the well-to-do."

*The Times* despatch concludes that there is no likelihood of M. Blum's succumbing to these blandishments.

indefinitely. On January 29th, 1937, Mr. Chamberlain made a speech declaring that unless expenditure on armaments could be reduced it would pull down the standard of living for a generation. That was before the £1,500,000,000 Arms Bill. Since then part of the Government Press has begun a campaign for cutting expenditure on education, health, and social legislation, in order to find money for armaments.

Sir William Beveridge has made a number of remarkable predictions about unemployment. On May 16th, 1936, the *Morning Post* published an editorial entitled "A Gloomy Horoscope," from which the following is taken:

"During the period 1924-1929, a period to which, in the light of subsequent experience, we now look back as one of prosperity, the country was accustomed, though not reconciled, to having a 'refractory million' of unemployed. Yesterday Sir William Beveridge assured an Oxford audience that the country must accept henceforward a refractory million and a half. Sir William must be listened to with respect, not only because of his eminence as an authority on unemployment problems, but also because, as Chairman of the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee, it is his particular business to assemble all the available information as to the probable future of unemployment. But when he speaks of a million and a half the picture which he presents us, unpleasant as it is, must be accounted almost optimistic in view of his further statement that during the next eight years the unemployed would probably fluctuate somewhere about 16½ per cent. A rough calculation shows that 16½ per cent represents well over two millions. . . . If, then, Sir William is right, it means that our unemployment situation during the next eight years is unlikely to be any better than during the last eight.

“ These forecasts are, of course, based on the assumption that economic conditions at home and abroad will continue more or less on their present lines and that no radical changes will be brought about by developments now impossible to foresee, such as, for example, a major war or a financial collapse of unprecedented magnitude, or alternatively some wholly unexpected improvement in international trade. But leaving such unpredictable possibilities out of account, is it not altogether intolerable if we are condemned to look forward to a permanent unemployment level of the order indicated by Sir William Beveridge? . . . Are we, then, to submit with complacency to so miserable a destiny? And is it really beyond the resources of political and economic leadership to find the way out? Socialism, though it boasts its facile panaceas, has never yet been able to show that under its guidance the last state of employment and productivity would not be very much worse than the first. But the fact that it is without a convincing rival cannot excuse Capitalism from the duty of setting its own house in order.”

At the British Scientists' Association Conference at Blackpool, in October 1936, Sir William Beveridge predicted that unemployment would not sink much below 1,500,000 and would in the next few years probably rise to 2,200,000. On January 29th, 1937, he made a speech stating that if the arms race were stopped, unemployment would rise again to nearly 3,000,000.

On February 23rd, 1937, the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee published its report. The report observes that:

“ In view of the defence programme there is practically no prospect of an appreciable recession of employment

from the present level for 1937 or for some time thereafter.

“On the completion of the intensive phase of the programme, however, and in the normal course of the trade cycle we should be prepared for a relatively severe recession, but nothing has happened to justify an assumption that the levels of unemployment will be either materially higher or lower than those assumed in the original estimate of  $16\frac{1}{4}$  to  $16\frac{3}{4}$  per cent.”

Here we have the same figures of well over 2,000,000 for the time when the present armaments programme is complete—i.e. about the middle of 1938. In fact, however, as we have seen, the programme is never likely to be completed, but rather to grow, like a snowball rolling down a hill. This may mean increasing dislocation in other parts of economic life, leading to unemployment. It will certainly mean rising prices, diminishing real wages, a falling standard of living, and shrinking social expenditure. This, in turn, spells trouble between trade unions trying to protect the standard of living of their members and employers reaping a golden harvest out of war preparations (for the Government's promises to stop profiteering have not been redeemed).

The Government, of course, know of all these troubles ahead. And the Government are growing steadily more reactionary in political complexion and more authoritarian in temper as war preparations speed up, the international situation grows more dangerous, and the race between the next war and another slump draws nearer its goal. Sir Stafford Cripps, in a brilliant analysis in the House on June 23rd, 1936, showed how the Government have been moving steadily to the Right, shedding or otherwise suppressing all their vaguely “liberal” and “progressive” elements. Mr. Baldwin's replacement by Mr.

Neville Chamberlain would be a further long step in the direction of straight reaction and may mean the definite triumph of the Die-Hards.

How will a true blue, hard-faced Tory Government meet the dangerous situation which is growing up largely because of its own foreign policy, but for which it feels no responsibility and only the determination to retain power come what may? There are various indications as to how matters will probably develop.

For one thing, members of the Government keep on complaining of the disadvantages under which democracies labour as compared with dictatorships when it comes to preparing for war. These complaints are, of course, true. The whole essence of modern war is that it is "total," for it depends upon complete unity, mobilisation, and co-ordination of all the moral and material resources of the nation and of all its man-power. In modern war there is no distinction between soldiers and non-combatants. Therefore modern war requires a totalitarian state. Everybody must be under the orders of the Government, and the Government's view must prevail and be unchallenged in all things.

Some recent speeches by members of the Government give a hint as to how the disadvantages of a democracy may be lessened even in peace-time. In November 1936, Sir Samuel Hoare, in a public speech, said that the Government were contemplating the necessity of reviving the Defence of the Realm Act. A little later Sir Thomas Inskip paid a tribute to the voluntary principle for recruiting, and added that the British people were so attached to it that he did not think it would have to be abandoned—at least not in peace-time. In January 1937, Mr. Duff Cooper went a little further. He also paid a warm tribute to the voluntary principle. He added that even if it broke down there was still some intermediate course between voluntary

recruiting and conscription. And he concluded that, of course, the moment war broke out there would have to be complete military and industrial conscription like in the last war, but this time it would come much more quickly.

These and other official statements, as well as the attitude of the Government Press, are so many signs that the process of "preparing" public opinion is again at work. There is a striking similarity between Government speeches and Press publicity on conscription to-day and the early stages of the Government's preparing of public opinion for rearmament. During those early stages Government spokesmen made speeches which at first glance appeared to be nothing but protestations of devotion to disarmament. But on closer examination they would be found to contain hints, at first guarded, then broader and broader, that the Government might be reluctantly compelled, by events for which it was not responsible, to begin rearmament. The same peculiar technique is visible in the Government's references to recruiting and conscription to-day. At first glance, one sees nothing but tributes to the voluntary principle. But tucked away in these tributes hints are beginning to crop up that something intermediate between conscription and volunteering (A militia system? Pressure on the unemployed to join the Army and on employees to join the Territorials?) may become necessary in peace-time, and that, of course, conscription will be resorted to the moment war breaks out. The third stage will be to draw the logical conclusion that it is better to start conscription before hostilities begin in order to have a trained reserve ready when war comes. We may hazard the guess that in another year or so Mr. Baldwin's successor will give another exhibition of "appalling frankness," observe that democracy is always two years behind dictatorships, and say that the time has now come when the Government feel that

British public opinion has reached the stage where it will bear with relative equanimity the announcement that there must be conscription and that the Government have been preparing for it for some time past.

The necessity for regulations analogous to the Defence of the Realm Act is already being acutely felt in the industrial field. As long ago as April 25th, 1936, Mr. Winston Churchill urged that rearmament should be speeded up. He added :

“ One is told that you cannot spend more under peace conditions, however great the need may be, without disturbing the economic and social life of the country ; and I noticed that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence a few days after he had taken up his office, made a very important pronouncement. He explained that he was working under peace conditions. I was much concerned at that statement, and thought it premature for my right hon. and learned Friend to commit himself so early to such a limitation upon his powers.

“ Surely, the question whether he should continue working under peace conditions depends upon whether working under these conditions will give us the necessary deliveries of our munitions—upon whether the gun plants and the shell plants and, above all, the aeroplane factories, can fulfil the need in time. If they can do so, then peace conditions are no doubt very convenient ; but if not, then we must substitute other conditions—not necessarily war conditions, but conditions which would impinge upon the ordinary daily life and business of this country. There are many other conditions, precautionary conditions, emergency conditions—and these must be established in this country if any real progress is to be made.”

Since then the pace of rearmament has greatly increased and many of the difficulties that led to the imposition of D.O.R.A. are already acutely felt. The new huge Arms Bill and the increasing Die-Hard influence in the Cabinet (which, under Mr. Neville Chamberlain, may bring in Mr. Winston Churchill to join Sir Samuel Hoare) make it in the highest degree likely that some form of industrial mobilisation is a matter of the near future.

And, of course, the military necessity will also be employed by the Government as an excuse for what it regards as the social necessity of gaining a sufficiently firm grip on the working class to prevent any trouble. The dismissal without trial of the dockyard workers is a foretaste of the kind of thing that will be done on a big scale when the new D.O.R.A. comes into force.

What might be called moral conscription is also a matter that is beginning to occupy the minds of the Government. Here, too, the necessity for propaganda and censorship as part of the equipment of modern war is undeniable. Morale is all-important in "total" war. Large-scale air raids, and the discovery that gas-masks and gas-proof rooms are almost useless, will subject morale to somewhat severe tests that require drastic measures to counteract them.

On May 22nd, 1935, Captain Guest, a supporter of the National Government, observed in the House:

"Times have changed. It is pointed out that the buffer time of mobilisation no longer exists. It was once thought to be safe to allow a fortnight before armies got going. But when news comes upon us of an air menace there is no time for that kind of deliberate arrangement. We must mobilise before the war, and not wait until the war begins. Mobilisation of thought is the beginning of all that."

On November 18th, 1936, Lord Strickland made a statement on this subject in the House of Lords that revealed the mentality of those who will have dictatorial powers over the working class and the youth of this country in case of war. This is what he said :

“ It cannot be doubted that half a second after the declaration of war, or more likely several hours before war is declared our opponents in the next war will use gas. Then it will be too late to tell our people that we are going to break our promises against the use thereof. We now say we are going to retaliate only after we have suffered. We have factories for producing poison gas here in a transcendent degree. We ought to have more in the overseas Empire, but we must also have officers and men trained in the use thereof, and not trained to believe it is wrong or merciless to use it. If we do not prepare thus, we are done for immediately the war starts.

“ In Spain they have begun to use poison gas. They have also begun with greater effect to use incendiary bombs and high explosives. . . .

“ Why did the combatants in Spain not begin to use that weapon early in the present war, and why have they not used it more copiously and efficiently ? Because they have not got the stuff, or enough of it, and because they are not sufficiently trained to do it. And it is not merely the drill and mechanical training, or the discipline that is wanted ; the concurrent psychological training to dispel prejudice is absolutely necessary. And it is absolutely necessary also that we at once denounce all treaties, pacts and promises that restrain this Empire from training our Defence Forces in the proper use of all and any of the very best weapons which we know exist or that may be developed.”

Lord Strickland then complained of the severe handicaps under which a democracy laboured in preparing for war as compared with "despotically governed countries," and concluded :

" Then let us have the courage to organise and pay for propaganda in this tax-paying England to persuade our own people of the necessity of submitting cheerfully to the increased taxation which is inevitable. It is of little use talking of preparing effectively for war unless we are prepared to pay for it, and it is no use expecting that the people of England will be prepared to pay for preparation unless our leaders explain beforehand what will happen if the taxpayers do not pay enough and willingly. To those who have something to lose it should be easy to explain that, for if the wealthy had, as of old, to provide their own private armies to protect castles and properties and the inviolability of the family, it would cost much more than it costs to-day under a co-operative system. But it must also be impressed upon the minds of the workers by propaganda that, if we do fight, we are fighting to maintain, if not to increase, the superior standard of living of the British people, and that that higher standard has to be paid for, and paid for cheerfully if it is attacked."

What is to happen to workers (as contrasted with those " who have something to lose ") who display an inconvenient scepticism when asked to reduce their standard of living now in order to prepare to maintain, if not to increase it by a world war ? The Sedition Act and the fate of the dockyard workers indicate how they may be dealt with.

On March 4th, 1937, the *News Chronicle* reported that " a striking call to the youth of Britain was made by one of her most famous sailors, Admiral Sir E. R. G. R. Evans,

'Evans of the *Broke*,' when he delivered his address as Lord Rector of Aberdeen University yesterday. . . .

"'We have allowed the foreigner to fool us, and to engage in a good deal of tail-twisting. But the old British lion is waking up and stretching his limbs—and no sane man will ever pull a live lion's tail. . . . We must groom up and exercise the old British lion. . . . Britannia has fished up the trident which she cast into the sea after the Washington Conference. Shipyards and factories are humming and prosperity is in the offing.'

"'Evans of the *Broke*' appealed to the students to look back upon the peerless soldiers, sailors, and airmen who had made the supreme sacrifice for their freedom from serfdom and dictatorships, and he asked them to frame up a commanding sense of duty—a national sense, a community sense, and, above all, a happy 'play for the side' duty sense."

The gallant Admiral only just left out the "old school tie." And he was injudicious in his use of the term "frame-up."

Whereas Lord Strickland was sinister, Admiral Evans was merely comic. But both reveal the same mentality, and it is the mentality of our governing class to-day in the face of the world situation they have helped to produce. It is obvious that with people in that state of mind only resistance counts. To reason with people in their mental condition is throwing pearls before the Gadarene swine. To endeavour to move them by showing that we too are little sahibs, or at least good and faithful servants, is merely pathetic.

That is the mentality that now presides over our destinies. Those are the lines—industrial, military, and moral conscription—along which the policy of an increasingly reactionary and authoritarian National Government are likely to develop the more war preparations are speeded up, the nearer we draw to war, and the greater the danger

of another slump. Within three weeks of the outbreak of war we shall be under a War Office-Tory despotism, which will be fully as dictatorial and as hostile to the working class as the Fascist regimes.

To sum up, the National Government's foreign policy has played a major part in destroying the League and starting the new arms race and the drift to another world war. It has done so, because at any time since 1931 an effective defence of the collective system would have meant co-operating with the U.S.S.R., championing the national aspirations of colonial and semi-colonial peoples, and releasing anti-Imperialist and anti-capitalist forces by encompassing the defeat of Fascist aggression. For Imperialist and class-war reasons the National Government found any such policies literally unthinkable. For the same reasons the Government regard both another war and another slump as inevitable, and is getting more reactionary and authoritarian the nearer they approach both. The Government are to-day utterly incapable of stopping the drift to war which their policy did so much to start. Their foreign policy is making the country unsafe, and sabotaging any possibility of defending the Empire successfully, much faster than any amount of national rearmament can catch up with the worsening international situation. When the war they are doing so much to make inevitable, duly begins, it will probably find them facing all three Fascist dictatorships with at best a weakened France at our side, the U.S.A. refusing arms or loans, the U.S.S.R. aloof, Central Europe and the Balkans neutral or vassals of the Fascists, the Empire disunited and the nation divided. In the circumstances the war will probably mean the break-up of the Empire and the fulfilment of Mr. Baldwin's prophecy (delivered at Bewdley on April 20th, 1936):

“ I have often uttered the truism that the next war will be the end of civilisation in Europe. That would be

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more than ever certain if the nations of Europe went back on their word and their signature and used poisoned gases in Europe. I believe that if such a thing were done, when that war came to an end the raging peoples of every country, torn with passion, suffering and horror, would wipe out every Government in Europe and you would have a state of anarchy from end to end of it as man's protest against wickedness in high places."

That is the consummation toward which the National Government's foreign policy is helping to hurry the world.

But peace can still be saved. No war is inevitable until hostilities begin. Least of all is the stupendous and well-nigh universally dreaded folly of another world war inevitable.

What, then, are the forces making for peace? They are everywhere the forces ranged in opposition to Fascism and Imperialism. In Asia much depends on the resistance being put up by the Chinese Government to Japanese encroachments. This resistance will be greatly strengthened if and when the long-discussed reunion between the Chinese Communists and the Kuomintang (the coalition supporting the Government) takes place on the basis of a democratic constitution and reforms in land tenure, taxation, and administration that meet the most crying needs of the peasants.

In Africa the Abyssinians are still compelling Italy to keep some 30,000 troops in that country and to spend money like water.

In Europe the first line of defence is the Spanish Republic. If the Spanish people win through against Fascism, it will be a heavy blow to Italy and Germany. It will increase the fear of revolution which is already the chief deterrent against the Fascist Powers embarking on any war where the odds are at best even. It will increase the strength of the Left throughout Europe.

The Soviet Union and France of the Left are wholly on the side of peace and a revived collective system, although neither feels strong enough to take the lead alone, or even in conjunction with the other, so long as Great Britain maintains her ambiguous attitude.

If this country returned a Socialist majority at the polls to-morrow, the mere news of the fact would still further increase the internal difficulties in the Fascist countries and strengthen the forces of the Left everywhere. If a Labour Government here joined hands with France and the U.S.S.R. to give a joint lead in rebuilding the collective peace system on the lines of Labour's policy for "A New start with the League" (see the quotations in the Appendix), there is no doubt at all that a large and growing number of States would join us. The political atmosphere would improve rapidly, and Great Britain, as the leader of a strong group of democratic and Socialist States within the League, would soon regain the initiative in world affairs which the National Government has allowed the Fascist Powers to capture.

But the first step to a Labour Government recovering the initiative in world affairs is for the Labour Party to recover the initiative on the peace issue in this country. That means, on the one hand, expounding clearly and forcibly the policy for rebuilding the League that a Labour Government would pursue. On the other hand, it means taking the lead in organising really determined resistance to the Government's drift to conscription and war. The first step in this direction was taken at the Trades Union Congress at Plymouth in September 1936. The Congress unanimously passed the following extremely vigorous resolution (No. 36) on resistance to conscription and war:

"This Annual Congress declares most emphatically that on no account whatever shall the Trade Union

Movement assist the Government in its desire for conscription, either in the armed forces or in the industrial field, in the event of war, but will actively resist such attempts."

Mr. A. G. Tomkins, who spoke to the resolution, said :

" The motive we have in presenting this resolution is that Congress might have the opportunity of dealing with the kites flown from National Government circles which tend to indicate to us that there is a desire on the part of certain sections of the National Government that the independence of the Trade Union Movement in this country should be impaired. Those of us who remember the restrictions imposed on trade union activity during the last war by such measures as the Munitions Act will recognise the need for a definite pronouncement to be made at this juncture, so that those aspirants to the position of leadership of Fascist thought in this country, as well as those who give tacit consent to that line of thought, may understand that so far as the Trade Union Movement is concerned it intends to maintain absolute independence of Governments, even though a form of State capitalism is introduced."

What was done to the trade union movement in the last war is, of course, not a patch on what is likely to happen to it in the war for which the National Government are preparing.

It is to be hoped that the Labour Party Conference at Bournemouth will follow the example set by the Trades Union Congress, for action on these lines is the first step, the moral foundation so to speak, for converting the drift to war into a drive for peace.

This country is in such a key position in world affairs

that it alone can give a lead for peace, big and bold enough to stop the drift to war, and to enable us to get on the top of events again instead of being at their mercy. But to apply such a policy we must have a Government that will (1) co-operate closely with the Soviet Union both in Europe and in the Far East; (2) break the resistance of the Conservative Party and of capitalist vested interests to the lowering of trade barriers and to international economic planning, as well as to putting all non-self-governing colonies under an advanced form of the Mandates system; (3) make an offer to participate in an all-European Arbitration, Non-Aggression, and Mutual Assistance Treaty, based on the Covenant, determining the armaments of the contracting parties and coming into force when ratified by at least three permanent members of the League Council, and seven other States; (4) offer to pool self-defence, sovereignty and transport in the air with all that that means in political and military as well as economic co-operation between the States concerned within the framework of the League; (5) offer to nationalise and put under common control the arms industries of this group of States; (6) encourage and have faith in the forces of international working-class solidarity.

That means that the way to peace lies through the speedy replacement of the National Government by a resolutely Left Government—that is, by a strong Labour Government with or without “popular front” support. That is the only path to peace. Time is short and growing shorter, but there is still time.



## APPENDIX

# LABOUR AND THE DRIFT TO WAR

### *Quotations from Official and semi-Official Statements by the Labour Party and its Leaders*

#### I. CAPITALISM AND IMPERIALISM VERSUS SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

*For Socialism and Peace*, pp. 9 and 11, and (pp. 243-4 of the Southport Conference Report) the War and Peace Memorandum adopted at Southport and Weymouth give the Labour Party's analysis of the international situation. The analysis emphasises the connection between capitalism and Imperialism on the one hand, and Socialism and internationalism on the other, and draws the conclusion that a Socialist home policy is the indispensable pre-requisite and foundation of a sound peace policy.

The Rt. Hon. C. R. Attlee, in a lecture delivered in August 1934 to the Geneva Institute of International Relations on "The Socialist View of Peace" (published in *Pacifism is Not Enough*, as part of the "Ninth Series of Problems of Peace," being the Proceedings of the Geneva Institute of International Relations, Allen & Unwin, 8s. 6d.), makes the same analysis and comes to the same conclusion (see particularly *op. cit.*, pp. 97-111). Mr. Attlee, who was then Acting-Leader of the Opposition because of Mr. Lansbury's illness, spoke throughout as one describing the attitude of the Labour Party. His speech was indeed little more than a development of the analysis contained in *For Socialism and Peace* and in the War and

Peace Memorandum, which had been adopted unanimously by the three Executives in June 1934.

The late Mr. Arthur Henderson, in a book entitled *Labour's Way to Peace*, published in April 1935 ("Labour Shows the Way Series"; General Editor, Mr. C. R. Attlee; Methuen & Co., 2s. 6d.), takes the same view of the causes of the drift to war and draws the same conclusions (see particularly pp. 4-8; 30-4; 108-10). The author himself says that his book is "a serious attempt to interpret with directness and clarity the official policy of organised Labour, industrial and political, in the realm of foreign affairs," and that "the importance of this book lies in the fact that it is a political document, for it sets forth the declared policy of the alternative Government."

In August 1936 the Rt. Hon. Herbert Morrison, in a speech to the Geneva Institute of International Relations on "A New Start With the League of Nations," analysed the international situation from the same point of view, and came to the same conclusions as his predecessors (see particularly pp. 5-17 of *The League and the Future of the Collective System*, being the "Eleventh Series of Problems of Peace"; Allen & Unwin, 7s. 6d.).

The analysis and the conclusions of the Labour Party on this subject are summed up in the following quotation from the Report of the National Executive Committee on the International Situation, 1934-5, that appears on pp. 3-8 of the Report of the Brighton (1935) Annual Conference:

"It is not possible to establish a post-war international society on the basis of pre-war imperialism. Labour has a different faith and a different approach to the whole question of organising peace. We believe that, just as the time has come to transcend national sovereignty and to build up a World Commonwealth in the political sphere on the basis of justice and equality, so it is also essential

to create a planned world economy instead of the anarchic exploitation of the resources of the world by certain favoured nations and capitalist groups. Labour insists that all current problems in foreign policy must be solved and all immediate decisions and short-term measures must be taken with reference to these major objectives and this long-term policy. Labour realises further that it is impossible to separate the struggle for peace from the endeavour of the workers to achieve social justice. We are in a rapidly changing world. It is no accident that Soviet Russia has entered the League, is one of the strongest supporters of collective security and is moving towards Democracy, whereas the Fascist States are turning more and more openly to aggression, imperialism, and tyranny.

“When the Covenant was framed it was assumed that political Democracy would be the prevailing system of Government, that the League would soon be universal and would impose all-round limitation and reduction of armaments, that the cult of war was dead, and that the economic system of capitalism would continue to function successfully.

“All these assumptions have been falsified. The economic depression has engendered a wave of political reaction which has assumed nationalist and imperialist forms. It has become clear that the survival of Democracy and of the idea of peace throughout the world is ultimately bound up with the triumph of Socialism.

“It is because of this realistic analysis that the Labour Party, in *For Socialism and Peace*, put forward bold and challenging proposals for the reconstruction of the League, which has been so sadly weakened by the emergence of Fascist States and the irresolution of reactionary Governments in this country and in France.

“With the League growing weaker and losing members

year by year, with a new arms race in full swing and the fear of war once more poisoning public life, the need for making a new start is obvious and urgent. It is equally obvious that Labour alone has the faith and the dynamic power to give this lead, and that it would be idle to expect the present British Government, which has wellnigh destroyed the League, to change its nature and begin building up again what it has pulled down.

“ Because this country as a Member of the League and a signatory of the Pact of Paris has renounced war as an instrument of national policy and undertaken certain duties in connection with the restoration and preservation of peace, the citizens of this country are no longer bound blindly to obey the Government if it summons them to war. The Labour Movement will give a lead to the citizens of this country in deciding, if and when an emergency arises, whether the Government should be supported or resisted. Therefore, the Government must be warned that the only way to keep the nation united on questions of peace and war is to keep the League alive, and to strengthen it as an instrument of peaceful change, both political and economic.”

From these texts it is plain that the Labour Party is officially committed to the view that the National Government, because its fundamental purpose is the preservation of capitalism, is incapable of preserving peace, and is, on the contrary, helping to make war inevitable.

## II. THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DRIFT TO WAR

The view that the Government are largely responsible for starting, and are wholly incapable of stopping, the drift to war, or of winning the war which they are helping to

make inevitable, has been expressed officially by the Labour Party on numerous occasions. Here are a few quotations :

“ *For Socialism and Peace* ” :

“ In foreign affairs the constructive leadership in the League of Nations so proudly and successfully assumed by this country under the second Labour Government has been wantonly thrown away. Loyalty to the League in words has been belied by betrayals of the Covenant in deeds and lack of deeds. Democracies in Austria and Germany have been destroyed without a word of protest from the British Government. By its high tariff system, its domestic policy of contracting public expenditure, its Ottawa commitments and its total lack of leadership, the Government made the failure of the World Economic Conference inevitable. Headstrong Japanese imperialism in the Far East has been assisted by the timid and supine attitude, not to say the tacit connivance of Great Britain. A feeble and disingenuous policy on disarmament and security has helped to frustrate the attempts to achieve a reduction in armaments and has stimulated the arms race to which Far Eastern events gave the initial impulse. The danger of war looms over the world.”

*The War and Peace Memorandum :*

“ In the last two years Governments have arisen in some countries that frankly desire to revive the pre-war ‘ Balance of Power.’ In this country, the ‘ National ’ Government has a few members who desire feebly to make something of the League, others who have no policy, and a determined minority, rapidly gaining the upper hand because they know what they want, who believe in international anarchy, with its concomitants, the ‘ Balance of Power,’ a new race in armaments, and ultimately another World War. . . . There is no alternative

to the collective peace system except a relapse into international anarchy, a race in armaments and, sooner or later, War or Revolution or both" (pp. 343, 346, Report of Southport Conference, 1934).

*The Report of the National Executive Committee on the International Situation, 1934-5:*

"In *For Socialism and Peace* it was stated that 'a feeble and disingenuous policy on Disarmament and Security has helped to frustrate the attempts to achieve a reduction in armaments, and has stimulated the arms race to which Far-Eastern events gave the initial impulse. The danger of war looms over the world.' Unfortunately, the truth of this statement has now become apparent to all. . . . If multitudes should perish as the result of an act of some Fascist dictator in a moment of madness, it will be a terrible nemesis for the lack of vision and virility in the foreign policy of the British and other capitalist Governments during the past four years" (pp. 3 and 5 of the Report of the Brighton Conference).

*Labour's Election Manifesto, October 1935:*

"The Government has a terrible responsibility for the present international situation.

"It did nothing to check the aggression of Japan in the Far East, and thus seriously discredited the League of Nations and undermined the Collective Peace system. It has wrecked the Disarmament Conference by resisting all the constructive proposals made by other States.

"As regards air armaments, in particular, Lord Londonderry has boasted that he succeeded, though with great difficulty, in preventing an agreement for the complete abolition of all national air forces.

“ The Government has helped to restart the arms race, and it failed to make Signor Mussolini understand that, if he broke the peace in Africa, Britain would join with other nations in upholding the authority of the League.

“ Too late to stop the war, the Government ranged itself at the eleventh hour behind the Covenant at Geneva.

“ Even now, its action has been slow and half-hearted.

“ Whilst paying lip-service to the League, it is planning a vast and expensive rearmament programme, which will only stimulate similar programmes elsewhere.

“ This Government is a danger to the peace of the world and to the security of this country.

“ The Labour Party calls for a reversal of this suicidal foreign policy.”

*The Parliamentary Party's Resolution on Armaments, March 1936:*

“ That, as the safety of this country and the peace of the world cannot be secured by reliance on armaments, but only by the resolute pursuit of a policy of international understanding, adherence to the Covenant of the League of Nations, general disarmament, the progressive improvement of international labour standards, and economic co-operation so as to remove the causes of war, this House cannot agree to a policy which in fact seeks security in national armaments alone and intensifies the ruinous arms race between the nations, inevitably leading to war; views with alarm proposals for the re-organisation of industry on a war basis which will enormously extend the vested interests in arms manufacture and create a serious menace to organised labour and to trade union standards; and has no confidence in His Majesty's Ministers whose unworthy and ambiguous

foreign policy has largely contributed to the present state of world unrest."

*The Parliamentary Party's "Call to the Nation" on "The Great Betrayal," June 18th, 1936:*

"The whole future of the League and the peace of the world are at stake. The British Government has scrapped the solemn pledges given to the people before, during, and after the last General Election.

"In its election manifesto, the Government declared that 'the League of Nations will remain, as heretofore, the keystone of British foreign policy. Our attitude to the League is dictated by the conviction that collective security can alone save us from a return to the old system which resulted in the Great War.'

"In spite of this emphatic statement, the Government having first, through its weak and ambiguous policy at Stresa and Geneva, failed to prevent Signor Mussolini's aggression, and then made his military success possible by the continued supply of oil and other necessaries of war, is now preparing, not only to condone aggression and to permit Signor Mussolini to profit by it, but to abandon the whole system of collective security through the League, without which there is no sure foundation for the peace of the world.

"The Government is advocating the limitation of the functions of the League, and the withdrawal of Britain from all responsibility for the maintenance of peace outside certain narrow areas in which it says this country has special interests.

"The adoption of such a disastrous policy will be to encourage the breaking of treaties, and new acts of aggression, to set free lawless forces, and to revert to the discredited policy of the balance of power.

“ The League of Nations will be reduced to an empty sham, and the hope of the peoples of the world for a new and secure international order and a reign of peace will be shamelessly betrayed. Millions will be doomed to death, and civilisation to utter and final destruction.”

*The Rt. Hon. C. R. Attlee, House of Commons, June 18th, 1936:*

“ The right hon. Gentleman [the Prime Minister] has killed the League and collective security. He has never honestly tried to make an effort. The Prime Minister had a great chance when this Abyssinian matter first came on of uniting all the people of this country to stand fast behind the League. We know now that we cannot trust a National Government so-called, a Conservative Government, to stand by the League. They have no principles. All they ask is for arms and arms and arms, and yet the Prime Minister says he is afraid that no one will be able to use them. He will not get anyone to use them, for the Government is not piling up arms for peace, but is leading this country back to the blood-stained tragedy of 1914.”

*The Rt. Hon. C. R. Attlee, House of Commons, June 23rd, 1936:*

“ I say quite frankly that the Government have killed the League; the League may go on as a debating society, but the Government have killed it. . . . The Government have refused to take risks for peace, although that was their professed policy and their aim, and they have increased the risk of war. The result is that they have put this country in a dangerous position. . . . This country's position is not what it was in pre-1914 days. It is not in the position in which it had an island stronghold here and a far-flung Empire. It now has its very heart connected with the Continent by the air. There is no security in

isolation. The alternatives to isolation are alliances or collective security. The indictment against the Government is that when they had the opportunity of uniting Europe and forming a real front for collective security, they threw it away, and when they had the chance of uniting all the people in this country behind that policy, they threw it away. That opportunity is not going to recur. To-day the British Empire holds its possessions in the Far East on the good will of Japan; we hold the route to India on the good will of Italy. These armaments which the Government are asking us to give them are being piled up so that we shall be strong enough to meet all these enemies. That way lies ruin and war."

*The Parliamentary Party's Manifesto on Armaments and Foreign Policy, July 1936:*

"In order to mark its entire opposition to the international policy of the Government, of which the rearmament programme is an integral part, the Labour Party will on July 27th and 28th vote against the estimates for the fighting services.

"A vote against an estimate is not a vote for the abolition of the service concerned, but is a vote in opposition to the policy of which the estimate is the expression.

"Labour does not advocate unilateral disarmament. On the contrary it has definitely declared its willingness to provide such defence forces as are required for this country to do its part in a system of collective security through the League of Nations.

"But the Government has shown clearly that it cannot be trusted to pursue an honest League policy. It has gone far to destroy the authority of the League of Nations, is ready to do a deal at any time with an aggressor, has never explained how its armaments policy

is related to League requirements, supports the vicious system of private interest in arms manufacture, is engaging in an armaments competition which can only lead to war, and has taken no step to call the nations together to deal with the causes of war, especially those economic causes which must be removed if permanent peace is to be attained.

“The Labour Party, therefore, opposes this Government and calls upon all those who love peace to do likewise in order to stop the dangerous drift to world disaster.”

*The Rt. Hon. A. V. Alexander, House of Commons, July 20th, 1936:*

“I should say from the experience we have had of this Government in the last five years, that the less faith is placed in them the better it will be for the country. . . . It seems to me very doubtful whether the occupants of that Front Bench opposite have ever believed in collective security or whether the Government has ever gone out of its way in reality to support the general idea of collective security. . . .

“If this Government had really been true to their League pledges to the electorate, they had the chance of a lifetime of getting a really united nation behind them for League policy and freedom. The Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty knew perfectly well that at the Trades Union Congress last September and at the Labour Party annual conference last October, although it was very much criticised from some Labour angles and although there was difficulty, there was an overwhelming majority for standing behind the fulfilment of the Covenant of the League in its entirety. The Government, after getting a vote on this policy from the country, threw  
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away their whole opportunity of having a united country behind them. What has happened now with regard to collective security? Collective security, to which lip service is still given, is a thing of the past with the Government. . . .

“ Even with armaments at double the strength we are being asked for to-night, unless the Government work through the League and for collective security they must know or they ought to know perfectly well that they cannot defend the British Empire. . . . There is not in this country a decent supporter of the League of Nations who will ever honestly trust that Government again. There is not one of the small nations in Europe who will trust them again.”

*The Edinburgh Resolution on the International Situation,  
October 1936:*

“ PREAMBLE

“ When an opportunity occurred of vindicating the authority of the League of Nations against an aggressor, the British Government betrayed the League of Nations and Abyssinia, and broke its pledges to the electors. The Labour Party, therefore, can have no confidence in the Government’s profession of loyalty to the League.

“ Impressed with the gravity of the International Situation, realising that another World War would destroy European civilisation, and that the piling up of competitive armaments cannot bring peace and security, the Labour Party reaffirms its belief that only by removing the causes of war can such a disaster be averted.

“ The Governments of the leading countries should seize the opportunity presented by the monetary changes now proceeding to examine anew the whole economic situation with a view to establishing fuller intercourse

between nations and giving access to all nations on conditions of equality, to raw materials and markets, so as to attain a higher standard of life throughout the world.

“The International Labour Office should be fully utilised to secure a general improvement of wages, conditions, and hours of labour, in order to increase the consuming power of the masses, and a permanent economic organisation of the League should be created to promote world prosperity.

“While opposed to the transfer of Colonial Territories to the sovereignty of Dictatorships, the Party would desire to see the Mandatory System extended to all Colonies inhabited mainly by peoples of primitive culture.

“Article 19 of the Covenant of the League of Nations should be developed and applied so as to facilitate peaceful change.

“The Labour Party reaffirms its belief in the League of Nations, in disarmament by international agreement, and in the principle of Collective Security. The present weakness of the League is not due to any inherent faults in the Covenant and the League system, but to the disloyalty of some Great Powers and the vacillating policy of others. During the last five years, while the international situation has steadily deteriorated, the British Government in the Council and Assembly of the League and at the Disarmament Conference, has thrown away opportunity after opportunity of strengthening the League and laying the foundations of peace.

“Any amendment of the Covenant and machinery of the League should make economic sanctions automatic and effective so as to secure an immediate and complete economic boycott of an aggressor State.

“Further, it is urgently necessary to form in Europe, within the framework of the League, a strong group of

peaceful nations, firmly pledged to non-aggression and to mutual assistance against any aggressor, and to a policy of close political and economic co-operation; membership of such a group, once formed, being open to all States which are willing to accept the obligations and to enjoy the benefits of membership.

“ RESOLUTION

“ The Conference resolves:

“ That in view of the threatening attitude of Dictatorships which are increasing their armaments at an unprecedented rate, flouting International Law, and refusing to co-operate in the work of organising peace, this Conference declares that the armed strength of the countries loyal to the League of Nations must be conditioned by the armed strength of the potential aggressors.

“ The Conference, therefore, affirms the policy of the Labour Party to maintain such defence forces as are consistent with our country's responsibility as a Member of the League of Nations, the preservation of the people's rights and liberties, the continuance of democratic institutions, and the observance of International Law.

“ Realising the relationship between foreign policy and armaments, and having regard to the deplorable record of the Government, the Labour Party declines to accept responsibility for a purely competitive armament policy. It reserves full liberty to criticise the rearmament programme of the present Government, and declares the continuance of vested interests in the private manufacture of arms to be a grave contributory danger to the Peace of the World.

“ The Conference accordingly pledges the Labour Party to unceasing efforts, both by exposing the present Government's record of incompetence and betrayal of its peace pledges and by expounding our own positive

International Policy, to secure the return of a Labour Government to power."

### III. LABOUR'S "NEW START WITH THE LEAGUE" POLICY

The 1935 Report of the National Executive Committee on the international situation mentions the need for a "new start" with the League, and refers to the "bold and challenging proposals for the reconstruction of the League" contained in *For Socialism and Peace*. The Edinburgh Conference resolution on the international situation says that it is

"Urgently necessary to form in Europe, within the framework of the League, a strong group of peaceful nations, firmly pledged to non-aggression and to mutual assistance against any aggressor, and to a policy of close political and economic co-operation; membership of such a group, once formed, being open to all States which are willing to accept the obligations and to enjoy the benefits of membership."

The following official and semi-official statements give a fairly clear indication of the nature of the "new start with the League" policy of the Labour Party:

#### *The War and Peace Memorandum of 1934:*

"This policy of reducing national armed forces in return for an international guarantee of security backed by international armed forces can be carried out first by a group of countries within the League as a regional agreement under Article 21 of the Covenant. But a condition for carrying out this policy is to bring the U.S.S.R. into the League. Labour would seek to associate the people of the U.S.A. with each stage of its policy, and, if they should still be unwilling to join the League,

to find the terms on which they might co-operate with the League" (p. 244 of Report of Southport Conference).

*For Socialism and Peace :*

" A Labour Government would always endeavour to secure world-wide acceptance for its policy of organising peace. But it would not make a fetish of unanimity, and would avail itself to the full of the facilities afforded by the Covenant for concluding regional agreements with such States as accepted the establishment of a World Commonwealth as our common objective, with all its implications in the realms of pooled defence, joint economic and social policies, and common duties of citizenship on the issue of preserving peace."

*The Rt. Hon. C. R. Attlee, in his " The Socialist View of Peace," 1934:*

" The League . . . will be the indispensable instrument of Labour's foreign policy. But we must face the fact that the unanimity rule and the existence of violently Nationalist States within the League raise difficulties. Here again, however, the wise elasticity of the Covenant shows the way out, for under Article 21 it is possible for groups of States to conclude regional agreements to promote any of the purposes of the League, and as this Article was interpreted by the Assembly they may even for this purpose use the machinery of the League to prepare and hold regional conferences for this purpose. One of the cardinal points in Labour's foreign policy is that we are prepared to go ahead on the basis of regional agreements with States that are prepared to go the whole way with us, including pooled defence, joint social and economic policies, and common duties of citizenship on

the issue of peace. In practice, the States that would be prepared to embark on such a policy would, I think, turn out to be the democratic and Socialist countries in Europe. We should hope to have the Soviet Union within this group, and the United States on terms of friendly co-operation with it, preferably through some form of association with the League" (pp. 120-1, *Pacifism Is Not Enough*).

*The late Mr. Arthur Henderson, in "Labour's Way to Peace":*

"Even before the Soviet Union entered the League the Labour Party spoke of full co-operation with the U.S.S.R. and the latter's membership of any peace and collective defence group as essential. Now that Great Britain and the Soviet Union are both permanent members of the League Council there is a solid basis for the closest economic and political co-operation. Every one of the proposals on disarmament and collective defence adopted by the Labour Party at Southport has been advocated by the Soviet delegation at Geneva. In economic and social policy too, the opportunities for co-operation will be great. On the question of revision of treaties and peaceful change of the *status quo* the Soviet Government see eye to eye with the Labour Party. That is because they share the view that the effective organisation of peace and the elimination of the causes of war require a change in the social and economic foundations of society, and in the prerogatives of sovereignty. Finally, it must not be forgotten that, whatever may be their views on the proper methods of governing their own country, the international outlook of the rulers of the Soviet Union is based on the fundamental belief of all Socialists everywhere that the ultimate guarantee of peace must be the drawing together of the nations of the

world into one Commonwealth, and that this can come about only through Socialism.

“ Let it be repeated once more, lest misunderstanding arise, that the Labour Government will seek to secure universal agreement on all the proposals which it will make for disarmament, collective defence, joint economic and social policies, common duties of citizenship on the issue of preserving peace, and common dedication to the great aim of establishing a World Commonwealth.

“ If it is impossible in the first instance to secure universal acceptance for these policies, it will nevertheless seek to press on with them as far as possible and to secure such actual results as are realisable in co-operation with other nations who will take similar action. All this action will be based solidly on the Covenant and within the framework of the League. But it is not too much to hope that such a policy, when it gives practical results, will exercise a great attractive power for nations which at first may stand aside, for it will become increasingly clear to such nations that such a policy of exclusive military nationalism does not confer great benefits upon the nations which pursue it. We can confidently expect that this policy will not be sterile of practical results, and that many, if not nearly all nations will agree readily to co-operate. For there are many nations which to-day are ready to accept:

“ (a) a wide measure of agreement on the economic, financial, and social policies outlined in Chapter IV ;

“ (b) in some form the idea of a World Commonwealth supported by a world peace loyalty. What this means is explained in the next chapter. In the case of democratic countries acceptance of these two ideals would have to be reflected in some form of Peace Act of Parliament ;

“ (c) the entire renunciation of war, peaceful settlement

of disputes, and pooled defence programme of Chapter V, together with a standing offer to carry out the whole disarmament plan therein specified, so soon as universal agreement was attainable, and an immediate start with as much of that plan as could be carried out even without universal agreement. Just how far the matter could be carried at the moment would depend on all the circumstances, including the number and strength of the nations who agreed to co-operate, and the armaments and attitudes of the States that preferred to stay outside. The absolute renunciation of war and the categorical undertaking to settle all disputes peacefully and to pool defences could be made effective by the co-operating Governments giving instructions to their Admiralties, General Staffs and Air Ministries to scrap all plans based on the assumption of the necessity for defence against any one of their number, and to prepare joint plans for the collective defence of all of them against resort to violence against any one of them by an outside State, as tested by the obligations and procedure laid down in the Covenant and in a non-aggression treaty with a definition of aggression. The co-operating nations would also undertake to enforce Article 16 of the Covenant loyally and effectively in all cases to the extent permitted by the collective level of their armaments and their respective geographical positions.

“ The British Commonwealth has long ceased to prepare against the contingency of attack from the United States. It is the Labour Party’s belief that we should similarly dismiss from our minds and from our defence plans the contingency of attack from other States with whom war should be regarded as unthinkable, for example: France, Belgium, Holland, the Scandinavian

countries and the Soviet Union, and that we should, on the contrary, endeavour to draw these countries into close co-operation on the lines sketched above. The United States would be on terms of close co-operation with these nations, who would no doubt work out the co-ordination of their foreign policies, as members of the British Commonwealth, the Little Entente and the Scandinavian countries have already done."

*The Rt. Hon. Herbert Morrison, in "A New Start With the League of Nations," in August 1936, sketched what he thought a British (Labour) Government should do, as follows:*

"In the first place, the Government should start preparing for a world conference in which security, disarmament, economic, and colonial issues as well as the question of peaceful change should all be included in the agenda. The preparation should take the form first of all of the Government having a clear policy itself, secondly of getting that policy discussed, and some of its implications worked out both in discussions with a few other Governments and through technical preparations, such as those that could be undertaken by League committees and the League Secretariat.

"When the conference met the British Government should propose an All-European Treaty in which the contracting parties would record their interpretation of their collective system obligations as regards non-aggression, arbitration, and mutual assistance against aggression—a sort of new Geneva Protocol, in fact. . . .

"Even such a treaty would not be sufficient. It would not solve the question of air armaments. That can be solved only by going much farther in the pooling of sovereignty and self-defence than either the Covenant or an All-European Treaty such as I have described would

imply. Therefore I think the British Government should make a further offer to internationalise both military and civil aviation with such States signatories to this all-European Treaty as were prepared to renounce sovereignty in the air.

“Renouncing sovereignty in the air, both as regards transport and defence, inevitably raises the question of pooling self-defence and sovereignty also as regards naval and land forces and as regards co-ordination of foreign and economic policies. That is why I think that the British offer to form an inner ring of States should include the proposal that these States would renounce war completely as between themselves and give effect to that offer by instructions to their Naval, Air and War Ministries to scrap all plans providing for the contingency of defence against each other and to concert plans for joint defence against attack from outside and joint upholding of the provisions of the Covenant and the All-European Treaty in so far as their collective geographical situation and military strength allowed. Internationalising civil aviation would lead to internationalising other forms of inter-State transport and communications within this group. Joint defence forces would make it desirable and even necessary to nationalise and put under joint control within the group the industries supplying war materials for these defences. This, again, would raise the whole question of common economic planning, common finances, and the abolition of trade barriers within this group. The signatories to the Treaty should agree that in all appropriate cases non-self-governing colonies should be put under the mandates system. They should work out a common colonial policy, seeking to develop the mandates system and a general high standard of colonial administration based on the principle of international trusteeship.

“ All this would necessitate permanent, far-reaching political co-operation, requiring some such machinery for co-ordination of policies and consultation as already exists between Great Britain and the Dominions or within the Scandinavian group of countries and inside the Little Entente.

“ I should like, further, to see some provision by which the legislatures of this group of States should have the obligation to elect proportionately representative delegations to a central consultative parliament of the group. This body would have no powers to bind Governments, but would have the right to discuss any of the affairs of the group, and its resolutions and reports would automatically be submitted by the Governments of the group to their respective national legislatures, where they would no doubt form the subject of debate. In such a parliament you would soon have alignments according to party and not national groupings. The Socialists would come together and so, I believe, would the Radicals and the Conservatives. It would fulfil effectively and on a big scale the kind of functions that are now being fulfilled by the Socialist International, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the Federation of League of Nations Societies. It would be a most valuable means of educating public opinion.

“ The Governments Members of this group would proclaim as their common political objective the founding of a World Commonwealth, and declare that they would use their joint efforts to develop the League of Nations in this direction and to uphold and strengthen in every way the collective system based on the Kellogg Pact, the Covenant, the Statute of the Court, the Provisions of the All-European Treaty, etc. They would declare their readiness to sacrifice sovereignty to the extent required for achieving this great aim.

“ Membership of this group would be open to any State that accepted its obligations. Great political and economic advantages would and should follow from membership. In practice the only Governments that would be willing and able to accept all the obligations of membership of the inner group would be the Governments of democratic or Socialist States. But they would be bound by the All-European mutual assistance, arbitration, and non-aggression treaty to a much larger number of States, and would be in touch through the Covenant with the whole League. The group would be an open group, which would be continually striving to enlarge its membership and to strengthen and develop the collective system for international co-operation and the pacific settlement of disputes. . . .

“ A group such as I envisage would rapidly regain the initiative in international affairs which has been captured by the nationalist dictatorships owing to the pusillanimity of the reactionary Governments in the Western democracies. Nothing succeeds like success, I understand, in the United States. I am convinced that the formation of such a group and the new start that both it and the All-European Treaty would mean in the League and in world affairs would make it rapidly possible to secure the co-operation of the United States, to begin with in economic matters and for a common policy in the Far East. As for the British Dominions, I think they would understand that the only way they can hope for outside help in solving their economic and security problems is by concurring in Great Britain's taking an active lead in restoring order and security through reviving the collective system in Europe. The experience of the last two years must have taught them the obvious truth that the more Europe is divided and the greater danger there is of a European war, the more the British navy is tied to the

shores of our islands and the less possible it becomes for Great Britain to devote any attention to imperial affairs. The idea that Great Britain can be towed away from Europe is just silly. While on the one hand we were building up this peace-and-pooled-defence-group of States, we should on the other go on pressing the nationalist dictatorships to accept the obligations of the collective system and reduce and limit their armaments, in exchange for the economic advantages and complete security we could offer them. If they refused, we should continue our peace offensive, offer them non-aggression and consultative pacts, and any guarantees or arrangements in reason that could allay their fears and give them a square deal. But in these negotiations the initiative and the preponderant power would be with the group of democratic and Socialist States and with the members of the League who had rallied to the lead of these States. Any offers we made would be due to love of peace and not to the fear of war, and any *modus vivendi* we arrived at with the nationalist dictatorships would be based on the principles of the collective system and not on the absence of principles of international anarchy and power politics. On these lines we could soon make war too dangerous for any would-be aggressor, and set a social and international example to the peoples under Fascist dictatorships that would ultimately prove irresistible" (pp. 19-20; 22-4; 25-6 of *The League and the Future of the Collective System*).

*Mr. Alan Findlay, in his Presidential Address to the 1936 Trades Union Congress, sketched the first steps in the "new start" policy :*

"I am convinced that Soviet Russia has a great contribution to make, and is making, to human progress and to the organisation of world peace. We who visited Russia

as representatives of our own great Movement in 1924, and all who have watched the progress of the Soviet Power, have prayed that Russia would have prolonged peace. Its policy at the present times serves the ends of peace. I am confident that difficult and dangerous though the situation is at the moment, world peace could be preserved if the British Government also would adopt a thorough-going League of Nations policy with all that that implies. . . . If the Soviet Union, France and ourselves framed a pact of non-aggression and mutual assistance based on the League Covenant and open to all, it would in my judgment, as I have said elsewhere, unquestionably preserve peace both in Europe and Asia. Such a pact would without doubt gain the adherence of the Scandinavian States, the Baltic States, the Little Entente and Turkey. It must not, I repeat, be exclusive—it should be open to all, including Germany. But if Germany, because of her aggressive policy, refuses to enter, then we should make it clear that our policy is to go on without Germany's co-operation, to develop the system of mutual guarantee within the framework of the League, and in conformity with the principles of collective security. From this platform I would warn both the British Government and the German Government that British Labour will never acquiesce in, but will fight strenuously against, any policy which secures temporary peace in Western Europe, whilst giving Hitler a free hand in Eastern Europe and against the Soviet Union."









