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STATESMEN AND SEA POWER

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STATESMEN AND SEA POWER

BY

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BASED ON

THE FORD LECTURES

DELIVERED IN
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Keep then the sea about in special
Which of England is the round wall
As though England were likened to a city
And the wall environ were the sea.
Keep the sea which is the wall of England
And then is England kept by God's hand.

(*Libel of English policy 1436*)

'Superiority in naval power will henceforth consist in keeping up a proper naval establishment in discipline. The first naval nation to fall will be the one that is first caught napping. So that instead of resting upon our former naval renown it will be much more to the purpose to watch vigilantly that the renown is not made to suffer from the neglect of Governments to train fleets.'

(ADMIRAL SIR CHARLES NAPIER)

'Whether a democratic government will have the foresight, the keen sensitiveness to national position and credit, the willingness to ensure its prosperity by adequate outpouring of money in times of peace, all which are necessary for military preparation, is yet an open question. Popular governments are not generally favourable to military expenditure, however necessary, and there are signs that England tends to drop behind.'

(MAHAN 1889)

'Throughout our long history there have been periods in which the gifts of the sea have been flouted, entailing in some cases a swift Nemesis. Political conditions, oblivion of the teaching of war, or the perverse counsels of individuals in authority, have induced neglect of the national navy, and encouraged reliance upon subordinate—and for Great Britain—wholly ineffectual measures of defence. War has thus found the country unprepared, and heavy losses, easily avoided, have been entailed. So soon as stern necessity has arisen, the rehabilitation of the fleet has forced itself upon the nation as the one indispensable means of guaranteeing territorial security at home and abroad, and of giving effect to the national will.'

(CLARKE and THURSFIELD, *The Navy and the Nation*, 1897)

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INTRODUCTION

THE great military historian Sir John Fortescue, who was the Ford Lecturer in 1911, opened the third of his lectures with the words: 'War is commonly supposed to be a matter for generals and admirals, in the camp, or at sea. It would be as reasonable to say that a duel is a matter for pistols and swords. Generals with their armies and admirals with their fleets are mere weapons wielded by the hand of the statesman. It is for him to decide when to strike, where to strike, and how to strike.' The statesman, he went on to say, has first to decide what object he wishes to attain and, having done that, on the best means for attaining it.

Those sentences are an expression of an eternal and fundamental truth to which the whole of history—that is, of experience—bears witness. We see it recognized in the conduct of statesmen, the opinions of fighting men, and the writings of successions of thinkers, both lay and military. Mahan expressed the same idea: 'The office of the statesman is to determine and to indicate to the military authorities the national interests most vital to be defended as well as the objects of conquest or destruction most injurious to the enemy.' Hard blows, he observed, are useless unless struck at the right spot: a fact of which we have had ample proof during the last few years. If the statesman misinterprets the nature of national defence or the ultimate object of a war, or fails to make the necessary preparations; if, in war, he misdirects the strategy employed for the attainment of the object; the results will be far more injurious than those of errors in minor strategy or tactics: for they are more far-reaching. They may make tactical victory impossible and pave the way to defeat; they may render useless all the skill and courage of the fighting men at sea, on land, and in the air. Even if defeat is averted, success is deferred. 'Our wars', the Duke of Wellington once said, 'have always been long and ruinous in expense because we were unable to prepare for the operations, which must have brought them to a close, for years after they were commenced.' For success depends primarily on whether the directing hand has made the most effective and complete use of the national resources in all their many forms, and has so

disposed all the available force that superior strength is brought into action at the decisive spot at the decisive moment. Whether those conditions can be fulfilled depends upon whether the nation's strength is sufficient for the purposes, whether it is equipped with weapons appropriate to its needs, whether those weapons have been provided and maintained in an efficient state, and whether they have been kept sharp or blunted by ill-considered policy, surrender of territory, of interests, or of rights concerning their use.

A recent illustration of this is to be found in the under-estimation by the statesmen of Germany of the strength of British sea power, in spite of the limitations imposed upon it during the nineteenth century, and of the staying power which it confers upon those whom it enables to draw upon the whole world for their supplies. Thus, in 1904, the Commissioners on the Nation's Food Supplies in War wrote: 'We look mainly for our security to the strength of the Navy, but we only rely in a less degree on our mercantile fleet and its power to carry on our trade and reach all possible sources wherever they exist.' Herr Bethman Hollweg, however, overlooked this. Prince Bülow in his memoirs quotes the Chancellor as saying in August 1914: 'It will be a violent storm, but very short. I count on a war of three months and I have organised all my policy on that assumption.' If the Chancellor was correctly reported by Prince Bülow he most gravely underestimated the effects of the intervention of sea power in the great wars of coalitions in the past; and the error was a costly one. In the aspect of depriving the enemy of the financial benefits of sea trade and of the various materials derived from oversea and essential to the needs of the national life and the military effort, the Chancellor may well have thought that there were adequate supplies of all kinds—food, raw materials, and finished articles—to meet Germany's requirements during a period of isolation that would be temporary only, and moreover that the teeth of British sea power had been effectively drawn, or blunted, by the Declaration of Paris and Declaration of London, with their abandonment of those belligerent rights upon whose retention and use the statesmen of Britain had insisted from the days of Queen Elizabeth to the middle of the nineteenth century. For with 'Free ships, free goods', with limitations upon the exercise of

blockade, with the increased facilities to land transport created by the developments of rail, road, river, and canal traffic, it was not unnatural to calculate that all the needs of Germany could be supplied in neutral bottoms, through neutral ports; and restrictions had been applied to goods capable of being proclaimed as contraband—among them metallic ores, cotton, and aeroplanes. It was not until, after long delay, those restrictions upon sea power were removed that effective pressure by sea, in the form of siege, could be brought to bear upon the Central Powers. That delay prolonged the war, increased the sufferings of the world, and made the making of a real peace more difficult—the arrangement made at Versailles was to prove to be a truce only. So there were respectable grounds for the Chancellor's belief, but however that may be, the miscalculation was serious for Germany; as serious as the two other great miscalculations of the German statesmen, the invasion of Belgium and the unrestricted submarine campaign.

My aim is to indicate, admittedly in broad outline only, the manner in which the statesmen of this country have dealt with this matter of sea power during the last three and a half to four centuries. What, then, *is* sea power? Sea power is that form of national strength which enables its possessor to send his armies and commerce across those stretches of sea and ocean which lie between his country or the countries of his allies, and those territories to which he needs access in war; and to prevent his enemy from doing the same. And who is the 'Statesman'? He is that civil authority responsible for the maintenance of this power in peace and its effective use in war as a national weapon. Its maintenance in peace consists in determining the policy of national defence and the part which sea power plays in it; deciding the standard of naval strength in relation to other Powers; providing and maintaining the fighting instruments at the required strength and efficiency, the bases necessary for their use, and the shipping and seamen which transport the armies and the commerce.

Thus sea power is composed of three elements of a material nature. There are other elements of a moral nature, such as aptitudes, character, and courage, the influence of which has been so evident in the present war but to which, as they lie outside the powers of the statesman, I do not intend to refer.

These three material elements are: fighting instruments capable of overcoming whatever resistance an opponent can offer to the desired movements of troops or trade across the sea, and of closing the sea to an enemy; positions in which those fighting instruments can be continuously maintained and from which they can, readily and without undue expenditure of their powers of endurance, reach the scene of their operations and there remain as long as is needed for the fulfilment of their purposes; and vehicles of transport in which the troops and trade can be carried. Those fighting instruments and those vehicles operate to-day on the surface of the sea, under the surface and above the surface; they extend from the largest battleship to the submarine, the motor-boat, and the aeroplane. All are instruments of sea power.

It is the duty of the statesman to make provision for the fulfilment of all these needs. Ships and aircraft cannot be built without the raw materials of their construction, nor moved without the means of their propulsion. If either of these do not exist in sufficient quantity within the country, access to their sources must be assured in peace and in war. And as ships cannot be built unless a shipbuilding industry exists with its yards, slips, and machinery, and a skilled body of workers in that industry, so the fostering of that industry is an essential duty of the statesman in regard to sea power. The positions needed by the ships of all natures—bases—cannot be held without garrisons, nor can additional bases be obtained, or the enemy deprived of bases, without field armies.

Finally, the economic pressure upon the enemy which the command and control of the sea enable the sea Power to exercise becomes nullified if it is permissible for the enemy to continue, in neutral bottoms, the trade which he is unable to conduct in his own. Hence, from the days of Queen Elizabeth until our own time, with a brief interlude during the nineteenth century, the aim of British statesmen has been to oppose measures directed towards enabling the enemy to evade the effects of British sea control and to open alternative channels of trade: and a continuous belligerent-neutral conflict has resulted, affecting foreign policy and influencing strategy throughout these three and a half centuries.

In those periods in which the statesmen of Great Britain have

taken the steps necessary, in peace, to develop and maintain the country's sea power in all its elements, interpreting correctly its needs and exercising foresight in the production and use of new weapons, and, in war, have made the command of the sea the primary object of its strategy and used the most appropriate means of attaining it, the country has been secured against vital injury and been able to render effective aid to its allies. In those other periods in which one or another of those elements has been neglected in peace, or the national efforts misdirected in war, misfortune has invariably followed. How, then, in the course of these centuries, have the statesmen of Great Britain applied themselves to these matters?

I

THE ELIZABETHAN PERIOD

THOUGH I am taking the Elizabethan period as my starting-point, it is needless to say that English statesmen had been fully alive to the need for strength at sea for many centuries before the sixteenth. Successions of rulers had taken steps to guard the country at sea against invasion. Navigation Acts, of which the object was to foster those elements of sea power, shipping and seamen, had been passed as early as the reign of Richard II, and the navy of Elizabethan England—the word 'navy' comprised both that body of fighting ships which was the personal possession of the ruler (the 'Royal' Navy) and the whole mass of shipping of the country—was the growth of centuries. It owed, however, its effective existence in the two elements of fighting ships and national shipping primarily to the Queen's father and grandfather. The material foundation from which a navy springs is its shipping and shipbuilding. Henry VII initiated the policy of fostering the industry of shipbuilding. He gave bounties for the construction of larger ships, better suited for both foreign trade and fighting; he stimulated the increase of ships and seamen by a Navigation Act more rigorous in its terms regarding imports in foreign bottoms than any of its predecessors—wine, for instance, might not be imported except in English ships manned for the most part by English seamen. He took steps to expand that 'nursery of seamen' the fishing industry. He did not, however, set himself to create a large force of ships specifically designed for fighting, preferring, as his predecessors had preferred, to rely upon hiring private ships for the purposes of war when occasion arose: a course possible when the differentiation between the fighting and the trading ship of the sailing type was as yet slight. Needing peace at home to consolidate his position, he kept clear of foreign quarrels, and this he could do as he had neither territorial ambitions abroad to satisfy, positions oversea to defend, nor dangerous rivals near home on either the Channel or the North Sea coasts. But the union of France with Brittany in 1491 opened a new phase; it brought an access of sea power to

France by the acquisition of the important ports of Brittany and of the services of the ships and the hardy seamen of that maritime province.

When Henry VIII came to the throne two things called for attention. The King of France displayed obvious signs of an intention to develop the naval strength of France in the Channel. He transferred fighting ships from the Mediterranean to the Channel, he began the development of the port of Havre. A nation dependent for its security upon the sea cannot but be sensitive to the appearance of a powerful, or prospectively powerful, navy close to its shores, and the Englishman of the sixteenth century saw as great a threat to his security in the rise of this new sea power opposite to his coasts as his remote descendants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw threats to their security in the establishment of foreign colonies close to their doors in South Africa and the Pacific. This was one cause calling for attention to the country's sea power. Another was a changed attitude towards continental affairs. In contrast to his father's abstention from expansion or interference in those matters, Henry VIII joined the Holy League and adopted the policy of the Balance of Power. He had a clear understanding of the national dependence on sea power and a passion for the sea. Himself a practical seaman, he improved the design of the fighting ship, making her primarily a fighter armed with heavy artillery; thereby he changed the character of a naval battle. The gun, not boarding as hitherto, was thenceforward to be the deciding factor. He improved the administration of the country's shipping by the establishment of the Trinity House. His father's modest fighting fleet of a round dozen of ships was expanded to over fourscore. The preamble to the most important of his Navigation Acts, that of 1540, opened with words in which the dependence of England upon the sea was emphasized: 'the Navy or multitude of ships of this Realm' was 'a great defence and surety in time of war, as well for offence and defence and also the maintenance of many masters, mariners and seamen, making them expert in the art and science of shipmen and sailing'.

Still, the nation's principal offensive arm remained, as in Plantagenet days, the land force. When Henry fought France

in 1512, in 1522, and 1544 the part the navy had to play in those wars was that of enabling the army to reach those continental theatres in which it was to co-operate with the armies of the King's allies. It was the principal defence against invasion; it took part in the cross-Channel raiding which was still a feature of war at sea. But economic pressure did not figure in the strategy, for it was not a form of pressure to which the enemy, France, was susceptible. So too Queen Mary, when she was in alliance with Spain in a war against France, sent an army to the Netherlands to assist in the Spanish defence there; and when Calais was taken it was not because a naval base had been lost that its name was engraved on the Queen's heart, but because England had lost a bridgehead for the invasion of France.

So Elizabeth inherited both a navy and a traditional strategy. How did she and her statesmen maintain the country's sea power, foster it in peace, develop and employ it in war, and resist attempts to deprive it of its power of bringing pressure upon the enemy?

So far as the 'Royal' Navy was concerned Elizabeth did little to increase its strength. She replaced worn-out ships, but she added no more than seven ships to the twenty-two in existence at the beginning of her reign; and this although the country was at war throughout nearly twenty years. The important position, however, which the navy had attained in the scheme of national defence is illustrated, as Sir Julian Corbett pointed out, by the appointment of a committee in 1583, when war with Spain was looming, to report on the state of the navy, and by the constitution of that committee, the members of which were the Lord Treasurer, Lord Admiral, Lord Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Sir Francis Walsingham. Great improvements in design were introduced under the able administration of Sir John Hawkins. But during the war there were periods of great neglect of upkeep of the ships and even worse neglect of the seamen for all the Queen's understanding of their indispensability.

The 'national' shipping was stimulated by a continuance of the legislative action of Navigation Acts. In the first year of her reign an Act was passed which restricted coastal shipping to English bottoms, and this was followed by others which gave

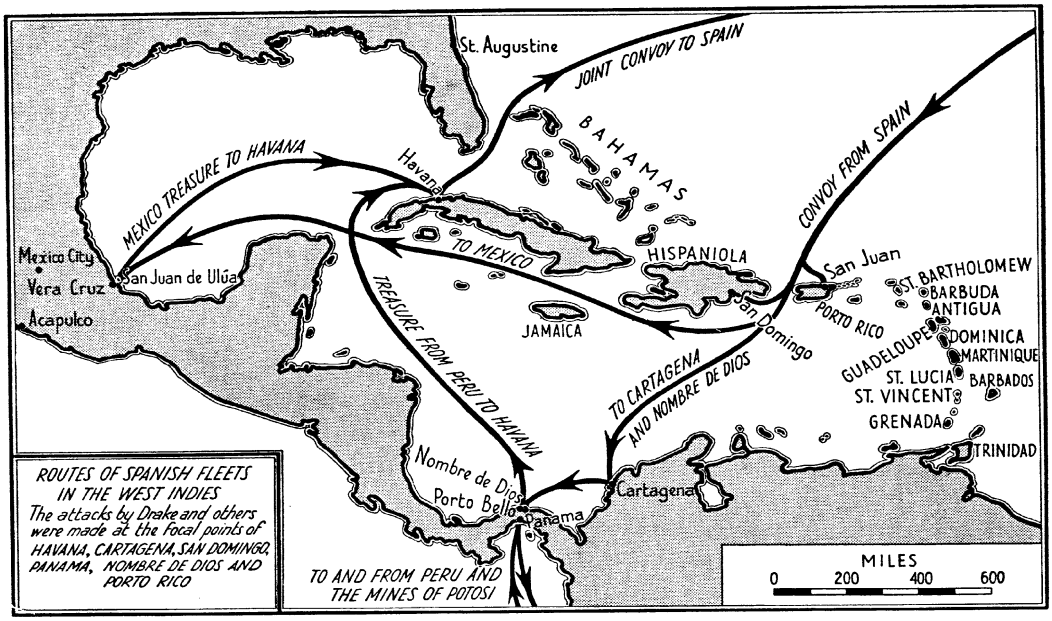
encouragement to the building of vessels suitable to foreign trade and to the development of chartered companies—the Russia, Levant, Eastland, and Guinea companies and the Company of Merchant Adventurers—all of which had a definite relation to the strengthening of the nation's sea power. These companies were favourably viewed by the rulers not merely because of the commercial benefits that would result from them but also, and possibly predominantly, because shipping was rightly recognized as an essential element in national security. Burleigh, for instance, commended the growth of the Levant Company because it would increase the volume of the nation's shipping, and its founders were thanked personally by the Council for what they had done 'for the Kingdom's sake', for the larger types of trading ship—those of over 100 tons—were potential fighting ships. Other of the Elizabethan Navigation Acts did much to encourage the increase of seamen. Many and various measures were introduced for that specific purpose, for, as the Queen wisely said, 'to multiply ships and to lack mariners is to set armour upon stakes on the sea coast and to provide no people to wear it, or to build castles and put no soldiers in them'. Mariners came from three sources—trade, fisheries, and piracy. Though the last of these was a respectable profession it was not one which could ensure a sufficient and permanent supply of men, and it was of no benefit to the State except in so far as it was an outlet for the energies of adventurous men and a school of practical experience. Trade and fishery, on the other hand, were both permanent and profitable. So, in addition to other measures, the Queen in 1562 added a third fish-eating day—Wednesday—to the calendar, with the expressed object of 'restoring the Navy of England' so that it might 'be thereby by God's grace able to defend the Realm against all Foreign Powers'. A writer in 1577 says that fish days were introduced in part to increase the number of cattle and partly 'for the preservation of the navy and the maintenance of convenient numbers of seafaring men, both of which would otherwise greatly decrease if some means were not found whereby they might be increased'.[1] In the same Act a statute of Henry VIII's, which provided for the compulsory sowing

[1] Tawney and Power, *Tudor Economic Documents*, vol. ii, quoting *S.P.D. Elizabeth*, vol. xxvii, no. 71.

of flax and hemp for the supply of canvas and rope, was revived.

Besides canvas and rope many other materials were needed for building ships. These were broadly of three kinds: timber for the hulls, spars for the masts and yards, and a large range of goods for maintenance and equipment of ships, in particular iron, pitch, copper, tar. As English oak was the timber needed for the hulls, one of the Acts of the Queen's first Parliament was directed towards preserving all timber suitable for shipbuilding and situated where it was available for transport to the building-yards. Even before the outbreak of war with Spain there were already signs that this supply was becoming insufficient, and a more stringent Act was passed in 1570 to safeguard the home-grown supply. For its masts and spars the country was not self-supporting. The forests of Norway and the Baltic were the principal source for these essential materials without which the hulls were mere immovable floating masses of wood. The East-land Company, formed in 1569, did valuable work in opening up this source. Trade with Archangel followed the voyages of Chancellor to the northern regions, but unhappily the trade fell to the Dutch, who, building and navigating their ships more cheaply and devoting greater care and effort to the business than the English, were able to charge lower freights and to give a better service: thereby they ousted the English from the carrying trade. The result of this was that the supply of materials upon which the safety of the country depended was jeopardized and England became dependent for the motive power of her navy on her principal naval rival. The Baltic trade had two other important elements. It was a 'nursery of seamen' and, in a year of bad crops in England, it was a source of grain which preserved the people from the danger of starvation.

These, then, were among the measures by which the English statesmen fostered the country's sea power. In what manner did they employ it in war? Formal war with Spain, as distinguished from a state of reprisals, may be said to have begun in 1585 when it became certain that the King of Spain was making preparations for the invasion of England. There was at that time a great Spanish army in the Netherlands, engaged in repressing the revolt of the seven northern provinces which



MAP I. DIAGRAMMATIC SKETCH MAP OF SPANISH ROUTES AND THE FLOTA IN THE WEST INDIES

Outgoing trade from Spain sails in two fleets for Mexico and South America. On arrival off Hispaniola, *South American shipping* goes to Cartagena, thence to Nombre de Dios. Bullion from Peru arrives Panama, carried overland to Nombre de Dios, and Fleet proceeds to main concentration port, Havana. *Mexico Fleet* to San Juan de Ulúa, embarks Treasure, proceeds to Havana. The two fleets return in company to Spain calling at Azores for water, information, and a reinforcement from Lisbon and Cadiz.

were still holding out against Spanish rule. The powers of resistance of the Dutch appeared to be coming to an end. They had already called on the Queen for help, but without success, or, at best, with a very small response, and that of a private character. Now they called with a greater urgency. Hitherto the Queen had been anxious to avoid a breach with Spain and to that end had pursued a policy of what to-day is called 'appeasement' in the hope that war might be avoided: for she had no sympathy with rebels. But she had two specific interests in preventing a Spanish domination of the Low Countries. It would give Spain the power to stop the ancient and valuable trade with the Netherlands—a course that had been recommended by a Spanish minister, Cardinal Granvelle, as a means of bringing pressure upon England; it would lead to the creation of Spanish naval bases in the harbours on the other side of the Narrow Seas and so expose England to a perpetual danger of invasion. 'If the nation of Spain', said the Queen, 'should make a conquest of those countries . . . in that danger ourself, our countries and people might shortly be.' It was therefore essential in her eyes to prevent 'the access and planting of the great force of the Spaniards so near to our countries'. For with those ports in her hands Spain would be able to assemble shipping and to launch an invasion across the short stretch of sea, choosing her own moment, and so imposing on England the need for a perpetual readiness to guard what would almost become a land frontier. Certainly this was not the only route by which an invasionary army could move. There was also the direct sea route from Spain. But if Spain were denied the facilities of the Dutch ports, greater forces would be available for meeting an attempt from the south. So long, however, as Spain was strong at sea she would be a danger. A mere strategy of defence could never afford security. The initiative would remain with her, and the one definitive course of safety was to inflict such injury on her as would compel her to desist from her policy of aggression.

An English invasion of Spain was out of the question, but Spain was vulnerable to economic pressure. The power of the economic weapon had been recognized for over a century before Elizabeth's day. In the *Libel of English Policy* written in 1436 its value had been pointed out for bringing pressure upon

Flanders, to whom the exports of English wool were essential for the weaving industries.

> If England would her wool restrain
> From Flanders, things follow in certain.
> Flanders of need must with us have peace
> Or else be destroyed without lease.

Spain's vulnerability to external pressure was due to her need of imports from over sea. Some 20 per cent.—the figure varied at different times—of her revenues were derived from the bullion she received from her Western Empire and the commerce of her East Indian possessions. She needed money to pay her armies, to buy the materials required for building and equipping her navies, and for the administration of her scattered interests in Europe. Her shipbuilding materials, like those of England, came from the Baltic. So the treasures which her Flota and galleons carried across the Atlantic were Spain's life-line. This was no new discovery of the English. Over sixty years earlier the French Huguenots had realized the fact and had sent their corsairs to prey upon Spanish shipping off the Azores and in the West Indies. This guerrilla warfare inflicted severe losses on the Spanish trade, though for want of bases it could only be of a sporadic nature. The Spanish reply was the institution, between 1564 and 1566, of a convoy system. The varied produce of the trade with South and Central America was brought to Havana, which was strongly fortified, and from Havana great fleets, numbering as many as seventy sail or more, were escorted across the Atlantic by bodies of well-armed ships of war. These escorts were further strengthened, when they reached the danger zone in the approaches to the Azores and the Spanish ports, by powerful squadrons which went out from Cadiz and Lisbon to meet them. The organization, it will be seen, was precisely on the same lines as that used by Britain in her later wars with France, lightly protected ocean convoys being reinforced or covered in the western approaches by the heavy ships of the western squadron; and, in modern times, as that used to protect the shipping against raiding ships, submarines, and aircraft—the modern fighting instruments, instead of being the ships of the battle fleet, being the destroyers, frigates, sloops, and aircraft operating from bases at home and, later, in the Azores.

Because of the importance of this trade to Spain, its destruction became the primary object of the war at sea. Attack was not confined to naval action. Attempts were made to cripple Spain's buying power and to reduce, or cut off, her supply of goods from neutral sources. An edict of 1586 forbade all trade with the Flemish banks and the sending of victuals and shipbuilding materials to ports east of Rouen. But the great object of all was the destruction of the Flota itself. The most effective steps which England could take for her own security were held to be destroying, preventing the sailing of, or, best of all, capturing, the treasure fleets. 'If her Majesty can only find means to let or intercept them [the treasure fleets] no doubt the Spaniards will be constrained to come to a very reasonable composition', wrote an Englishman in Venice to Burleigh. 'If we might once strike them, our peace were made with honour, safety and profit', wrote Hawkins. At a later date Essex expressed the same view: 'The hurt that our State should seek to do him is to intercept his treasures, whereby we shall cut his sinews and make war upon him with his money.' The English, said the Venetian ambassador, would prove dangerous enemies if they could seize the India fleet. The idea in fact constantly recurs in contemporary writings, and to call the operations of Drake and his fellows 'piracy' is a complete strategical misrepresentation. Their blows were military blows aimed at the Spanish lines of communication.

The route of the treasure was not the only line of sea communications on which Spain depended. Her armies in the Low Countries were mainly supplied by sea across the Bay of Biscay and up Channel; her fleet depended on the naval stores from the Baltic; her fishery off her Atlantic seaboard and her coastal trade were all elements in her national and military economy. But while all these were important in their varying degrees, they were all objectives of a 'long-term' character. Unless the Spanish army in the Netherlands were in immediate and pressing need of men or money, no temporary interruption of those services would prevent the Spaniards from crushing the Dutch defence and establishing themselves in those ports to which so high an importance was attached. If matters in the Netherlands were as pressing as they appeared to be, aid of a more direct and rapid nature was called for. The Dutch army

remained in the field and the garrisons in the seaports must be reinforced. When, therefore, in 1585, events, including the arrest of English grain ships in Spanish ports and the capture of correspondence, clearly showed that it was King Philip's intention to invade England, an army of 4,000 foot and 400 horse was sent to Holland to assist in the defence of Antwerp and to hold 'some of the towns on the coast opposite to the English coast', a fleet with another body of troops was sent to the West Indies to attack the Spanish trading organization in its three nodal points of San Domingo, Cartagena, and Panama, and a squadron went to the coast of Spain to cut up the fishery, whose importance lay not only in the seamen it furnished to the navy of Spain, but also because the salt fish which it provided was needed for the victualling of ships. The coasting trade was also an essential factor in the distribution of goods in the country.

The expedition to the Caribbean ports inflicted some severe losses on the towns and, in a lesser degree, upon the treasure, but the material injuries were not the principal result of the stroke. That result was the effect which was produced on the minds of the people of Spain and of Europe. Spain's credit was weakened. The sources of her wealth and power appeared to be at the mercy of England: the Spanish colossus was not invulnerable. The military campaign in Flanders was also affected, since owing to the holding up of the sailing of the treasure, Parma's army could not buy food and its movements were suspended. Hard as the blow was, however, it was not decisive. The injuries were temporary and could be repaired; the sailings of the Flota would in due course be resumed; credit would recover in time. Still, Philip could not be blind to the fact that a succession of such blows would be serious. He realized that England was the principal obstacle to his reduction of the Dutch, and that the drain of the prolonged military campaign must be arrested. He must bring this quickly to an end. The most direct way of so doing was to crush England once and for all. Therefore preparations were begun in 1586 for the invasion of England. The brilliant campaign conducted by Drake on the coast of Spain in 1587 retarded the preparations, but unfortunately the advice of the seamen to repeat the offensive form of defence in the spring of 1588 was rejected by the Queen

and the Armada was completed without further interruption. It sailed in the summer and met with its fate at the hands of the English navy in the Channel and the North Sea.

How this great victory should be exploited was the question which the statesmen had then to solve. Three courses came under discussion. The Queen, always averse from doing things on a grand scale and still clinging to the hope that the war might be avoided, wished to send out marauding squadrons to the Indies; in other words, to carry on sporadic warfare against shipping, ignoring the main fighting forces of the enemy. Sir John Hawkins wished to employ cruising squadrons powerful enough to fight the Spanish escorts and those reinforcing fleets which met the convoys in the area of the home terminal between the Azores and Cadiz or San Lucar, maintaining them at strength by reliefs. He particularly advocated avoiding any land fighting. Drake wished to strike a decisive blow at Spanish sea power. The heart of that power was in Lisbon. There lay the bulk of the Portuguese ships, the best units in the Spanish navy; there a rising against Spain might be supported. That done, the Azores, Portuguese islands, might be taken with Portuguese assistance—a step that had been proposed to the Queen by the Portuguese Pretender some years earlier but rejected. With Lisbon and the Azores in their hands the English would possess that essential second element of sea power—bases in which fleets or squadrons could be permanently maintained and from which a continuous observation could be maintained on the movements of the treasure fleets, almost amounting to a blockade.

Drake's scheme was accepted. A fleet under Drake, carrying an army under an experienced soldier, Norris, was sent to Lisbon. The expedition was a failure. The roots of that failure lay in London. The army was ill equipped, insufficiently provided, and wanting in discipline, and the whole operation was prejudiced by the Queen's instructions. Singleness of purpose, concentration of effort upon one object only, the attainment of surprise, are elementary military axioms. The instructions flouted them all. Instead of sending the expedition direct to its destination, to fall upon Lisbon in full strength and without warning, other duties were laid upon it—to call on its way at ports in northern Spain and attack any forces that might be

lying there. It did so, and by so doing all chances of surprise were destroyed. The enemy, warned by the appearance in the north, was not caught napping, and a combination of disease, desertion, losses, and indiscipline completed its ruin. Blame for the failure fell on Drake, who went out of favour. It should have fallen on the Queen and her statesmen who had failed to make adequate military preparation and who misdirected the plan of campaign.

What may properly be called the beginning of a problem, with which English statesmen were thenceforward continuously to be faced when using their sea power, found its first expression in the Elizabethan war—the problem of dealing with the opposition of the neutral nations to the interruption of their commerce with an enemy. It was plain to the English ministers that the Spanish navy was built and equipped with materials drawn from the Baltic and therefore that it was essential to prevent supplies of those materials from reaching Spain. 'The late great navy of Spain', said a decree of July 1589, 'could not have been prepared and furnished fit for such an exploit unless they had been supplied . . . by certain Easterlings, members of the Hanse towns.' The Queen asserted her right to stop this supply. She issued a decree in which the various neutral Powers were informed what goods would be treated as contraband and that they, together with the ships carrying them, would be confiscated. The eternal struggle between the belligerent and the neutral at once began. Protests poured in from the Hanse, the Poles, and the Danes, but Elizabeth firmly refused to allow her weapon of sea power to be blunted or shorn of its strength. She replied to the Hanse that a belligerent possesses the inherent right to prevent an enemy from nourishing himself and his fighting instruments with goods from without and, as many of her successors have done in later times, she quoted precedents for her action. She reminded them that in the war that had recently been fought between Poland and Muscovy the capture of warlike stores had been enforced by Poland against England, that in the war between Sweden and Denmark neutral trade in the Baltic had been interrupted. And this, she remarked, was just. 'Whenever any doth directly help her enemy with succours of any victual, armour or any kind of munition to make his ships to maintain themselves, she [Eng-

land] may lawfully interrupt the same.' So, in that year of 1589, she defined the elementary principle that was to be accepted and acted upon by generations of her successors for nearly three centuries: a principle in which the first breach was made in the middle of the nineteenth century, but to which a return had to be made in the stark necessities of the War of 1914–18.

The contraband list of 1589 included everything that contributed to the building and equipment of a navy—materials such as cables, masts, anchors, cordage, canvas, planks and poles, powder, bullets, lead, copper, guns, muskets, and armour; victuals needed for the provisioning of a fleet such as bacon, corn, wheat, rye, barley, and meal. But while the Queen stood firmly on her right to intercept these warlike materials, she was prepared to make concessions in order to avoid any undue risks of raising fresh enemies against her. Thus she made an agreement with Denmark not unlike some of those made with certain neutrals in 1914–18: if the King would prohibit the carriage of some specified goods to Spain, his ships would be allowed to sail without hindrance. To Poland, upon whose grain England depended in bad harvests and who might retaliate by withholding it when needed, she conceded permission for grain cargoes to sail. She warned her commanders to be careful in their treatment of French, Tuscan, and Venetian shipping. But she was adamant concerning naval stores and munitions. One of her difficulties proceeded from the very country to whose help she had come—Holland. Though England was fighting for the liberation of the Dutch as well as for her own security—the two being in her eyes indissolubly connected—the Dutch insisted on continuing their commerce with the common enemy even to the extent of trading with ports in the actual occupation of the Spanish army and under blockade by Dutch forces. The question had first arisen in 1585 when Leicester was sent to the Netherlands. Finding that the Dutch were conducting an extensive trade with the enemy, much of it consisting in grain and warlike stores greatly needed by the Spanish army, Leicester issued a proclamation forbidding the traffic. He received some support from the 'inland' provinces who did not share in the profits of this commerce, but the 'maritime' provinces, whose merchants were reaping a rich financial harvest,

insisted not only on their right thus to trade but also on the national necessity of that trade. Without it, so they asserted, the Dutch would be deprived of the means of continuing the struggle. Leicester's order therefore came to nothing. It was revived by the Queen in 1596 and, though then glumly assented to by the 'maritimes', was so systematically evaded in practice that, like its predecessor, it too became a dead letter. The Dutch doctrine of 'free ships, free goods' was then an innovation in international law, first introduced by them in a treaty with Spain in 1580; an innovation which found no countenance in England when the attempt was made to put it into practice. The Elizabethan admiral Monson voices the complaint in his 'Tracts', wherein he records that when Cumberland was on his way to the coast of Spain in 1591, many Dutch ships laden with enemy goods were met. 'Therein may appear the abuse offered to us by the people of Holland, who, though they were the first that engaged us in the war with Spain, and we bore the brunt of it eighteen years together, yet did they cunningly maintain their trade and supplied the Spaniards with ammunition, victuals and intelligence against us.'

To enforce the contraband decree of 1589 a squadron was stationed in the Straits of Dover with orders to arrest all ships bound to Spain with goods of the defined contraband character on board. To avoid this the Hanse sent their ships north-about round Scotland, a step the Queen with her limited forces could not prevent. All, however, did not reach their destinations. One outstanding success of the otherwise unsuccessful expedition to Lisbon was that Drake's ships intercepted off the Tagus a Hanse fleet of seventy-five ships of which sixty were taken. In spite of the protests of the neutrals these measures for depriving the enemy of the supplies he needed for his fleet and army were continued throughout the war. In 1596 clear intimation was given to all the Powers concerned, in a proclamation circulated to them in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, that, while the Queen intended to live in friendship with all except Spain, she would arrest the ships of all who should give 'manifest aid with their ships, artillery, victuals and other warlike provisions for the invasion of her Majesty'.

Ministers did not confine their activities to the sea or backgrounds of commerce. Search was also made for allies. The

Porte was approached with a proposal that the Sultan should send a fleet of his galleys to the coasts of Spain, Italy, and Africa, thereby to effect a diversion of Spanish strength from Flanders. It was suggested to him that it would be well worth his while to contribute to the common effort against the Spaniard since, if Philip should once succeed in conquering Europe, he would be in a position to bring the whole strength of Christendom to bear on the Turkish Empire. The Sultan gave consideration to the proposal. He asked the King of France for the use of Toulon as a base. But, as he was then deeply engaged in a war with Persia, nothing came of the proposal. It was the first, but was not to be the last, occasion on which a diversion in the Mediterranean by means of sea power was aimed at by British statesmen.

While these many excellent intentions designed to bring further pressure on Spain and to raise up new enemies against her were being set in motion, the measures essential for enforcement of the decrees and for assuring the prospective ally that he would be on the winning side were not being taken. The measures needed were, in a word, the strengthening of England's sea power. It was plain that the Flotas were the life-blood of Spain and that her continued aggression depended on their arrival at Seville and Cadiz. It was equally plain that Spain's ability to ensure the arrival of those Flotas resided in her navy, and, therefore, that the destruction of that navy was the direct and certain way of isolating her from her external sources of supply. But no concerted and consistent strategy directed towards that object was adopted. In place of expanding the English fighting forces at sea they were actually reduced. Expenditure on the navy fell from £66,000 in 1590 to £40,000 in 1594. In place of a continuous concentration of force against the Spanish navy and the Flotas, the warfare was conducted by spasmodic operations of a merely sporadic character. The squadrons employed were too weak to tackle the strengthened escorts with which the Spaniards now protected their great ocean convoys, still less to overcome the reinforcing fleets from Cadiz and Lisbon. Though Drake's campaign in 1587 had demonstrated beyond all possible question that a base abroad was needed if effective and continued action against the enemy at sea were to be conducted, and though the Azores fulfilled

exactly the requirements of such a base—as Don Antonio had urged in 1580 when he had invited the Queen to co-operate with him in reconquering them—no attempt was made to seize a position in that crucial area. The most decisive course of action that could have been adopted would have been one which aimed at compelling the Spaniards to come to sea and engage in battle. There could be no more promising method of bringing that about, in conditions favourable to a decision—that is, at a distance from the Spanish ports—than the threat of attack upon the Flotas by a force superior to the ocean escorts of galleons. Such a threat must, in so far as the word 'must' may be used in the uncertain game of war, bring out the Spanish fleet in force from the home ports to protect the vital convoys. As we shall see, this method of attempting to force action upon an enemy who is dependent on oversea communications permeated the minds of the English statesmen in the two later wars with the Dutch; and, indeed, such a result followed the appearance of a squadron off the Azores under Hawkins in 1591, when, in order to defend the homecoming Flota, a Spanish fleet was sent out under Don Alonzo de Bazan to protect it, and a battle was only prevented by bad weather which drove the Spaniards back to harbour without making contact. Certainly the Flotas were more than once threatened, but only by small, and generally private, squadrons, too weak to bring about a decision if the opportunity arose, and for brief periods, not for continuous and sustained effort.

So, for six years, the English efforts at sea were of the secondary character of a *guerre de course*. Cumberland, Hawkins, Frobisher, Howard, and others, in command of comparatively weak forces, operated in the West Indies, off the Azores, and the coast of Spain. They did no small injury to Spanish trade. They delayed more than once the sailings of the Flotas. They contributed to the bankrupting of the King. They added a golden page to England's naval history in Grenville's splendid fight off Flores in the *Revenge*, a fight against immense odds most glorious to those who fought, but most discreditable to the statesmen who elected to send weak forces in place of strong ones. It is the duty of the statesman to assemble superior forces at the decisive spot at the right time. The English squadrons were never at the right place, at the right time, in force sufficient

to obtain a decision. And, while this indeterminate strategy was being pursued by the Queen and her ministers, Spain was busy repairing the losses she had suffered in the Armada campaign and rectifying the faults in the designs of her fighting ships which that greater disaster disclosed. King Philip rightly interpreted his defeat, in so far as its material aspect was concerned, to the superiority of the English type of fighting ship over the Spanish. He set to work to rebuild his navy on English lines. The materials needed for the rebuilding continued to reach him in spite of decrees forbidding the neutral to provide them, decrees rendered invalid through the absence of ships at sea to enforce them. So a new Spanish navy came into being; and so too the British islands were again threatened with invasion on several occasions after 1589, and English offensives were cancelled or postponed owing to the necessity of providing for defence.

Distracting elements in the European situation certainly contributed to, though they do not excuse, this strategical failure to make use of the potential sea power of England. The danger to the Netherlands, though greatly reduced by the victory of 1588, was not wholly removed, for there were still strong Spanish armies in Flanders, and it was not deemed possible to refrain from sending military aid to hold the coast towns. In 1590 the eternal problem again arose of whether aid could best be given by action on land or action at sea to an ally threatened with invasion. Following the assassination of King Henry III of France, civil war broke out in France between the Protestant claimant, Henry of Navarre, and the Holy League. Philip of Spain at once seized the opportunity to make himself master of that distracted country. As the Dutch in their hour of danger had called on the Queen for help, so Henry in his did the same: and, as self-preservation had dictated Elizabeth's intervention in aid of the Hollanders, so the same practical consideration dictated giving aid to France. If France were to become a mere province of Spain, if its great ports in Brittany were to become bases for the Spanish navy and its seafaring folk to form the crews of Spanish ships, Spain would be in a far more favourable position for attacking England than she had been when she had to bring an army up Channel and embark troops from the shoal tidal ports of the Low Countries. 'Whenever the last day of France came it would also be the eve of the destruction of

England.' So said Elizabeth. Pedro Valdez spoke truly when, at a later date, he told his King that 'our enemies fear that if the port of Brest is faithful to your Majesty it will injure them greatly'.

There were, therefore, good reasons why England should come to the help of Henry of Navarre. The question was, what was the most effective form in which, at that moment, it was practicable to give the help required. Now, as it had been in the case of the Dutch, the governing factor seemed to be Time. Henry needed help at once, for the armies of the League were pressing him back into Normandy, and no 'long-term' policy of attack on the Spanish sea lines of communication appeared to offer a promise of averting the defeat of his army and the establishment of a Spanish naval base at Brest. Spain had lines of military communication by sea—3,500 Spanish troops had been sent by sea to western France from Corunna during 1590—but, though action at sea might prevent the arrival of further forces, those already on the spot were too numerous to ignore and must be dealt with at once. So, after some hard bargaining, the Queen decided to give military aid to Henry IV. She sent 3,000 troops to Dieppe. They were as ill equipped and ill fed as the unhappy English soldiers had been in Flanders. How much help they gave in staving off French defeat is uncertain, but what is certain is that they gave it at a cost of the lives of three-quarters of their number, and while they were fighting in Picardy, a Spanish army under Parma invaded France from the Netherlands. That invasion was brought to a standstill by lack of money to pay the army, and that lack of money was due to the English operations at sea. The treasure which should have arrived from the Indies had been delayed by the action of the cruising squadrons: in Madrid it was greatly feared that it had been taken by them. 'If that fleet be lost', wrote a correspondent, 'His Majesty will suffer loss and all his kingdom be ruined.' The treasure fleet, however, got through, for the measures taken to intercept it had been inadequate, and sailed into San Lucar late in November to the great rejoicing of Spain. Cruising squadrons had imposed delay and hampered action. They had not been able to do more.

It was now—in 1590—becoming plain to many in England

that this dissipation of effort between land and sea forces, and of the sea forces themselves, was a fruitless and futile form of strategy. The veteran soldier who commanded in France, Sir Roger Williams, expressed a fundamental truth when he wrote: 'Believe me, unless we can give great blows either on the Indian Navy or in the countries whence his treasure comes, or on his disciplined army, I mean the Duke of Parma's, or on the main of Spain or Portugal, be assured all the rest is but consuming of little fires.' Obvious as this was to the general, it was still not obvious to the Queen. Grudging expense, she continued 'the consuming of little fires'. To be sure there was reason for grudging, in that she was poor and in debt. But the policy was not a cheap one. The army in Brittany that was effecting so little and losing so many men was costing £60,000 a year; in addition there were subsidies to the King of France, the upkeep of another army in the Netherlands, loans to the Dutch—loans never repaid—which, in all, amounted to about £800,000. The cost of the military operations in Ireland between 1588 and 1599 ran to close upon £3½ millions. For a fraction of these sums a navy might have been equipped and maintained which would not merely have checked an army's advance in Picardy and caused anxiety in Madrid for treasure ships, but would have brought the whole structure of Spain tumbling about the King's ears. With a base in the Azores and a strong fleet in constant cruising there, no Flotas could have expected to pass unmolested. With adequate squadrons off the Spanish ports, the supplies of stores from the Baltic would have been interrupted and the building of Spain's new ships arrested, even if it were not stopped. Far from being a cheap way of making war, the Queen's was a most costly one, as dissipation of effort invariably is.

Though a truce was made between Henry and the League in the summer of 1593, Spanish troops remained in Brittany. Brest was besieged and a small Spanish force of galleys at Blavet acted as a threat to the English coast. Elizabeth could not be indifferent to the position at Brest. 'In the hands of Spain', said Sir John Norris, 'Brest will prove as prejudicial for England as if they possessed Ireland.' Therefore a conjunct expedition of 4,000 men was sent to expel the Spaniards and they, with a French reinforcement of 2,000, saved Brest.

All this, however, was only defensive warfare. While it warded off Spanish blows it did not do enough to force Spain to desist from her aggression. The resistance offered to her in France and Flanders, combined with the injuries done to her commerce, forced a continued expenditure upon her while depriving her of some of the means of meeting it. But attrition works slowly, and such attrition as there was offered little promise of producing a decision. This was becoming more and more evident to the statesmen. In 1595 the need for a return to offensive action was recognized, and Drake was called forth from his retirement to command, with Hawkins as his colleague, an expedition to make an attack on the port of embarkation of the Spanish treasure at Panama. But such delays occurred in the preparation of the expedition, and there was so much leakage of the intention, that Spain, warned in time, was able to take steps to forestall the attack: and it failed. Still, the desire for an offensive strategy had at last been reborn. It found expression in 1596 in a great expedition to Cadiz. This time adequate and well-equipped forces were provided, secrecy was preserved in the preparation, and steps were taken to mislead the enemy as to its destination if the fleet should be sighted on its way. Thereby complete surprise was achieved. Cadiz was taken, the Flota in harbour was burnt by the Spaniards themselves to prevent it from falling into the hands of the English, a quantity of shipping and stores in the port was destroyed, and the trade of the Indies was effectually disorganized. As a raid the Cadiz expedition was an outstanding success, but as an operation on the larger scale of strategy it was insufficient to effect a material improvement in the strategical situation, for though considerable injury was done to Spanish shipping it did not destroy, or seriously diminish, Spain's fighting strength at sea; nor did it cripple her financially. Her convoys continued to come home. The damage, great as it was, could be made good. The course of the war was not greatly altered. The reason lies ultimately in the fact that the blow was struck at the shipping and the city, not at the fighting forces at sea. It stirred the King of Spain to exert himself by every possible means to strike England back, and he possessed both the navy and the means of increasing it for so doing. In October of that same year a Spanish fleet of 100 sail put to sea from Ferrol to invade England, and England

was again thrown on the defensive. That fleet was practically shattered by a gale; and the same fate was suffered by another fleet of 136 ships, carrying 9,000 troops, which attempted an invasion in the autumn of the following year. Yet another attempt, prepared in 1599 on an even more formidable scale, was abandoned at almost the last minute in order to deal with a threat of the Dutch on the Flota and the Azores. Finally, later in 1601, a Spanish army succeeded in landing in Ireland, where it was first rounded up by the army and afterwards cut off by the fleet and forced to surrender. To these successive dangers of invasion the nation was exposed because its statesmen, after twelve years of war, had neither devoted their attention to the maintenance of their own sea power nor directed the efforts of their combined arms to crushing the sea power of their formidable enemy. The fate of a well-conceived offensive plan for 1597 illustrates this. A Spanish fleet was then known to be assembling at Ferrol for the invasion of England, and a combined English force was fitted out for the purpose of destroying it and, when that should have been effected, of proceeding to the Azores to intercept the Flota and capture the much needed base in that area. The scheme was excellent, but the most excellent designs are idle dreams unless the means for executing them exist. Neither in men or material did those means exist. The seamen, discontented at their treatment by the Crown, were not forthcoming, the ships had been neglected and were leaky and unfit for the sea. Owing principally to these two causes there was a long delay in preparing the expedition, and during that delay a threat arose of a Spanish raid upon the south coast of England from Blavet which resulted in five-sixths of the expeditionary force of 6,000 being disembarked for the defence of the coast. Hence the attack on Ferrol had to be given up. The fleet, under an inexperienced commander, was sent to the Azores, where it did nothing. Before it returned home the attempt from Ferrol was begun. Bad weather and lack of Spanish seamanship, not the dispositions and use of their sea power by the English statesmen, saved the country on that occasion.

In 1601 the Queen renewed the attempt she had made in 1599 to create a European 'boycott' of Spain, thereby to cut off the supply of stores needed for building and victualling a navy. She issued a decree in which she pointed out that without

the help given by the neutral Powers Spain could not fit out a fleet, and the great advantages that would accrue to the whole world if that help were withheld. She called on the civilized world to combine in refusing aid to the great oppressor of all. 'The stoping, hindering and impeaching of all commerce with him in his territories in Spain and Portingall will quickly in all likelihood, give an end to these bloudie and unnaturall warres which disturb the general peace of all these parts of Christendome.' So she once more forbade 'all and every one of what condition, realme or land soever, none excepted, to trade, ship, carry or transport by sea, directly or indirectly, under what colour or pretence, soever, any ships goods wares or merchandise to any part of the Spanish dominions'. As a statement of intention the decree was as unexceptionable as its predecessor of 1589; but as, like it, it lacked the sanction of a navy to enforce it, it was an ineffective instrument of war. The neutral trader was not disposed to abandon the rich and immediate profits he was enjoying for the more remote, though greater, profits arising from giving 'an end to these bloudie and unnaturall warres'.

But the end of this war was then approaching. After the complete defeat of the Spanish land and sea forces which invaded Ireland in 1601 the Government took stock of the reasons why the country had been exposed to that imminent danger. The invasion of 1601 had only been defeated after the enemy had landed a powerful army, and then at a cost to the English forces, from first to last, of some 6,000 soldiers. That the defence had had to be made on land, at this cost and risk, was because ministers had failed to maintain and to use their navy. Though it had been known in July that a powerful fleet of some 38 sail and an army of 5,000 men were assembling at Cadiz and San Lucar, nothing had been done to prepare a fleet to deal with the threat. Once more, as in 1597, ships were foul and unfitted, seamen were lacking, and before the obvious measure of attacking the enemy at his point of departure—the only certain point of interception, since it was impossible to say where he might be intending to land between Ostend and Cape Clear—could be taken, this Spanish Armada had sailed. An offensive defence being therefore impossible, the English fleet had to await the enemy's appearance on the defensive, and it was not even on its

way westward from the eastern ports until five weeks after the landing of the enemy in Ireland had been reported. The defeat of the invaders had been achieved by a very narrow margin and at a high cost. The very real danger to which the country had been exposed awakened the Government to their errors of omission in not preparing a fleet in time, and of employing a defensive strategy. They now saw that a strong fleet was needed, and that it must be used not in an idle defensive but in an offensive with the definite object of forcing action upon the enemy and destroying his fighting ships; that the means whereby action could best be forced upon him was by threatening his great trading and treasure fleets, thus to place him in the dilemma of losing his vital supplies or coming to sea with his fleet to defend it; and that the place where this could be done was in the approaches to the coast of Spain. It was not possible to put this sounder system into action at once. The seamen had been so scurvily treated that many had avoided service under the Crown and it was even necessary to have resort to the disgraceful expedient of hiring 200 Dutch sailors to complete the crews. When, eventually, the fleet was ready, it sailed for Spain, and two cruises were made during 1602 in which it made some important captures, did some effective damage, and removed any danger of a Spanish attack at home.

The design for the year 1603 showed a still further advance. In that design the navy was at long last to be put to a proper use. A blockade of the Spanish coast was to be established and maintained uninterruptedly throughout the year from February to November by two strong squadrons, each capable of engaging the main forces of the enemy, relieving each other—practically the plan proposed by Hawkins in 1589. The object was, as in 1602, to force a decisive action, or, if the enemy would not fight, to strangle him by cutting off his vital supplies of trade and treasure. To stop the supply of naval stores for the re-equipment and building of his navy ships were to take the place of decrees. A squadron in the Narrow Seas was to intercept the shipping coming from the Baltic. Finally, in order to protect the English shipping, which was now being industriously attacked by Spanish privateers from Dunkirk and the ports on the Bay, an auxiliary fleet of light vessels was to be formed to provide convoy. Here, at last, was a comprehensive and

reasoned strategy. One thing alone was lacking: the acquisition of a base abroad. For this, however, the means, a well-trained, well-equipped, and adequate expeditionary army, was still lacking.

The intended campaign was not put to the test of practice. In March 1603 the Queen died and, with the accession of her pacifically minded successor, the war came to an end.

Thus a war which had officially begun in 1585—the earlier operations in the Indies being no more than retaliatory acts—had lasted eighteen years. In its third year a resounding defeat had been inflicted on the Spanish navy and the command of the sea was in England's hands. How was it that the sea power of England was not able to bring upon Spain the pressure which would result from depriving her of that sea-borne commerce in which, as Philip II said on his death-bed, 'doth consist the power and the might of Spain'?

The reason for the prolongation of the struggle is that the statesman in whose hands the direction of the national effort lay never understood either the capabilities or the use of the nation's sea power. That 'statesman' was the Queen. She had advisers who well understood that Spain's sea communications were vital to her and that Philip could be subdued by cutting those communications, and who desired to concentrate force against them. They urged a vigorous policy with that in view. The Queen rejected the advice. She chose to make her principal efforts where her enemy was strongest—on land—and, in the years from 1585 to 1603 she expended a sum of 4½ millions upon land campaigns which yielded no offensive dividend while spending approximately one million only upon the sea forces which were capable of severing Spain's life-line.[1] She aimed her maritime strokes directly at the shipping in place of the fighting forces which defended it and were also the one threat to her kingdom. The forces she employed were weak, their efforts were sporadic and fitful—in Ralegh's words, she 'did all by halves'. Though she lacked bases abroad—that second essential element of sea power—she took no steps to acquire any, with the single exception of the attempt on Lisbon in 1589; nor did she furnish herself with the one means necessary for so doing, a well-equipped and mobile army. In consequence the struggle,

[1] Oppenheim, *Monson's Tracts*, vol. i, p. 10.

as Corbett rightly says, 'degenerated into that most hopeless form of hostilities, an inadequate commercial blockade and a war on seaborne trade. Spain, in spite of hampered resources, was left free patiently to create a navy, and England lost the working command of the sea which Drake had so brilliantly won for her.'[1] In all the years of cruising warfare the English squadrons did not capture a single Spanish treasure fleet.

[1] Corbett, *The Successors of Drake*, p. 409.

II

SEA POWER UNDER THE STUARTS AND THE COMMONWEALTH

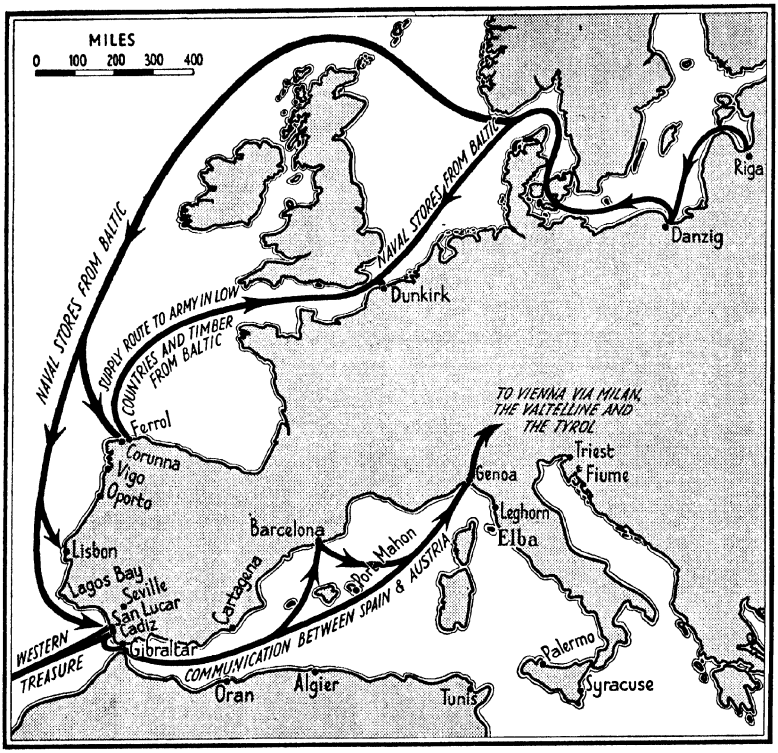
THE accession of King James I was quickly followed by peace with Spain and, with the peace, a rapid decline in the navy. The King had inherited a fleet of twenty-nine good fighting ships, a body of experienced seamen, and an adventurous spirit in the command. He at once drastically reduced expenditure on the navy. During the nineties of the Queen's reign this had averaged from £50,000 to £60,000 a year; in 1605–6 it fell to £30,000, a fall accompanied by an increase of £144,000 on the Court. Shipbuilding and repairs were suspended, all fighting ships at sea were recalled, and the young men of an adventurous spirit who had sought to serve in foreign navies and there gain experience were forbidden to do so. That acute observer, the Venetian ambassador, noted these things and was telling his Government a few years later that England could no longer send out a fleet like that of Elizabeth, and that the youth of the country now preferred a life of ease ashore to one of adventure afloat. The administration of what was left of the navy passed into incompetent and corrupt hands. As a result English sea power sank so low that piracy was able to flourish in the Channel where corsairs, even from the remote ports of Barbary, preyed upon English shipping. No less than 466 merchantmen were taken by these pests between 1609 and 1616. The King gave no protection: it was left to the owners to do what lay in their power to defend their own vessels.

By 1616 the navy had almost ceased to exist, and the losses of shipping and the demonstrable incompetence of the administration led to the appointment of a Commission to inquire into the strength and condition of the navy and to recommend what was necessary 'to provide a navy enough with private ships without foreign aid to encounter any Prince's sea forces'. Two points are to be noted in that order. First, that the hired ship was still counted as an element in the navy, and second, that, in this vital matter of national security, dependence was not to rest upon the uncertain factor of foreign alliances. The Commission reported

in 1618. It had found a most lamentable state of affairs. Out of fifty-three ships, great and small, on the list of the navy, all but a half existed on paper only. A programme of reconstruction was recommended providing for the building of a fleet of thirty powerful ships which would form what to-day we should call the 'battle fleet'. Commerce protection was still regarded as a separate matter: this was to be afforded by 'cruisers' drawn from hired and armed merchant ships. But though the royal ships were intended for the massed battle force, that mass was not to be confined to them alone; they formed a solid nucleus to be reinforced by armed merchantmen. Thus the first English fleet which made its appearance in the Mediterranean in 1620 was composed of six royal and twelve private ships, and the armed merchantman was to continue to figure in the battle line for another half-century, though in steadily decreasing proportions. Thirty years later, when the statesmen of the Commonwealth had provided the country with a great national navy, Blake expressed the wish that not more than two-fifths of a fleet should consist of hired ships, and by the end of the Stuart period the hired ship had disappeared from the battle line.

Though England's sea power had thus declined it had not suffered a complete eclipse. Its aid was competed for by continental Powers, when, owing to the recombination of the Austrian and Spanish branches of the Hapsburgs, Europe was threatened with a Hapsburg hegemony. In turn, Venice, Genoa, France, Holland, and several of the Protestant Princes in Germany saw their individual liberties and even existences in danger, and, under the leadership of Richelieu, an association of these several Powers came into existence which marked the beginning of the long Hapsburg-Bourbon struggle. Sinking to some degree their religious and commercial rivalries, they set themselves in opposition to Austro-Spanish domination, and for that purpose they sought the assistance of England.

Owing to the fact that Spain, the Netherlands, and Austria were separated by the sea, sea power was capable of influencing this continental situation. Except at the cost of a tedious march across France, troops and money could only pass between them by way of the Bay of Biscay and up Channel, where they would be opposed by the Dutch navy, and from Spain to Austria, across the Gulf of Lions, from the Spanish ports to Genoa, then



MAP II. ILLUSTRATING DEPENDENCE OF SPANISH-AUSTRIAN HAPSBURGS ON SEA COMMUNICATIONS

Spanish money, derived from America, and Spanish troops can only reach Austria by sea, across the Gulf of Lions to Genoa or another port in Italy and thence via Milan and the Valtelline to Venice. Hence proposals for either a squadron to occupy the sea route or an expedition to occupy Genoa.

Spanish troops to the Low Countries move with greater ease and economy and speed by sea from Ferrol or Corunna to Dunkirk or Antwerp than by road through France.

Spain needs naval stores from the Baltic which must either pass through the Channel or proceed north-about round Scotland.

The capture and occupation of Cadiz would provide the fleet with a base from which it could permanently blockade the port of San Lucar, to which the western treasure goes, cut an important line of communication between Spain and Austria, and, because of the disadvantages this would impose upon Spain, tend to produce a diversion of Spanish troops from Italy to recover the port. The destruction of the Spanish fleet, if achieved, would deprive the enemy of the sea force needed for the invasion of England.

in alliance with Spain, from whence they travelled by way of Milan and the Valtelline to the Empire. A hostile fleet in the Mediterranean was thus an obstruction to this traffic. Further, there was the old question of the treasure fleets. Both Spain and the Empire needed money, and the source of wealth was the Spanish sea-borne trade with the Indies, vulnerable to English attack at sea.

Elizabeth, in her day, had had to decide upon the manner in which she would give help to the Dutch and the French. Her choice lay, as we have seen, between sending troops to reinforce their armies on land and using her fleet to interrupt the movements of the enemies' armies at sea, or to cut off the national supplies of bullion and goods needed for the prosecution of the war. King James, whose interest in the European war lay primarily in his desire to restore his son-in-law to the throne of the Palatinate, had a similar choice to make. But alone he could do nothing: he must combine his efforts with those of the other Powers ranging themselves against the combined Hapsburgs; and each of these Powers had its own views as to the form which English aid should take. Certain Protestant Princes in the north wanted an English army to be sent to Germany; France wanted an English army in the Valtelline and an English squadron in the Mediterranean to cut the military line of communications between Spain and Genoa, or to capture Genoa. James toyed disastrously with the first of these, sending to the Continent a ragged rabble which quickly melted away.

After the death of James Charles I adopted a 'naval' policy. It was not the French policy of control of the lines of Mediterranean communication. Charles aimed his blow direct at Spain's sea power. In 1626 he sent a fleet and army to capture Cadiz, to destroy the Spanish fleet, and then to occupy that port as a base for the fleet which would be well placed for intercepting the treasure fleets whose commercial harbours were at Cadiz and San Lucar. The instructions to the commander express the object of the expedition.

'The chief intention of the voyage being the weakening and disabling of the enemy in his sea forces and trade, by taking and destroying his ships, galleys, frigates and vessels of all sorts; by spoiling his provisions in his magazines and port towns, and by depriving

him of seamen mariners and gunners... and by taking and possessing some place or places in the many of his dominions as may support and countenance our successive fleets.'

From this, three results were expected to arise in favour of the King's ultimate object, the recovery of the Palatinate. The destruction of the Spanish fleet would give command of the sea. With the command of the sea an effective blockade of Spain would be possible with Cadiz and San Lucar either occupied or blockaded. The financial sinews of war needed by both Spain and the Empire would be severed. At the same time England would be secured against invasion through the destruction of the fleet. Finally, a continued occupation of Cadiz might cause a diversion of Spanish troops from Italy, to the advantage of the continental allies.

Here was a truly comprehensive use of sea power in the true tradition formulated by Drake. The land and sea forces are combined to strike at the enemy's principal fighting force at sea, a base is to be taken in the area through which passes enemy trade regarded as vital, and that trade is then to be assaulted in the most effective form. The aid to the allies consists of depriving the enemy of what they need for the support of their military campaigns—money—while the loss to the enemy of so important a position as the principal naval arsenal promises to provoke an attempt to recover it by a withdrawal of troops from the theatres where the allies are engaged. Unhappily both preparation and performance fell far short of planning. The supplies furnished were inadequate, the troops had been newly raised and lacked both training and discipline, the commanders both at sea and on land were wanting in experience in this form of warfare. Unreadiness delayed the departure of the expedition and, though great damage was inflicted, the fine design came to no more than a raiding blow. It showed that both administration and command were in need of extensive reform.

Other events were simultaneously showing a need for an increase in the material strength of the navy. France was again turning her eyes seaward, and developing her commerce and colonies; Holland's sea power had been steadily expanding in both the elements of fighting and trading ships during the quarter of a century since she had been secured, largely through the efforts of England, against the Spanish danger. The English

statesmen could not be indifferent to the growth of two naval Powers, each with bases close to the coasts of England, and whose common interest in their opposition to Spain was drawing them together. Though Spain might be their enemy at the moment, England might be the enemy of the morrow, for political associations are never permanent. There was, too, much loose powder lying about in the relations between England and the United Provinces. In the Eastern Seas the Dutch were pursuing a policy of excluding all others from the trade, a policy as monopolistic as that of Spain against which Grotius had strongly protested in 1609. In the North Sea there were disputes concerning the rights of fishing. In the Channel King Charles had revived his father's claim for what was called the 'Sovereignty of the Sea', wherein King James had proclaimed himself the guardian of order in the Narrow Seas through which traders and honest men might sail without fear 'under the peace of our Lord the King'. But there was little of that peace at the time. Owing to the weakness of the navy the pirates of the Flemish ports, of the Spanish ports on the Atlantic, and even of Algiers, were preying on the 'honest men' with impunity.

In the light of these many events and prospects an increase in the English navy was felt to be necessary. The 'Ship Money Fleets' were the outcome. However unconstitutional the tax of ship money may have been, it was a true expression of the needs of the country for sea power. The first of these fleets put to sea in June 1635 with orders 'to keep the peace within those seas, permitting no fighting or capture at sea whatever even by nations engaged in hostilities'. Composed, however, as the Royal Navy of the Ship Money fleet was of a small number of great ships, it proved wholly unable to put a stop to the depredations of the host of small and swift pirate vessels, too widely dispersed to be dealt with by a few powerful ships concentrated in one body and capable of outsailing them if encountered. And while it was thus incapable of performing these police functions, it was not strong enough to preserve order between nations engaged in hostilities. From 1621 onwards, Spain and the United Provinces were at war, in the course of which Dutch ships, in contemptuous defiance of the pretended English sovereignty, conducted continuous operations in the Channel, visiting and searching shipping and blockading the port of

Dunkirk. The pretence of sovereignty was finally exploded in 1639 when a Dutch fleet under Tromp, having driven a great Spanish fleet and convoy of transports into Dover Roads, sailed into the roadstead and there, in English territorial waters and under the eyes of the weak English squadron, totally destroyed the Spanish expedition.

While the Dutch could thus treat the King's proclamation with impunity, lacking as it did the sanction of force, the threat of a French navy was growing. Under the energetic direction of Richelieu a fleet was being built. 'Armed strength', said the Cardinal, 'demands that the King should not only be strong on land but also at sea.' Under his powerful impulse the navy of France grew, in the course of the five years 1626–31, to a force of thirty-nine ships; a number little less than the existing navy of England. The rise of this new sea power was thus commented on by a contemporary officer, Colonel Harwood: 'If the French King should come to be as powerful or more than his Majesty at sea he will be a more dangerous and powerful neighbour than Spain, whom hitherto this kingdom of later years only had cause to fear.'

The Ship Money fleets were designed to be a means of providing the necessary security. Apart from the constitutional problem to which they gave rise, they were a failure for two other causes. Besides being inadequate to their purpose they represented a conception of national defence that was becoming, if indeed it had not already become, obsolete. The needs of defence had by now passed outside the medieval form of a small Royal Navy, the property of the reigning monarch. National defence called for a national navy. A nucleus of a comparatively small number of regular fighting ships, augmented when the occasion arose by an indefinite and uncertain number of hired ships with untrained crews, was incapable, in the new conditions created by the rise of the Dutch and French navies, of meeting the needs of security at sea, needs that were growing with the extension of both commerce and colonies.

In the Civil War the navy declared for the Parliament. While the victories of the Parliamentary armies from Chalgrove Field to Worcester are the familiar subjects of our everyday history, little attention is usually paid to the part which the Parliamentary command of the sea played in the war. Yet it was one

of the determining causes of those victories. The King lacked money, powder, arms, and all the equipment of an army, and, though his friends on the Continent in France, Holland, and elsewhere were willing to supply them, and even to send reinforcements to his army, they were unable to do so. The Parliamentary Navy under Warwick barred the way. Clarendon speaks of 'this loss of the whole navy' as unspeakable and 'a terrible addition to the strength of his enemies'.[1] Many attempts were made to bring in stores from abroad for the use of the Royal armies. They failed. Thus in 1646 the Duke of Courland, who possessed a small but effective navy of some twenty-five ships, having been asked to send a squadron to protect the passage of a body of French troops to England, replied that, while he was willing thus to help the King, he regretted that he was unable to do so, as he could not fit out a fleet strong enough to face the Parliamentary forces that blocked the approaches to the English ports. Some ships got through the blockade of those ports held by the King's forces, but 'much more was taken and intercepted at sea than ever arrived at any port within his Majesty's obedience'. An almost exact parallel is to be seen in effects of the command of the sea by the Federal navy in the American Civil War of 1861–6, which closed the sea to the Confederates and contributed in a marked manner to their defeat. The same thing, but on a far greater scale, has happened in our own times. The supplies of munitions with which the maritime allies have sustained Russia by way of the Persian Gulf and Murmansk could never have reached their destinations if the Axis navies had held the command of the sea.

The statesmen of the Commonwealth expanded the navy manyfold. Where Charles I, owing to parliamentary opposition in a time of peace, had been unable to produce one ship of war, the Commonwealth, in spite of the costs of the war, built ships by tens or more, besides making use of armed vessels. The Royal Navy became a National Navy. Its fleets were commanded by hard-fighting officers with both military and sea experience in place of the courtiers who had bungled the Cadiz expedition. Their seamen, in place of being neglected and discouraged, were better paid and cared for than they had been at any earlier time. So, in its two elements, fighting ships and

[1] Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, Book V, pp. 371 et seq.

seamen, the Commonwealth statesmen strengthened immeasurably the country's sea power. In the element of shipping they passed Acts of Navigation in 1650, 1651, and 1652, of which the aim was the building up of maritime strength and the breaking of the Dutch monopoly of sea transport. Though increase of trade was the stated purpose of those Acts, that purpose was itself a means to an end, and that end was the nation's fighting strength at sea. The preamble to the Act of 1651 made this plain. The Act, it said, was designed 'for the increase of the shipping and the encouragement of the Navigation of the Nation, which, under the good providence and protection of God is so great a means of the welfare and safety of the Commonwealth'. Under the Navigation Act colonial shipping received its first encouragement.

The Navigation Acts were commended in later years by Adam Smith. 'The defence of Great Britain depends very much upon the number of its sailors and shipping. The Act of Navigation, therefore, very properly endeavours to give the sailors and shipping of Great Britain the monopoly of the trade of their country. Though some of the provisions might have proceeded from national animosity to Holland' he went on to say, the Acts were 'as wise as if they had all been dictated by the most deliberate wisdom'. He did not regard them as advantageous to commerce. 'The Act of Navigation is not favourable to foreign commerce or to the growth of that opulence which can arise from it. . . . As defence, however, is of much more importance than opulence, the Act of Navigation is, perhaps, the wisest of all the commercial regulations of England.' So, too, with the fisheries. Bounties on the fisheries did not stimulate the wealth of the nation, but 'it may perhaps be thought that they contribute to its defence, by augmenting the number of its sailors and shipping'. We of to-day, who could not have survived but for the services of the seamen of the merchant navy and fishing fleets, can well endorse the wisdom of these words. Adam Smith was less foreseeing in his estimate of the value of colonies which, he said, should be measured by the military forces they could furnish for defence and the revenues they produced for purposes of security. Since they not only contributed neither men nor money, but themselves needed military garrisons and were the causes of disputes, they were a liability.

Perhaps, not unnaturally, he could not cast his eyes into the distant future when the 'colonies' would not only provide their own defence, but would send great armies across the sea to take part in campaigns from the east of Asia to the west of Europe and the south of Africa: but he failed to see that they could also provide ships and seamen, the raw materials for the building and equipping of ships, and that third element of sea power, bases abroad, without which a navy's activities would be confined to the limit of the seagoing endurance of its ships.

The great expansion of the navy raised again the problem which had been experienced in the Elizabethan period—that of the supply of building materials. Elizabeth, as we have seen, had Acts for the purpose of safeguarding the supply of shipbuilding timber. Now the needs of the navy outstripped the native production of timber and thereby the Baltic supplies became of essential importance. This was brought home to the Government during the first year of the Dutch war of 1652–4, when, England's fortunes appearing to be at a low ebb after Tromp's victory in the Channel, the King of Denmark, who held the commanding position in the Sound, seized British ships laden with naval stores and timber. At the same time the Dutch, who had professed themselves the great supporters of the right of neutrals to carry goods between belligerents and who were so often strenuously to deny the English claim that naval stores were legitimately to be treated as contraband, declared these goods contraband and seized neutral vessels with such cargo bound to Lisbon, in order to prevent them from reaching England. A nation's interpretation of international law is indeed coloured by circumstance.

When Denmark acted in this manner, the Commonwealth was too fully engaged to take action against her. They sent a squadron to convoy the Baltic trade, but it was scattered by a storm and the attempt to open the Baltic had to be dropped. Fortunately, the tables were being turned at sea: but the intervention was a hindrance to building. At the peace Cromwell brought the King of Denmark sharply to book, and in order to prevent a recurrence of the event he took steps to arrange a treaty with Sweden which should provide for keeping the Sound open. But the episode impressed the Commonwealth statesmen with the danger to which a country like England, whose security

depended entirely on her sea power, was exposed, when a vital source of supply might be closed in war at the whim, or for the convenience of, a foreign Power, or when the essential goods should only be available at the ruinous prices that a monopolist nation or association might choose to impose. So their eyes turned to the colonies in North America and the beginning was made of a trade in spars with New England. The first cargo of these spars arrived in 1653. The innovation was opposed, as all innovations which affect existing interests adversely are liable to be opposed, by those who, wedded to the Baltic market and its goods, were averse from the introduction of new materials and the opening of a rival source of supply. Nevertheless the trade began. Among its advocates was Samuel Pepys, who put the matter thus: 'We have suffered ourselves to come to want of our own growth almost everything that goes to the building and equipping of a ship . . . whereas a naval nation that could have done it ought to have encouraged to have everything within itself.' During the century and a half of many wars at sea that followed, England had to ransack the forests of the world to provide the timber of her needs as one or another of the existing sources was closed to her through being in the occupation of her enemies. The problem is still with us in another form,[1] the supply of the oil, which has replaced spars and canvas and coal as the propelling agent of the ship.

Henceforward the Baltic became an integral factor in British policy because of its direct relation to British sea power. The balance of power in the Baltic, and the preservation of peace in that sea, became a primary British interest. When the extension of Swedish power under Charles X appeared to foreshadow a Swedish hegemony of the Baltic and a Swedish control of the Sound, Cromwell warned Parliament of the effects this would produce upon their sea power. 'If they can shut us out of the Baltic and make themselves masters of that sea, where is your trade? Where are the materials to preserve your shipping? Where will you be able to challenge any right by sea or justify yourselves against a foreign invasion of your own soil? Think upon it, this is in design.' So too Thurloe, who reminded Parliament that if the entrance to the Baltic were in the hands of a Power who might exclude the English shipping, they would be

[1] For a survey of this problem, cf. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power.*

deprived of their naval stores and put to great distress, as they had been when the Danes closed the Sound in 1652.

Though the colonial supply grew it did not reach a figure sufficient to meet the full needs of the country: the Baltic remained the main source of supply. Later governments were to pass a number of Acts fostering the development of the resources of the colonies. Among the many unhappy results of the loss of the Northern colonies was the loss of this most important element in sea power. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars Britain was ransacking the forests of the world for timber and spars: India, the Ionian Islands, the Black Sea, and Canada were among her sources of supply.

'The forests of her Empire saved England from disastrous consequences to her navy when the English woodlands and the regular foreign supply proved insufficient during the struggle with Napoleon.

'The experiences of that decade reflect the wisdom of the men a century earlier who attempted to make the Empire self-sufficient in the matter of naval necessities even if the cost might be greater.'[1]

By these many means the Commonwealth statesmen fostered the country's sea power in men and material.

They upheld also those maritime rights which render sea power effective: they created an administrative system more efficient than any that had preceded it, and superior in some respects to those that followed.

Passing from the Commonwealth's maintenance of sea power in peace to its use in war. The first war with the Dutch broke out in 1652. Though there was a long list of grievances with the Dutch, some going back as far as the Elizabethan war, that which actually brought matters to a head was, fundamentally, the maintenance of those maritime rights without which sea power is a shield but not a sword, or at best a blunted sword. As Elizabeth in her day had insisted on her right to cut off her enemy's means of waging war, so in their day the statesmen of the Commonwealth stood firm upon the same rights. Being engaged in a war with France, they took steps to stop supplies going to the French ports. Those goods were largely carried in Dutch ships, and these were intercepted and searched by the English cruisers. The Dutch refused to submit to this interference, asserting, under the then novel doctrine of 'Free ships

[1] Albion, op. cit., p. 368.

Free Goods', their right to trade with whom they would in war. In the words of Lord Liverpool in 1759, they aimed in their policy 'to obtain recognition of the principle that whenever any other nation was engaged in war, they might then enjoy, as neutrals, the right of protecting the property of the enemy. They alone, therefore, could carry on the freightage of the countries and reap, when their neighbours were at war, the advantages proposed.' In support of this innovation in International Law they commissioned an additional 150 ships of war, bringing their navy up to some 226 vessels, stating that this was 'for the security of the sea and the preservation of the shipping and commerce of the United Provinces'. The English Government accepted the challenge. It added ships to its fleet and before long there were two masses of fighting ships cruising in close proximity in the Channel, each concerned with the duty of enforcing the orders of its Government. A scuffle in the Downs, arising largely over a misunderstanding on the wholly different question of the salute to the flag, was the spark which set alight the great quantity of loose tinder that already lay between the two nations. War followed.

The direction of the war was in the hands of a Council of State. This body of statesmen decided the course of the strategy, provided the means of executing it, and issued the orders to the sea commanders. In Holland the same duties were performed by a body known as 'The States General'. England possessed one great advantage over her enemy in her geographical position, flanking as she did the two routes of the Dutch sea communications. Another, of great importance, was her unified control. Whereas she had a single navy and one Admiralty, the Dutch had five. No decisions could be made by the States General if one of the provinces dissented; and among the provinces themselves a fatal spirit of localism prevailed, expressing itself in a rigid insistence upon the maintenance of provincial sovereignty. There is indeed a striking parallel in this respect between the United Provinces and the Athenian Empire, and in the results.

'The Athenian Empire . . . began to decline not many years after it had reached the height of its power. . . . The sovereign city was the basis of the civilized Hellenic world, and no city state was ready, if it could help it, to surrender any part of its sovereignty. In the

face of a common danger cities might be ready to combine together in a league, each parting with some of its sovereign power in a common federal council but preserving the right of secession. . . . When the motives which induced such a surrender became less strong or pressing, each member was anxious to gain its complete independence and restore the sovereign rights which it had laid down.'[1]

As with Athens, so it was with the United Provinces. The 'cumbrous machinery was quite unsuitable to the management of war. . . . If ever a nation was handicapped to its disadvantage in entering a war, it was the Dutch Republic in 1652.'[2] The Athenian Empire and the Dutch Republic have their lessons for the British Empire of to-day.

All wars are 'a new sort of war', and the First Dutch War was no exception to the rule. Its conditions were very different from those of the wars that had been fought with France in Plantagenet times and with Spain under Elizabeth. The ultimate object was plain—to compel the Dutch to abandon their claim of immunity from search, and of freedom to furnish the enemy with the means of conducting war. The course by which this could be attained was no less clear. The national life of the United Provinces depended on shipping and fisheries. The stoppage of these two great industries must bring ruin and surrender in its train. What was less plain, in the opening phase, was the manner in which the English sea power should be used. Two courses were open. To strike directly at the trade and to strike at the forces which defended it. In the opening move the former was chosen. The principal Dutch fishery was off the north coast of Scotland and a home-coming East India fleet was expected shortly to arrive coming north-about. An English fleet under Blake was sent to break up the fishery and intercept the Indiamen. English and Dutch shipping was passing through the Channel: to protect the English and attack the Dutch, but primarily for the former purpose, a second fleet was sent to the western approaches. This opening miscarried, for in the north the East Indiamen were missed in a gale, and in the Channel the Dutch escort rebuffed the English attack and brought home its traders without loss. The strategy then developed, first into

[1] J. B. Bury, *History of Greece*, vol. i, p. 365 et seq.

[2] S. R. Gardiner, *Letters and Papers relating to the First Dutch War*, vol. i, pp. 57–8 (Navy, Records Society, vol. xiii).

a succession of attacks on Dutch convoys and, finally, into battles of the greatest possible concentrations of force on both sides with the definite and correct object of destroying the fighting forces of the enemy as the essential means of acquiring command of the sea, which in its turn was the preliminary to obliterating the enemy's sea-borne trade. That the breaking of the enemy's main body was the sole path to both victory and security became clear to the statesmen of both countries. The Dutch Council fully realized that a decisive defeat of the English fleet would confine its remnants to port, that a blockade of the port of London could then be established, the Baltic supplies of naval stores stopped, and security assured, under the protection of slight forces, to the Dutch convoys passing through the Channel and the North Sea. The English statesmen saw no less clearly that the one effective means of isolating the United Provinces was blockade, and that blockade would only be possible if the main body of the enemy was decisively disabled. So on both sides the sound military principle of concentration of force upon the single object of destruction of the enemy's fighting forces was adopted. The first clash between the two main fleets took place off the Kentish Knock[1] and resulted in an English victory.[2]

Then the Council of State made a grievous error. A small English squadron in the Mediterranean had been worsted and driven into the shelter of Leghorn by a superior Dutch squadron and there lay, not only blockaded but in danger of being ordered out of port by the Grand Duke in consequence of not being able to pay the port dues. The English Mediterranean trade, now wholly unprotected, was at a standstill. The financial losses caused thereby were appreciable and the desire to restore the trade, and to set free the squadron, was natural, for the merchants were crying out for protection. After this battle the situation at home appeared favourable. The enemy had been defeated and was expected not to be able to repair his injuries and reappear at sea for some months: the opportunity could therefore be taken to detach a squadron from the fleet at home. Twenty ships were detached from the main fleet for service in the Mediterranean: their place, it was thought, could be filled before the Dutch could renew the fight.

[1] 28–9 Sept. 1652. [2] English 68 ships, Dutch 57.

It was a gamble. The calculations that the Dutch would not be ready, and that the detached ships could be replaced in time, proved to be wrong. Far sooner than had been expected the Dutch fleet was repaired, its losses were made good, and it put to sea under Tromp with a strength of eighty-five ships. To these Blake could oppose no more than forty-two. In the battle which took place, a battle which Blake for all his material inferiority did not shun, the English fleet was beaten and driven to take shelter in the Thames. The command of the sea was now in the hands of the Dutch, with the natural results. The port of London was closed, trade in the Channel was brought to a standstill, and if it is no more than legendary that Tromp sailed the Channel with a broom at his mast-head, he might justifiably have done so. This was the result of the error committed by the Council of dividing and dispersing the fleet without the certainty that the enemy was so completely disabled that the need for concentration had passed. The lesson went home. Thereafter, except upon one occasion when it was tempted to repeat the mistake but was dissuaded by its sea commanders, it focused its attention upon concentrating its forces on the enemy's main body. The Dutch did the same. They saw that the true defence of their convoys did not lie in escorting them in the presence of a strong English fleet in the Channel and the Narrow Seas, but in destroying that fleet. Hence there followed a series of the most stubborn battles that have ever taken place at sea, and it was because the English statesmen, after their first unfortunate digression, threw all their energies into strengthening their navy and concentrating their efforts to maintain a superiority in the decisive area, that they eventually overcame their brave and efficient enemies. But it was a close run thing on more than one occasion. The slightest relaxation would have spelled defeat.

Cromwell and the Council had shown themselves fully alive to the needs of English sea power in the elements of fighting ships, shipping, and seamen. They showed themselves no less alive to the need of the third element, bases. The incident at Leghorn was a sharp reminder of the weakness of dependence on foreign hospitality in this matter. England had no bases of her own in either the Mediterranean or the western Caribbean. To remedy the lack in the west Cromwell, while the fleet was

still on a war footing at the end of the Dutch war, sent an expedition to the West Indies specifically 'to gain an interest in that part of the West Indies in the possession of Spain': in other words, to obtain a base. An attack on Porto Rico failed, but in lieu Jamaica was taken. Cromwell lost no time in taking steps to fortify the new acquisition, 'our intention being to have a fleet always in those seas'. At the same time he sent his admirals up the Straits to discover whether the deficiency there might be remedied by the capture or lease of a port—Gibraltar, Oran, and Tangier were suggested—which could be made tenable and would serve for the defence of the trade and the 'annoyance' of the Spaniard. Gibraltar was preferred, but its capture was not practicable at the moment, since land forces were not available; and the reason why no land forces were available was that they were engaged in a campaign in the Low Countries, the needs of which took precedence over those of the Mediterranean. It was a campaign directly connected with sea power. Dunkirk was the Spanish base from which corsairs harassed English trade in the North Sea and the Channel. Though fifty ships manned by 4,000 men cruised in the Channel, and convoys were provided, formidable losses of ships and fishing-vessels were being suffered which were only checked by a definitive blockade of the port. All this involved a great and unending expenditure of effort which would always recur whenever Spain was the enemy. An opportunity for stamping out this nest of corsairs once and for all presented itself in 1656. Mazarin, needing an ally in a war in which France was then engaged with Spain, and was being worsted, turned to England, the only source from which help was to be expected, promising Cromwell in return the possession of Dunkirk and Mardyk. In the spring of 1657 6,000 English redcoats landed in Flanders and an English squadron blockaded Dunkirk. A year's campaign culminated in the defeat of the Spanish army by the allied forces in the battle of the Dunes (4 June 1658) and the surrender of Dunkirk to the English three weeks later.[1]

Events at sea contributed to this success in other ways than

[1] Four years later (1662) Charles II sold Dunkirk to Louis XIV for 5 million louis—or with a discount of 12 per cent. for cash, 4,654,000 (£327,000). Clyde L. Grose, 'The Dunkirk Money, 1662', *Journal of Modern History* (U.S.A.), vol. v, no. 1, March 1933.

by the blockade of Dunkirk. The Spanish army in the Netherlands was never equal in numbers to the allies, and a reason for this was lack of money. Cromwell and his colleagues held to the old Elizabethan doctrine that Spain, dependent as she was on her imported bullion and her trade, would be crippled if they were stopped. A fleet had been sent to the coast of Spain in the spring of 1656 to intercept the treasure, but, missing it through making a late start, it proceeded to blockade Cadiz. A treasure fleet attempting to reach port in the autumn was taken, with the double result of depriving Spain of a sum of about a million, and of bringing a most welcome contribution to the hard-pressed English treasury of perhaps two-thirds of that sum. The blockade continued and the Mexico fleet did not dare to sail. On it Cromwell's eyes were firmly fixed, but they were fixed no less surely on the Spanish fighting fleet. 'There can be nothing of more consequence', he said, 'than to intercept the Spanish treasure going to and coming from the West Indies, for which end our purpose is to keep a fleet in those seas [i.e. off the coast of Spain] which may be able to fight with any fleet the Spaniards can set forth, as the most effectual means to prosecute that war.' Therein is seen the wide difference between Cromwell's and Elizabeth's strategy. With him, there was nothing done by halves. With him, though the ultimate object was the stoppage of the treasure, it was not at the treasure itself that his strokes were directed, nor in small sporadic forms, but against the fighting fleet which was its protection and without which it could not sail. His admiral, Blake, was of the same outlook. No reports of treasure fleets approaching would wean him away from his watch on the fleet in Cadiz so long as the barest possibility existed that the Spanish fleet was in a condition and ready to fight.

So the admiral kept his place off Cadiz and the statesman kept him supplied by means of store ships. The margin was terribly narrow at times, but the thing was done: it was a feat unexampled hitherto in sea war. It lasted through the summer and winter of 1656. Its reward came in the spring of 1657. In March Blake learned that the Mexico fleet had made a dash across the Atlantic and reached Tenerife, where it was unloading its treasure to await a safe opportunity for its transport to Spain. Having assured himself that the Spanish fleet was not in a

condition to sail, Blake made for Tenerife, forced his way into the harbour of Santa Cruz, and sank or burned the whole fleet of galleons. No treasure was taken, for it had all, or nearly all, been landed, and what remained on board was destroyed. But the object had been attained. The treasure, carried into the hills out of reach, must remain there: it could not reach the Spanish treasury and was of no more use to Spain than the guineas which Crusoe found in the wreck were to him. Cromwell nipped in the bud a plan whereby the treasure was to be conveyed to Spain, in Dutch bottoms, according to the doctrine of free ships free goods. He made it plain that his sea power was not to be by-passed by these tricks and gave orders to his officers to visit and search Dutch ships and confiscate any Spanish goods, and, though this threatened to provoke a Dutch reaction, he would not budge from his decision. The effects went far. Spain's colonial trade was crippled, her finances were disorganized. A Spanish invasion of Portugal which had been progressing favourably was stopped as the army, unpaid, melted away in desertion. In Flanders want of money restricted the number of troops Spain could support. In this manner the sea offensive in the Atlantic made its useful contribution to the land campaign in Flanders.[1]

While these stirring events were in progress in the south of Europe others were occurring in the north which, like them, were of interest to England because of their relation to her sea power. In the hard winter of 1657–8 Charles X of Sweden invaded Denmark across the frozen sea and conquered her, neither England nor Holland being able to intervene with their fleets. Denmark was forced to make peace. The terms which Charles wished to impose included the cession to Sweden of the whole of Norway. To this England objected and employed diplomatic pressure to prevent it, since this would be 'giving the Swede the whole and entire possession of the chief materials as masts, deals, pitch, tar, copper and iron, needful for the apparel and equipage of our ships, too great a treasure to be entrusted in one hand'. The diplomatic intervention, which included other matters connected with the freedom of passage into the Baltic, was successful. When Sweden, rejecting the previous

[1] For further details cf. C. H. Firth, *The Last Years of the Protectorate*, vol. i, p. 260, and vol. ii, pp. 176 et seq.

treaty of peace, attacked Denmark a second time in the summer of 1658 and besieged Copenhagen, an English fleet was sent by the Commonwealth ministers to effect a mediation between the two Kings, with instructions that if mediation should fail, force was to be used against whichever of them should refuse to come to terms. The weight England carried lay in the ability of her fleet to prevent the movements of armies, whether Swedish or Danish, from crossing the sea into the territory of the other. She wished to see Sweden neither crushed nor supreme, but the establishment of a balance of power in the Baltic leaving no one with the 'too great treasure to be entrusted in one hand', ability to close the sea, deprive the navy of its essential supplies, and destroy the shipping services in the Baltic, services of peculiar importance in that they furnished a great reservoir of seamen readily available near home on the outbreak of a war. Thus the key-note of England's policy in the North was the maintenance of her sea power. Simultaneously she endeavoured to bring about a peace between Holland and Portugal, the long struggle between whom was weakening Portugal in her resistance to Spain. The English envoy sent to the Hague, Downing, pointed out to the States General how prejudicial it would be to them in a war with Spain 'not only to want the friendship of Portugal, with the Havens and Shipping thereto belonging, but to have them in the hands of that enemy to be made use of against you'; arguments which applied with equal force to the needs of his own country.

In due course the Protectorate came to its end and Charles II came to his throne. The Restoration brought no change in the intention to maintain the country's sea power. Charles fostered it from the beginning. One of his first Acts was a new Navigation Act (1660) even more drastic in some of its terms than its Commonwealth forerunners. He was as clear-sighted as Cromwell in his recognition of the necessity for bases abroad. Though pressed hard by France and Spain to restore Nova Scotia, Dunkirk, and Jamaica he categorically refused to do so. His marriage brought him one thing which Cromwell had so greatly desired, a base in the Mediterranean, Tangier; and another in the East, Bombay. He encouraged colonial expansion, not merely for the extension of the Empire, but more for the relation of colonies to trade and sea power. 'The men of the day', says

the historian of the Old Colonial System, Mr. G. L. Beer, 'argued in a circle of sea power, commerce and colonies. Sea power enabled England to expand and to protect her foreign trade, while this increased commerce in turn augmented her naval strength.' The colonial trade was described in 1678 as 'one of the greatest nurseries of the shipping and seamen of the country'. At the same time a steady increase was made in the fighting navy whose tonnage rose from 62,594 in 1660 to 101,032 in 1688. Thus in all its three elements—fighting ships, shipping and seamen, and bases—the sea power of England was notably strengthened by the statesmanship of the Stuart King.

'It is not enough to be armed unless we know the true use of armour.' So Walsingham had said in his day. The use of their 'armour' of sea power by Charles and his statesmen, and particularly the King himself, notwithstanding one most egregious error in 1667, show that the lessons of the First Dutch War had been absorbed. The main object of their strategy was the destruction of the principal body of the enemy's armed forces. When a second war with the United Provinces broke out in 1665 the opening movement ordered for the English fleet was a massing off the enemy's main base at the Texel where the bulk of his navy was lying. In that position it closed the approach to the city of Amsterdam and placed the Dutch in the dilemma of fighting at a disadvantage or losing their great convoys. The admiral, Lord Sandwich, put the matter succinctly. 'Methought the hindering of their trade the best provocation to make the enemy's fleet come out.'

So the broad conception of the English strategy at sea was to obtain a decision in battle, forcing the enemy to action by threatening him with the stoppage of his vital commerce, outward and inward. Of the latter, two valuable convoys, one from the Mediterranean and the other from the East, were known to be nearing home, sailing by the northern route round Scotland, so that it might be hoped that there would not be a long delay in their arrival. A decisive battle would enable a blockade to be firmly established and, when that was done, Holland would be completely isolated from her means of national existence, her commerce by sea.

The hopes were disappointed. The homeward-bound Dutch fleet did not arrive; it had put into neutral harbours to await

developments. The fleet could not lie in full strength, indefinitely, off the Texel, for its power of endurance was limited by its supplies of food and water and the health of the crews, and there was no margin of superiority over the Dutch fleet with which a system of reliefs could be organized—in the later blockades of Brest a margin of 40 per cent. was found necessary to allow for sending ships to harbour to revictual and repair. Therefore, after some weeks at sea, the fleet was obliged to return to the English coast in Southwold Bay to reprovision. Owing to its absence the Dutch completed their naval mobilization and effected the junction of their separate divisions. They put to sea and appeared off Southwold, and a battle developed in which the Dutch were put to flight with a loss of seventeen ships; but the bulk of the fleet reached the shelter of their ports as the English pursuit was not sufficiently pressed.

Though the victory was not decisive it served a useful political purpose. It acted as a deterrent to the King of France, who was engaged, under a treaty with the Dutch of 1662, to come to their help if they were attacked. Though called on by the Dutch to fulfil his engagement, King Louis had so far evaded doing so, asserting that the Dutch were the aggressors and using other arguments of the kind familiar to all who wish to find an escape from an obligation which proves inconvenient. He was even less inclined to throw in his lot with his allies on the morrow of an English victory.

The favourable situation did not last. During the summer the scene changed. Partly because of faulty directions from London, which transferred attention from the enemy fighting forces to a body of their trade and took the fleet away from the Texel to make a most base attack on a Dutch convoy lying in the neutral port of Bergen, an attack which was repelled; and partly because of a breakdown of the administrative machine under the combined influences of corruption, want of money, and the plague then raging in London, the fleet was so crippled for want of supplies and repairs that, when a Dutch fleet ninety sail strong put to sea, the English were in no condition to meet it; and for nearly a month the enemy rode undisturbed off the mouth of the Thames, closing the river to all traffic. Now, for want of sea power, it was London, not Amsterdam, that was blockaded; and at the same time the Mediterranean trade was blocked by the

presence of a Dutch fleet at Cadiz, holding the Straits' mouth, while another enemy squadron blockaded the base of Tangier. As fortune now appeared to smile on the United Provinces in the winter of 1665 King Louis threw off his doubts. He announced his intention of coming to the help of his victorious allies and was followed in so doing by the King of Denmark and the Elector of Brandenburg; while Sweden, with whom England had been negotiating for an alliance, repudiated the draft treaty. So success, in the customary manner, bred allies, and England now stood isolated and in great danger of losing her Baltic supplies and the necessary means of equipping her navy. With a fleet of seventy-six capital ships fit for the sea she was faced by a naval coalition whose ships numbered, on paper, over 200 sail. Fortunately it was a number on paper only.

In February 1666 France declared war. In April the English fleet, refitted but not augmented, found itself threatened in the Channel with an attack from the Dutch in the east and from the French in the west. In this situation the English ministers made a consummate strategic blunder. In the belief that the Dutch fleet would not be ready for some time they decided to strike at the supposedly approaching French, but instead of doing so with their whole force and ensuring by an overwhelming superiority a rapid and certain decision, they sent a detachment only. The error is obvious. If the Dutch fleet was not ready there was no reason not to send the whole fleet to deal with the French: if they were ready, it was hazardous in the extreme to keep an inferior force in the east to meet them. The result of the Council's division of the fleet was that when the Dutch came to sea earlier than had been expected with a fleet of eighty-four ships, Monk (like Blake before him and for the same reason of an incorrect disposition by the Council) could meet him with no more than fifty-five. A furious four days' battle then took place, towards the end of which the squadron that had been detached to meet the French rejoined Monk—the report of the French approach had been false—but the odds were still too great. The battle was a Dutch victory. Twenty English ships were lost and 2,000, or possibly more, men. But even with their great superiority the Dutch had not won their victory cheaply, and 'were as glad to be quit of us as we of them', as an English commander said. Mauled as the Dutch had been, however, they were not

disabled, and were soon once more off the mouth of the Thames and closing the river to traffic.

Though beaten, the English were not decisively beaten. In spite of the grave handicaps of maladministration and shortage of supplies they still possessed enough of those essential elements of sea power, ships, materials, and seamen, to fit out their fleet once more. Within seven weeks the fleet was at sea again, ninety sail strong, and met the Dutch on 25 July in approximately the same numbers off Orfordness (British 92 ships, Dutch 99). The tables were now turned. The Dutch were defeated with a loss of twenty ships and driven back to their ports in complete disorder, the English suffering such slight losses that they could at once without delay follow up their victory with a heavy raid on Terschelling, where they burnt 150 merchantmen and destroyed a great quantity of supplies in the storehouses of the port.

Thus the approach of the end of the year 1666 saw the English in a highly favourable situation. The Dutch had been badly beaten in one great action and driven back to port with losses in a lesser one that followed. The French, who had at last ventured to put their noses into the Channel in August in the hopes of joining the Dutch, had hastily returned to Brest, escaping the punishment designed for them mainly because of the dislocation of the administration through the Fire of London; and they were now feeling the effects of the war at sea in their maritime provinces whose prosperity depended on sea trade. The prospects were in every way favourable for England. Those prospects were to be shattered by one of the greatest strategical mistakes ever made by the statesmen responsible for the conduct of war.

There is an old Chinese proverb, quoted by Admiral Togo in a moment of success during the Russo-Japanese War: 'In the hour of victory tighten your helmet strings.' It would have been well if that saying had been acted upon by the King and his ministers in the winter of 1666. Unfortunately they did precisely the reverse. Instead of making every possible effort to maintain the strongest concentration of force in the main theatre, the home waters, they not only repeated the error which had led to Tromp's victory in 1653 and detached a squadron of twenty ships to the Mediterranean to reopen the trade there, the stoppage of which was undoubtedly causing great distress

in the manufacturing districts of the country, but worse by far, they persuaded themselves that Dutch resistance was now nearly at an end and that all that now was needed to drive the last nails into the coffin was a cruiser attack on what remained of Dutch trade. 'It was said', wrote a contemporary, 'the Dutch might best be beaten by sending small squadrons abroad to interrupt and ruin their trade without which it would be impossible for them to continue the war or support themselves in peace.' It was an attempt to gather the fruits of victory before the victory had been won. The King, in his fears for expense and in opposition to the representations of his sea officers, deliberately closed his eyes to the known fact that the Dutch were busily at work refitting their fleet with every intention of renewing the war in the spring if peace negotiations should fail. Preparations of an absurd and inadequate nature were made to guard the country against invasion: troops were moved into the Isle of Thanet, forts were erected here and booms laid there, the militia was called out to be ready to repel invasion—all in the vain pretence that by such measures the country could be defended. That which followed this supreme act of folly was what was bound to follow. In the spring of 1667 the Dutch fleet, eighty sail strong, put to sea. It appeared off the Firth of Forth and alarmed Edinburgh, moved down the coast of Yorkshire and threatened it with landings, and brought the coastal trade to a standstill. Even in the face of this attack the King ordered a further reduction of the fleet; only a small force of cruising ships was to be kept at sea 'to distract the enemy and disturb his trade'. A bare month later the enemy fleet reached the Thames unopposed, ascended the Medway, broke through the boom at Gillingham, landed troops and captured Sheerness, burnt the naval storehouses and six great ships, and carried off the fine flagship herself to Holland. Now the Port of London was closed and English trade was strangled, while Dutch trade sailed in complete safety: one of the richest Dutch convoys that had ever come home passed unmolested up Channel under the protection of an insignificant escort of fighting ships. Eight weeks were all that was necessary to compel England to make peace on humiliating terms. Never had there been such a reversal of fortune in so short a time. In the end of 1666 the English fleet commanded the sea and had every prospect of being able to

continue to do so. In the summer of 1667 England, with her fleet laid up by her statesmen, surrendered without even a battle; and in the treaty which followed her surrender she abandoned some of her rights at sea. She had to pay dearly in future wars for the loss of her maritime rights and the consequent blunting of her power of bringing pressure on an enemy by cutting off his means of supporting a war.

Five years later a third war with the Dutch began. The Kings of France and England formed an unholy alliance for the destruction and despoiling of Holland. For this purpose France was to furnish thirty-six ships of war, placing them under English command, England was to support France with 5,000 troops and a fleet of fifty sail of capital ships. The general idea of the combined strategy was to be an invasion of Holland by a French army of 120,000 men over the land frontiers combined with one from the sea by the smaller English forces. The essential preliminary to the maritime invasion was to be the disablement of the Dutch navy—it was agreed that until command of the sea had been obtained no troops could be moved. It was therefore designed that the English and French fleets should unite as early as possible and force the Dutch fleet to sea. Decisive battle was aimed at: on more than one occasion in the earlier wars the Dutch, when worsted, had been able to escape destruction by regaining the shelter of their shoals. If annihilation were to be achieved, the Dutch must be forced to fight at such a distance from their own coasts that a tactical victory could be consummated in a prolonged pursuit. So the plan, set out by King Charles, was that the combined fleet should take up a position off the Dogger Bank, and there lie in the track of the homeward-bound enemy trade where interception might be most surely calculated upon, and thus force the Dutch fleet to come well out into the sea to meet and protect the convoys. A Dutch intention to forestall the allied junction, by attacking the English division before it left the Thames to join the French and the other English divisions at Portsmouth, failed to materialize, owing mainly to the unfortunate spirit of Dutch localism of which mention has been made earlier, the Zeeland squadrons having been ordered not to leave port until the Holland division appeared off the Wielings. The result of this loss of time was that when the combined Dutch fleet reached the mouth of the

Thames it was too late. The inferior English force had already made its departure and was well on its way to join the remainder of the English fleet, and the French division, at Portsmouth.

The combined allied fleet now returned to the North Sea to take up the appointed station, but before it could start upon its campaign it needed victualling and for that purpose went to Solebay. The Dutch, by now fully provisioned, boldly took the initiative. They put to sea with the object of catching the allies at a disadvantage while engaged on storing their ships in the anchorage. The surprise was effected. The allied fleet was unready. It weighed, but, in the situation in which it found itself, it could not avoid becoming separated, the English van and centre casting to the northward, the French rear to the southward. The brunt of the fighting fell on the English on whom the Dutch admiral concentrated the bulk of his force while a weak division contained, in a Nelsonic manner, the French. Tactically the battle was indecisive. The Dutch failed to crush the English, the allies failed to destroy the Dutch; but strategically it was a definite Dutch success, for it inflicted such injuries on the allies that it was impossible for them to carry out their intended plan. Instead of the decisive victory for which they had planned, they were obliged to return to port to repair their damages: the projected invasion of Holland across the sea could not be attempted. It is not too much to say that this temporary crippling of the allied fleet saved Holland, for the French armies had already overrun Holland, and Amsterdam itself was in danger. If, at that moment, an army had landed on the coast it may well be doubted whether even the heroic opening of the sluices by which the Dutch stayed the further advance of the enemy could have averted complete defeat.

The first year of the war—1672—thus ended without fulfilment of any of the high expectations of the allies. The question of what strategy should be pursued in the following year was discussed during the winter, and in that discussion the problem of whether to make the principal effort at sea, against the enemy's commerce, or on land, against his armies, arose in a new form. One thing was common to both courses of action. Whether the decision was to be sought by the use of economic pressure through cutting off the enemy's trade or by military action against his armies on land, the essential preliminary to

both was the same—the disablement or destruction of the Dutch fleet. Till that obstacle was out of the way no blockade could be established, still less maintained for more than a brief time; and no army large enough to affect the campaign could be put ashore and maintained. So that, as before, the problem was by what means to force the enemy to a decisive action. Should this be attempted by threatening his trade or by threatening him with an attack on land? In 1672 the intention had been to use the threat on commerce; the plan for 1673 was to be to use the threat of invasion by an army. A force of 15,000 men was to be assembled in the eastern counties for a major landing and another of 5,000 for co-operation with the fleet as circumstances might permit. When all was ready and the expeditionary force in position, the combined fleet of capital ships, accompanied by a great number of frigates and fireships, proceeded to the Dutch coast with the intention of forcing its way into the Dutch anchorage in the Schoonevelt and attacking the enemy fleet at its anchors. It was a bold idea, not unlike in character those attacks on Cadiz in earlier times. It failed. The Dutch did not tamely await the attack but conducted an energetic and skilful counter attack. Throughout the summer de Ruyter pursued an active strategy of sallying with all his forces whenever a threat became dangerous, inflicting as much damage as he was able, but avoiding becoming so deeply engaged that he could not break off the battle and return to the security of his ports.

The English fleet had not only to contend with a brilliant antagonist in the person of de Ruyter: it suffered from two serious handicaps at the hands of the statesmen, one of an administrative nature and the other in the realm of the main direction of the strategy. Adequate supplies of stores were not provided, and for want of these the fleet was first delayed in starting, then exposed to the risk of attack while provisioning, and then delayed in effecting its repairs after the first battle. So, while it lay refitting in the Gunfleet, the Dutch were able to seize the opportunity to put to sea and cruise off the Thames and shut the river to traffic for a period of about a month. When the fleet was once more ready it was so inadequately provisioned that it could not keep the sea for more than a brief time. Prince Rupert cried out: 'The truth is, as I foresaw long ago, the fleet was merely huddled out and hitherto maintained

by fortune.' All the evils of inefficient administration made themselves felt and affected the whole course of operations. In the matter of strategy the King and his ministers gave their admiral no clear instructions, though he pressed hard for some indication of what he was required to do. For what purpose, the admiral asked, were the troops designed? 'If His Majesty has any design for 4,000 men he must tell me what we shall do. You', i.e. Arlington, to whom he was writing, 'may assure him that my opinion is to go out as soon and as strong as we can and fight the enemy's fleet, if they be at sea. . . . If he will give me any further commands I shall most humbly receive them, but desire with all duty they be in writing.' Though the Prince repeated his requests with the greatest urgency he could draw no reply from the King. On one point only he had categorical orders—not to repeat the attack on the enemy fleet in the Schoonevelt; but what was the purpose of the army which was assembled at Yarmouth he was not told. A campaign in which the commander-in-chief is kept in ignorance of the intentions of the High Command, and is also prohibited from striking when a favourable opportunity offers, is one which holds little promise of success. What the King's intentions were is still not known. Initially[1] he had ordered Rupert to make a landing with the 4,000 embarked troops 'where you shall think most proper and there attack what places you shall judge likely to be carried or destroyed' and to hold and administer such place or places; but on the strong representations of the Duke of York and Sir Edward Spragge that no landing should be attempted until the enemy fleet was beaten, he was dissuaded from taking that course. Apparently the army at Yarmouth was now intended partly as a threat to induce the Dutch to retain a number of troops on the coast, and so divert them from the interior in order to benefit the action of his French ally, and partly to keep the enemy in doubt as to whether the fleet would strike at the coast or at the convoys. The threat to the trade, when a homeward-bound convoy was expected, had the effect of bringing the Dutch fleet to sea in August. The two fleets met off the Texel and fought a hard action, in which once more the brunt of the fighting fell upon the English divisions, the French commander withholding his division in so marked a manner that

[1] Instructions of 26 Apr.

even one of the French admirals complained of it and was clapped into the Bastille for his frankness; and though Rupert thought that 'the French are ashamed of the part they played and will retrieve their honour', the impression in England was that help had been deliberately withheld as the result of orders. Whether this impression was justified or not it had its effect in contributing to the English dislike for the war, fortifying the beliefs that it was being fought to satisfy Charles's personal animosity to the Dutch and that he was the mere tool of the French King. Hence, when Parliament met in October, active operations at sea having ceased owing to the coming of the winter, an impassioned appeal for supply to continue the war in the coming year made by the Lord Chancellor met with no response. Though, in language not unlike that with which we are familiar to-day from other sources, he spoke of the war as having been forced on a peace-loving king by the factious and hostile policy of the enemy, and warned the House that England was now fighting for her freedom and very existence, the Lord Chancellor failed to convince Parliament that the country had really ever been threatened, or to weaken the conviction that it was being used as a catspaw to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for Louis: and the supplies were not granted. England made a separate peace with Holland in the following February. Holland continued to fight, being now reinforced by the Empire and Spain.

The three Dutch wars were marked by the final transformation of the navy from being a personal possession of the King to being a national service, and by the manner in which it was used to attain the national end. The ultimate object in the Spanish and Dutch wars was the same—to reduce an enemy whose national life was supported by oversea traffic by the stoppage of that traffic. The difference lay in the measures by which the statesmen of the two periods attempted to stop the traffic. While Elizabeth scattered her efforts in sporadic and fitful blows at the shipping itself, the statesmen of the Commonwealth and Restoration concentrated their effort, and aimed their blows, with almost complete consistency, against the fighting forces which protected the shipping. There were occasional departures from this sound military policy, and on every occasion on which the principle was violated, or when, through one or

another cause, the needs of the navy either in ships or supplies were not furnished in adequate quantities, failure was suffered or successes could either not be consummated or were only temporary in their effect. But the policy was pursued with such a degree of permanence that the Dutch, though their trade was never brought to a standstill, found great difficulty in conducting it in their own bottoms and sought the use of neutral flags to cover their goods.

All the many questions of the right of the neutral to perform the vital services of supply to a belligerent beleaguered at sea then arose. The English statesmen adhered to the doctrine which they had hitherto upheld: that trade is the support of war since it both provides the means—money—with which to meet the expense and the materials with which weapons are made both for the land and sea services. They held that the neutral who carries goods for the enemy, or who performs those services of carriage which he is unable himself to perform, or whose action releases enemy seamen from commercial employment for employment in the fighting fleet, is rendering a direct aid to the enemy. So they took steps to prevent enemy goods from being moved, outward or inward, in enemy or neutral bottoms, across the sea. On their part the Dutch attempted to maintain their commerce in neutral bottoms, exercising the greatest ingenuity in concealing the character, ownership, and destinations of their goods, using many of the devices employed two and a half centuries later by the Germans in the War of 1914–18. Dutch goods would be consigned in the name of a neutral who, for a consideration, was prepared to swear they were 'on his proper account and that no other person can, or ought, to pretend to any interest in them'. The English, in order to spare the neutral the delays consequent on visit and search and subsequent proceedings in the Court, introduced a system of passports, like the navicerts of to-day, certifying the innocent ownership of consignments; but it was found that they were either falsely obtained or given without due care: even a certificate given by an English representative in a neutral country seems to have met with no more success. The difficulties of searching ships at sea led, as it led in the war in our own day, to their being taken into harbour for examination, resulting in its turn in protests from the neutral on the score of illegality.

The difficulty of establishing the ownership of property proved great, for the ships' papers, the normal evidence of ownership, were so disguised as to make them valueless. 'The French', said Sir Leoline Jenkins, the judge in the Admiralty Court, 'do take it much amiss that I do require further proof than the ships' papers', but as he had found he could not rely on them he 'heeded no ships' papers'. Lord Stair, in recounting some of the tricks played, said that in the Second Dutch War the neutrals found out 'so cunning devices to cover their trade that the same could hardly be discovered as to make a lawful probation'. Goods were imported to Holland by way of neighbouring neutrals' ports: wine, raisins, wool, and many another commodity poured into Ostend, Bruges, and Dunkirk. The plain inference from this immense growth of traffic was that, although the merchants' books showed them as being 'Upon and for his own account and risk', they were in reality Dutch property, bound to Holland. To add to the 'cunning contrivances', foreign merchants became domiciled in England, employed English ships and English crews, and traded as Englishmen all over the world, their masters swearing the ships were English-owned and free to do so.[1]

The neutral was not behindhand in protesting at the measures taken to defeat these devices, but the English statesmen refused to be turned from their purpose or to allow their weapon of sea power to be blunted, and the nation's efforts weakened, in order that individuals in neutral countries should reap rich profits from a struggle in which their national interest was, in their opinion, at stake.

[1] Full accounts of these fraudulent practices will be found in an article by Mr. Llewellyn Davies in the *British Year Book of International Law*, 1934, and by Jessup and Deak in *Neutrality*, vol. i, chapters v and vi, to both of which works I am indebted for the information above.

III

THE WARS OF KING WILLIAM III AND QUEEN ANNE

THE wars of King William III and Queen Anne with France introduced entirely new strategical problems, for the conditions affecting the use of sea power differed profoundly from those of the wars with Spain and Holland. England was now a member of a continental coalition in place of a single Power or a Power with one ally only. Moreover, in all of those earlier wars there was a clearly indicated objective for an offensive at sea in the lines of sea communication which were vital to both of her previous enemies. Spain had essential lines of supply at sea: her treasure, the loss of which would cripple her, reached her by sea; her armies in the Netherlands and northern France could only reach their fields of action, and be maintained there, by sea. Holland's national existence was sustained entirely by sea, by her carrying trade and her fisheries. France, on the other hand, was not similarly vulnerable at sea, for valuable as her trade and colonies were, they did not take the same place in her national life as the treasure fleets of Spain or the trading fleets of Holland. She was more self-contained than they, and though the wealth which trade produced affected her power of maintaining her armies, she could, as events showed, conduct a long-drawn-out struggle on her own internal resources.

While her trade was thus less vital to her it was also less vulnerable to attack by England. Though the principal Spanish commercial and naval ports lay at a great distance from England, that disadvantage was capable of being remedied by the seizure of the Azores. Dutch trade had to pass up Channel or round the north of Scotland, with English fleets on the flank of both routes and in a position to shut the Dutch fighting forces in their harbours. Well situated as England was, with ports to the westward and in the Channel and the Narrow Seas for intercepting the French trade, the sea-keeping powers of the ships had not yet developed to the extent necessary for the maintenance of a continuous blockade of Brest, still less of the ports in the Bay; while in the Mediterranean, where France had a

valuable trade with the Levant and Italy, neither England nor her ally Holland possessed any base.

England, on the other hand, was more vulnerable than she had been in her earlier wars. The danger of invasion was greater, for a highly organized and efficient army was on the other side of the Channel, a powerful fleet lay at Brest, and ports in which transports could be assembled were at France's disposal from Cherbourg to Mardyk. For the defence of trade she was also less happily situated than she had formerly been owing to the strength of the French fleet, the numerous French shipping capable of attacking commerce, and the bases available for their use. It was one thing to coop up the Dutch fleet in the Maas and the Texel and patrol the Channel with light squadrons: it was quite another to confine the French fleet in Brest and protect shipping against the ravages of squadrons and single ships operating from the Channel and Biscay ports.

Not only was the defence of the country against invasion, and of its trade in home waters, a more formidable task: new problems of defence had arisen in the outer seas. There, both trade and colonies had grown in importance, and the relation of the colonies to sea power was even greater than it had been when the Stuart writer had spoken of the interdependence of the navy, the trade, and the colonies. At the same time they were more vulnerable to French attack than they had been to Dutch, for, while the Dutch had few possessions in the western Atlantic, the French had colonies in the Caribbean and Canada, giving them bases from which their vessels could attack the English trade while their military garrisons threatened both the island and mainland colonies with invasion and raids. The English colonies lacked any organized defence. Though the ultimate security of all the oversea possessions depended on the navy and its command of the sea, they needed local defences to secure them against *coups de main* from their more militarily organized neighbours. The English colonists in the Northern colonies greatly outnumbered those of France in Canada, but they were as individually minded as the provinces of the Dutch had been; while the French, centrally controlled and with military administrations, could concentrate and co-ordinate the whole of their efforts in any military operation desired. In the Caribbean islands

the English garrisons were so small as to be almost negligible, and the local authorities did nothing to develop measures of defence themselves. The fixed defences—the forts and batteries—were neglected by both the home and the local governments, and the islands were thus without any effective protection against a sudden blow from even a small force of the enemy. 'All turns upon the mastery of the sea', wrote the Governor of Barbados. If the sea were in British hands the islands would be safe; if in the hands of the enemy, the islands would be overrun and occupied in detail. But though the islands thus depended on the sea, there was no permanent naval force at hand adequate to afford the security. They were in fact in the same position as the present-day British possessions in the Pacific, whose overrunning by Japan was the direct result of the same lack of sea power.

The more urgent, the more widely spread, needs of defence thus called for greater strength at sea than hitherto, but the maintenance of England's sea power had lately been neglected.

When King William III brought England into the Grand Alliance against Louis XIV the two maritime Powers were jointly stronger in sea power in two of its elements—fighting ships and maritime resources. Their strength in 'capital' ships[1] of which the massed body of a fleet is composed was more than double that of France. This, however, was a paper figure only, for during the latter part of the reign of James II many of the ships had fallen out of repair and could not quickly be fitted for sea; nor were there seamen enough to man them. Though the French had lesser numbers, they had a more competent administration: they could fit out their ships and man them more quickly than the allies. Hence, for the first three years of the war the allies were unable fully to profit from their numerical superiority; thus in 1690 the French Channel fleet numbered 70 ships to 56 of the Anglo-Dutch, and it was only in 1691 that the numbers became approximately equal, with 69 in each. This failure of the statesmen to maintain their naval strength resulted in Ireland being invaded and the country being unable

[1] The term 'ship of the Line' was beginning to come into use at this period. The merchantmen had now disappeared from the line of battle. Cf. Sir J. K. Laughton, 'The Battle of La Hougue and the Maritime War' (*Quarterly Review*, 1893, vol. clxxvi, pp. 461 et seq.).

to take any action other than defensive during the early years, during which it was exposed to the most imminent danger of invasion and suffered a great loss of shipping. In the matter of shipping, seamen, and resources for building, the allies were better equipped than their enemy, and fortunate it was that they were or they could never have retrieved some of their early misfortunes. They had also an easier and more secure access to the great source of naval stores, the Baltic—an advantage somewhat mitigated by the interference to commerce which resulted from the wars between the Powers in that sea, and by the prices which the Swedes, seizing the opportunity of the allied needs, demanded for their products. In the third element of sea power, bases, the English had possessions in both ends of the Caribbean Sea, along the coasts of the Northern colonies and on the west coast of Africa. They had none in the Mediterranean: Tangier, that precious spot, had been sacrificed in 1663 through party spirit and want of vision of its value. On the other hand, Spain being an ally, the joint navies had the use of Cadiz, a port very useful for the control of the Straits approaches but not sufficiently advanced into the Mediterranean for the purposes of a campaign within that sea. Hence, one of the first proposals made by the Dutch, with their recollections of their own war in that sea after 1674, was for the occupation of Port Mahon in Minorca or Porto Ferrajo in Elba.

In what manner did the statesmen of the country employ their weapon of sea power? The statesmen in question were the King and his Council, but the final decision lay in the hands of the King and, during his many absences in Europe, in those of the Queen.

The outstanding significance of this war was that, as it was the first in which the country was a member of a continental alliance, the statesmen were confronted with the problem which was to recur through the wars of the next century: the problem of whether England, as a maritime Power, could best help her allies by strengthening their armies on land or by weakening the enemy's resources at sea and oversea. In other words, whether to join in the assault on the enemy's continental forces or to throw all her efforts into destroying the resources which support them. These two alternatives gave rise to two schools of thought, the 'continental' and the 'maritime'. The King, on

the whole, adopted the 'continental' view, Dean Swift was the spokesman of the 'maritime'. The King, although alive to the necessity of attacking the enemy in his resources, directed the efforts of his army during the whole war to helping the armies of his continental allies. Swift, as a result, in his *Conduct of the Allies*, attributed to the King a policy of subordinating English interests to Dutch. 'During that whole war the sea was almost entirely neglected and the greatest part of six millions annually employed to enlarge the frontiers of the Dutch. For the King was a General but not an Admiral, and although King of England, a native of Holland.' To this the Dean and his party added the further complaint that the efforts put out by England were in excess of her liabilities, the King putting her in the position of a 'principal' in the war, whereas she should have been regarded as a 'second' only whose action should be guided entirely by considerations of her own individual interests. The existence of an equal, and still less of a common, interest was denied. The war, said this Dean, was a 'confederate' war, and in such a war the parties to the confederation have separate interests; but one party has usually the most concern, and such party should bear the greatest burden. In a war between two princes for possession of a kingdom, help should be given to him who would give good conditions for trade. It might happen that a country was in danger of being overrun by a powerful neighbour, which, in time, might produce very bad consequences upon your trade and liberty. 'Tis therefore necessary as well as prudent to lend them assistance, and help them to win a strong and secure position: but as they must in course be the first and greatest sufferers, so in justice they ought to bear the greatest weight.' So Swift preached a policy of isolation and the pernicious principle of a selfish limited liability in contradistinction to that, advocated later by Addison, of the fullest possible co-operation in a common cause.

The King's strategy was also criticized. He was accused of not using sea power as it was capable of being used. He was represented as being uninterested in commerce and industry and negligent of, or oblivious to, their influence in war; of seeing no other road to victory than by land, and therefore interpreting the contribution which England should make in terms purely of a reinforcement of the armies of the allies in the

principal theatre, in contradistinction to the use of that economic pressure by which England had sought to disable enemies over a century of wars. The small results, at a heavy cost, of the military operations in Flanders furnish support, as we shall see, for the Dean's criticism. But there were flaws too in the arguments of the maritime school. Although their policy of attacking the enemy's communications in preference to his main bodies on land was sound, the means they suggested were mistaken. They failed to recognize that the most effective way of doing this was to destroy the fleet which protected the lines of communication; instead they advocated direct attack on the colonies themselves and on the trade. Both schools were therefore to some degree wrong in their objectives: the King most fundamentally in the importance he attached to England's contribution to the continental operations, Dean Swift and his party in making the trade and colonies themselves the objectives of attack. Both schools, moreover, made the mistake of treating the land and sea forces as separate concerns, each with a duty of its own, instead of as a combined force, to be employed in conjunction, with a single object. The result of this attitude was that when the time for the offensive came, with a few exceptions, continental operations and economic pressure were attempted at the same time. Through this division of the land and sea forces, each was too weak to attain its particular end: the army was not strong enough seriously to influence the continental campaigns; the navy lacked the support of the army for obtaining the command of the sea.

So far, however, was the King from being oblivious to the influence and value of economic pressure that one of his first acts, after coming to agreement with the Dutch as to the number of ships which each should contribute to the common stock, the dispositions of the major fleets, and the measures to be taken for the protection of the trade of the two countries, was to set on foot a proposal for exercising the utmost possible degree of economic pressure on France as an essential factor in the military campaigns. The sea forces were to take their obvious part in stopping the French sea-borne commerce, but the effort was not to be confined to the sea forces. It was intended that the effort should be European and all-inclusive. King William postulated that France, owing to her King's aggressive and acquisitive

policy, was a danger to, and therefore the enemy of, all the Powers, great and small; from which it followed that it was in the interests of all, neutrals as well as active belligerents, to take a share in opposing her. The members of the Grand Alliance were, he claimed, performing a public service to Europe, and even though other Powers might not be inclined to take an active part in the common defence, they lay under a moral obligation to make a passive contribution to the defeat of the aggressor: and this they could do by ceasing all commercial intercourse with France. In other words, William proposed that an international boycott of France should be established.[1] It proved, however, no more possible in the seventeenth century than it was afterwards to prove in the twentieth to induce nations to make individual sacrifices for the common good. It was a proposal that ran counter to the cherished Dutch doctrine of refusing to interrupt their trade, even with a power with which they were at war; and, though they entered into the agreement, their merchants continued to conduct a clandestine traffic with little interference from their government. Nor were English merchants averse from making money by the same behaviour, though not with the same connivance of the authorities. As to the neutrals, they flatly declined to deprive themselves of the benefits of trade, the more especially when the profits were so greatly increased as they always are in war. Sweden, who had naval stores to sell, categorically refused to admit the English doctrine that naval stores were properly contraband goods and announced her intention to continue to supply them to France, protecting them, if needs be, with her navy. This was a claim for the hamstringing of England's sea power which her statesmen could not possibly admit. The Secretary of State, Nottingham, replied that the trade in naval stores could not be allowed to continue; shipbuilding materials could not be excepted from the contraband list, 'they being of more prejudice to us than muskets or any other things that usually fall under

[1] In his statement of policy on 9 Apr. 1944 Mr. Cordell Hull made an appeal of a similar nature to the neutral nations. The United States, he said, had constantly reminded the neutral Powers that their very existence and freedom as independent nations depended on the victory of the allies, and that, in view of the allied strength, the neutrals were not being asked to expose themselves to destruction. 'We ask them not to prolong the war, with its consequences of suffering and death, by sending aid to the enemy.' (*The Times*, 10 Apr. 1944.)

declaration'. To a protest from Denmark he gave a similar reply. Nothing could more effectively prevent Louis's success in this war than want of trade, 'which impoverishes him, and particularly the trade of the North, which supplies him with materials without which he cannot carry on the war'.

Thus, for all that the King was a 'General' it is plain that it was his intention to exercise the utmost economic pressure on France in aid of the war on land by depriving her of the commerce which nourished her warlike strength—the money to pay her armies and the materials with which she built and equipped her sea forces. What was lacking in the opening phases of the war was the means of enforcing the desired isolation. The intended boycott, unsupported by force, melted away. Neither the English nor the Dutch navy was in a condition of readiness and, before either any arrangements for co-operation could be put into practical form, or the English navy had sufficiently recovered from the disorder and doubts of the Revolution and the neglect which had preceded it, a French fleet from Brest escorted a French army across the mouth of the Channel and landed it at Kinsale. In the months that followed Ireland was overrun up to the very walls of Londonderry. England's unreadiness and insufficiency at sea now threw her entirely upon the defensive. All her available military resources, with the exception of the 10,000 men which, under the terms of a treaty, she was under an obligation to send to the help of the Dutch, were needed merely to hold and recover Ireland; and the recovery could not begin until further forces had been raised. This took time. During this time the two allied navies were not only on the defensive but were inadequate to their many tasks. They had to protect the transports of troops going to Ireland, to prevent reinforcements of French troops from reaching the enemy in southern Ireland, and to defend the trade against which the enemy, in the summer of 1689, launched a widespread attack by cruiser squadrons and privateers. This French commerce attack was urged in June by the energetic seaman Jean Bart. A campaign against commerce, he wrote, should extend to the Baltic, the North Sea, the west of Ireland, and as far afield as Greenland. As the Dutch, in spite of their absolute dependence on shipping, were economically minded and only escorted their convoys with one or two men-of-war, squadrons

of no more than three ships would be enough to overcome them. This in turn would force them to allot stronger forces to the convoys, the result of which would be to make the maintenance of their main fighting fleets more difficult. Thus trade attack was in Bart's eyes not solely an offensive against the lines of communication: it was also a diversion of the enemy's strength from his main body and a means towards disputing the command of the sea in battle. The attack on the trade called for strengthening of the English convoys and these, in the condition to which the navy had been reduced, could not be provided. The trade in the Mediterranean, both Dutch and English, harassed by the French from Toulon, suffered such losses that an outcry arose, similar to that which had arisen in two former wars, for more protection, and to that outcry ministers again unfortunately gave way in spite of the critical situation in home waters: and with the same results. In June 1690 the fleet in the Channel, faced by a French fleet of nearly double its strength, suffered a defeat off Beachy Head with the loss of fifteen ships and of the temporary command of the Channel. Fortunately for the allies, the French admiral failed to consummate his tactical victory in a resolute pursuit and frittered away his opportunity in minor enterprises, thus giving the allies time to repair their injuries and to recover the command of the Channel before the end of the year. Thus resources showed their importance as an element of sea power.

While the allied fleet was suffering this defeat at sea, King William's English army was beating King James's French army in Ireland at the Boyne. Though a certain number of troops were thereafter still required to re-establish order and to round up pockets of French resistance, a large proportion of the 70,000 troops which Parliament had voted for the purpose were now set free for other uses; and by the end of the year the recovery at sea after Beachy Head relieved the country from the danger of invasion.

Now, at last, after two years of war, the English statesmen could turn their thoughts from defence to offence, and consider for the first time the manner in which the fighting forces of the country by sea and land could most effectively contribute to the success of the common cause. A choice between three principal courses of action was open to them. The land and sea forces

might be used in combination with the object of destroying the sea power of the enemy and obtaining the command of the sea; the army might be used to strengthen the armies of the allies on the Continent, while the navy undertook the separate duty of protecting the sea routes and doing what harm it could to enemy commerce and supply; or the combined sea and land forces could be used to deprive the enemy of his oversea possessions and the benefits he derived from them, of which not the least was the shipping and seamen engaged in the Western, and more particularly the Newfoundland, trade.

The first and fundamental step towards gaining the command of the sea is always the destruction of the massed forces of the enemy. If those forces are unwilling to fight, the possibility exists of putting the enemy in the dilemma of either fighting at what may appear to him a disadvantage, or of sacrificing some essential element in his national economy—trade, a vital position, or the assistance of an ally. So, as we have seen in the earlier wars, the national needs of Spain and Holland to protect the Spanish treasure fleets and the Dutch East India convoys were regarded as so great that a threat to them would impel the enemy to send out his fleet to defend them. There was no French objective of a corresponding importance. The alternative course was to attack the enemy in his harbours. This could not be done by ships alone. Conjunct land and sea forces were necessary. The number of disposable forces was not large—it amounted to some 30,000 men. The question therefore for the British statesmen was whether results more favourable to the common cause would flow from the use of these troops, or some of them, in destroying a French fleet in Brest or elsewhere, or in reinforcing the armies of the allies in Flanders, where they would form only a small proportion of the total numbers engaged. Their decision in the year 1691 was to make their military effort in Flanders. During that year an inconclusive campaign on land was accompanied by an equally inconclusive campaign at sea in the Bay of Biscay where a great French fleet searched the Bay for a homeward-bound allied convoy, and an allied fleet sought, equally fruitlessly, the French fleet. It is legitimate to consider that if the two arms by sea and land had been used in conjunction with each other upon the single purpose of obtaining the command of the sea instead of separately, on different and

disconnected purposes, a more satisfactory result might have been achieved.

So the year 1691 was disappointing, and when Parliament met in December, considerable dissatisfaction was expressed at the manner in which the war was being conducted. The strategy for the forthcoming year had then to be settled. The King in his outline of his views said that a strong fleet must be at sea early in the year and a very considerable army 'ready at all times to defend ourselves from insult, but also to annoy the common enemy where it may be most sensible to them'. It was decided that this lay in Flanders, and Parliament voted 65,000 men, 38,000 of them for service overseas and the remainder for garrisons. But while the major effort was to be directed against the enemy in the main theatre, the need for action against the French fleet in Brest was recognized and preparations were begun for sending an army of 7,500 men to Brest to attempt the destruction of the fleet.

While these plans were being made in London King Louis on his side was preparing a stroke against England. Taking advantage of the fact that the allied fleets had to return to their widely separated home ports in the winter to refit the ships, the English to the Thames and Portsmouth, and the Dutch to the Texel and the Maas, and slow as he knew from experience their refitting and recombination would probably be, and in the further belief that strong Jacobite assistance would be forthcoming, he thought it possible to strike a decisive blow at England before the allied fleets were ready. With great secrecy, therefore, he assembled an invasionary army of some 24,000 men in the northern French ports, intending that this body should be rushed across the Channel without protection and landed before the allied fleets could be joined and in a position to oppose its passage. But the secret leaked out, the preparations of the allied fleets were hastened, the intended attack on Brest was set aside; and on 1 May 1692 a combined Anglo-Dutch fleet, greatly superior to the French (79 ships to 44), fell upon them in the Bay of la Hougue and broke up the enemy fleet, inflicting a loss of fifteen ships. A large part of the French fleet escaped into the port of St. Malo, where attack upon it by naval forces alone was impossible. A land force was needed. 'There is now an opportunity', wrote Lord Carmarthen to the King, 'to destroy a great

part of the French naval force . . . a sufficient land force would certainly encompass what we propose to do either at St. Malo or Brest, or both, so that the omitting to endeavour it will be looked upon as an unpardonable crime not to advise.' Admiral Russell urged the same thing: the destruction of the enemy fleet would be worth more than 'the possession of two provinces in France'. But nothing was done. Troops were not ready, transports were not assembled, weeks went by for want of readiness, of clear thinking, and of prompt action on the part of ministers. A great opportunity was lost, what might have been a decisive stroke was whittled down to the fruitless bombardment of the town of St. Malo. 'Burning a town in France is no more consequence to them than an accidental fire in Knightsbridge is to us' was the admiral's contemptuous comment on this kind of operation.

Though the French losses at la Hougue were no greater than those of the allies had been at Beachy Head there was this great difference between the effects. The allies, with their greater resources, could recuperate from their defeat; the French, lacking those resources, could not. Moreover, the burden of a great army absorbed much of their revenues and, though considerable French fleets continued to show themselves at sea, all thoughts of invasion or of gaining the command of the sea in the Channel were dropped. The war of fleets gave way to cruiser warfare directed against commerce, and commerce destruction, originally diversionary in its object, now assumed the form of a primary effort with decisive results in view. It was not to be the last time that an enemy, having failed in his attempts at invasion, turns to commerce attack as his means to victory.

While the war at sea had taken this favourable turn in 1692, the war on land had gone less satisfactorily. Namur had fallen, there were no signs of a decision in Flanders. At the end of the parliamentary year criticism of the conduct of the war again became acute. A considerable section of the House regarded the supplies granted to the King for his land campaigns as wasteful and condemned the policy as one which, since it failed to make full use of the allied sea power, was wrong.

A State tract of the day illustrates what, in the view of this school of thought, should govern the methods in which England made war. Being an island she was bound to furnish herself

with a supreme navy for security against invasion and the protection of her trade. Trade, the life of England, was being destroyed by French squadrons and corsairs, for want of adequate defence at sea, while at the same time no use was being made of sea power to 'make the enemy suffer'. Properly used, said the writer, the combined land and sea forces of the country could ruin the West Indies trade of France by capturing the islands in the Caribbean and by so doing cut off the money without which she could not prosecute war, diminish her shipping, deprive her of seamen, and close the great nursery of sailors in Newfoundland. In home waters the fleet could stop the French Baltic trade and so cut off all supplies of naval stores, and, combined with the army, capture the naval bases, destroy the fleets, and, stretching into the Mediterranean, destroy the commerce with the Levant. All of these possibilities, the writer went on to say, which combined an effective defence with security, were open, yet no thought was given to them in the strategy adopted by the ministers. All these advantages were assumed to be insignificant in comparison with the glories of the war on land. But where could any effective impression be made on land? Not in Savoy or on the Rhine. Not in Spain, for she, with all the help which England might be able to give, could never invade France. Flanders alone remained. And what happens in Flanders? We are beaten at Fleurus in one year, we lose Mons in another, Namur in a third. We pay vast sums to confederate armies, but for all that expenditure we gain neither victories, returns, nor advantages to ourselves. What a contrast to this is to be seen in a maritime strategy! What opportunities lie open in the West Indies! And what losses in our trade we were suffering in those waters, where the dwindling English commerce was being picked up by the neutral! The Swede, the Dane, and the Portuguese were worming their way into it, and would soon carry goods to France and supply her, which her own shipping was unable to do. So France would continue to obtain much of the financial benefits of her colonial trade, and, with that financial support, she would be able to continue the war.

This expression of the maritime doctrine goes farther than that of Swift, for it envisages the use of the army and fleet in combination, striking at the enemy's sea fighting forces and not only at his commerce and colonies. It shows also that a 'West

Indian Policy' was not advocated merely for the greedy purpose of gain or for expansion of the Empire, though the former of those considerations was not absent. Primarily, it was regarded as the most effective form in which England could make her contribution to the common cause, weakening the enemy on land by impoverishing him, weakening him at sea both in his navy and his shipping, and preventing the neutral from making a breach in the economic encirclement of France.

To return to the events in the main theatre of the war at sea after 1692. Though la Hougue had been a serious blow, the French fleet was still a menace and French cruising squadrons from Dunkirk and Mardyk were taking a heavy toll of shipping in the Channel and North Sea. So long as the French fleet remained virtually intact it was not possible, with the limited number of ships available, to strengthen the convoys—the situation was not unlike that after Jutland when it was still necessary to keep the destroyer flotillas with the Grand Fleet in readiness for another battle, badly needed though they were to furnish defence against the submarine. Ministers therefore revived the idea of the previous year and discussed again the possibility of destroying the fleet in Brest: but as troops were not available, and as a purely naval attack was rejected by the seamen as too doubtful an enterprise, the proposal was dropped. In its place another suggestion was made. For two years the Mediterranean trade had been held up for want of ships to protect it against the Toulon squadron of some twenty ships. During 1692 the Levant Company had pressed hard for steps to be taken to restore it, the stoppage having been 'to the great prejudice of poor manufacturers in particular and to the Kingdom in general'. In response to these representations it was decided, during the winter of 1692–3, that a squadron of about equal strength to that at Toulon should be sent to the Mediterranean, taking out the accumulated mass of merchantmen which had been held up for so long. When these had been safely seen on their way, the allied squadron was to join forces with such Spanish ships as there were, and together with them endeavour to destroy the Toulon squadron. The necessary bases would be available in Port Mahon, Cartagena, and Porto Longone in Elba.

The great convoy was delayed through the defects of the administrative machinery—ships were not yet repaired, seamen

and provisions were still lacking, at the time the convoy was intended to sail in March. The delays proved fatal. In the interval the French fleet at Brest, unwatched and unreported, slipped out of port and went down to the coast of Spain. When the convoy, insufficiently protected, as it was supposed to be outside the danger zone, arrived off Cadiz, the enemy, in overwhelming force, fell upon it and captured over eighty merchantmen. To what was this misfortune due? It was due firstly to the ministerial lack of a policy at sea; to making the principal effort in Flanders before command of the sea had been assured; to the delays, during which, while the English ministers were deliberating, the French were acting; and, finally, to the direct orders given by the Queen for the convoy to sail, overriding the representations of the seamen that it should not do so until the uncertainty as to the whereabouts of the Brest fleet had been cleared up.

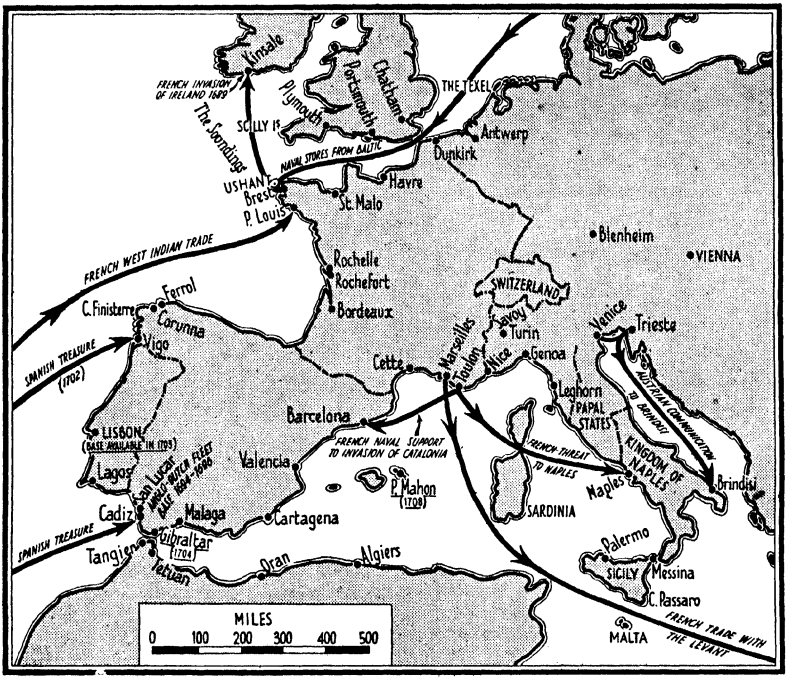
The loss of the 'Smyrna Convoy' emphasized the need for making a resolute attempt to eliminate the French fleet, which, after its considerable success, had returned to Brest. Clearly its destruction was essential. It was impossible either to force it to sea into the arms of a waiting fleet or to blockade it in Brest. One course only was open, the old one of attacking it in port with land and sea forces. Hence in the spring of 1694 an army of 7,000 men, to be covered against the Brest fleet by the combined allied fleet and tactically supported by a squadron, was sent to capture Brest. Three things were necessary for success: secrecy, speed, and strength. All were lacking. The secret was not kept, the start was delayed owing to the same administrative defects as had delayed every previous fleet and expedition, the means were insufficient. A landing was made at Camaret Bay, but the French were prepared for it and repelled it with heavy losses.

During the delay in the sailing of the expedition the French, having news of the intention, had sent the Brest fleet to the south to be out of danger. But it was not the threat of attack alone that had led to this transfer. King Louis, for all his successes on land, was feeling the strain of the long-drawn-out war. His resources were dwindling in the many costly campaigns he was waging, and the need for a decision had become urgent. If some of his enemies could be detached he would be able to

concentrate the whole of his strength against the remainder. There appeared a chance that this might be done in the Mediterranean. There was Savoy, weak, notoriously unstable as an ally, and open always to the highest bidder: by offering her attractive terms and accompanying the offer with the pressure of cutting off her trade by sea, she might be induced to desert her allies. There too was Spain, very weak and with no great heart in the war; she might make peace if Catalonia were invaded and Barcelona captured. To effect both of these the French fleet was needed in the Mediterranean. It would blockade Savoy, it would support the French army in its invasion of Spain, carrying its heavy stores, its provisions and siege artillery, and blockading Barcelona by sea when the army invested it on land.

The allied answer to this was the dispatch of a powerful fleet to the Mediterranean. Its arrival effected an immediate transformation in the scene. There the French army had already reached the approaches to Barcelona, and the French fleet, blockading the port, had cut off its seaborne supplies. Before even the topsails of the allied fleet showed over the horizon the French abandoned their blockade, their fleet retired in haste to Toulon, their army, deprived of its support, raised the siege and retreated to the Pyrenees, harassed all the way by the fierce Catalan guerrilleros, a far more formidable fighting force than the regular Spanish troops.

Command of the sea in the Gulf of Lions had thus been established. Whether it could be maintained depended on whether the fleet could remain in the Mediterranean. Ships, at the end of a season's campaigning, needed refitting, and as this could only be done at a base and England had none in that sea nor any of the stores needed, the fleet must return to its home ports. It was then customary for a fleet to sail for home not later than September in order that the great leewardly ships should not run the risk of the winter gales in the Channel. But the King, determined that the advantages he had gained in the Mediterranean should not be lost, and the French be allowed to regain in the spring what they had lost in the previous summer, took the drastic step of ordering the fleet to remain abroad and make its refit in Cadiz, whither store ships would be sent. Most courageously he overrode the objections



MAP III. FRENCH, SPANISH, AND AUSTRIAN SEA COMMUNICATIONS IN NORTH ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN, 1689–1714

When France invades Catalonia in 1694 an Anglo-Dutch fleet is sent to Mediterranean. With Cadiz as base it operates off coast of Spain, cuts French army's sea communications with Barcelona, drives French fleet back to Toulon, interrupts French trade with the Levant, influences attitude of the Porte. Withdrawal of fleet in 1697 exposes Austrian possessions to French attack by sea, and deprives Austrian military communications in the Adriatic of protection.

In the War of the Spanish Succession Cadiz becomes an enemy base. To enable allies to act in Mediterranean an expedition is sent in 1702 to capture Cadiz, which fails; and until Lisbon becomes available in 1703, allied fleet can only remain in Mediterranean during three summer months. Gibraltar, taken in 1704, is held against Franco-Spanish attack because relief can twice reach it from Lisbon. With command of the sea an invasion of Provence by continental allies to effect a diversion from Flanders is possible; and French Levant trade and food supplies from Africa are interrupted effectively after capture of Port Mahon.

offered by the admiral. He impressed on him the importance of remaining at Cadiz in these terms:

'The King and the Committee are strongly of opinion that it will be extremely to the advantage of England and the Allies if you can hinder the French fleet from coming northwards. For our trade in the Mediterranean will be preserved while that of the French will be obstructed, and the coasts of Spain will be protected which otherwise must inevitably fall under French dominion: and it may have a very good effect upon Portugal and the neutral Powers in Italy.

At the same time he gave orders that steps should be taken to prevent naval stores from reaching the French at Toulon.

So the allies remained in their commanding station, and their sea power disappointed the French King's hopes that a relief to his troubles in Flanders might be obtained by action against Spain and Savoy.

At the same time thoughts in London were turned towards the possibilities that the situation in the Mediterranean might offer. Would it be possible, asked the King, 'now to concert with Savoy a descent in Southern France, or to assist him [the Duke of Savoy] against France in any way?' Could Toulon be bombarded and its ships and galleys destroyed? How alive he was to the importance of exploiting the situation, in particular in the direction of destroying the French fleet, is shown in these words: 'At such a time as this, when there appears to be a prospect of doing something to weaken France in their naval force, which is so immediately the interest and security of England, His Majesty is earnestly concerned that such an opportunity be not lost, which in an age may not offer itself again.' Bombardment, however, was not practicable: it could neither reduce Toulon nor destroy the fleet. One means and one only would do this—the combined use of land and sea forces. But the only land forces available on the spot were those of Savoy, and the Duke declined to take part in an attack on the French base. He was, indeed, already preparing to go over to the enemy. He did so in 1696.

Though it thus proved impossible to make full use of the opportunity afforded decisively to consolidate the allies' command of the sea, the persistent attention their sea power gave to the enemy's main fleet had its effect in convincing him that he could not wrest the command from them. In 1695 the

Intendant of the Navy, the great fortress-builder Vauban, urged a complete abandonment of the use of fleets. France, he said, had drawn no advantage throughout the seven years of the war from her great fleets. A new strategy must now be adopted at sea. The war at sea must be made 'hard and inconvenient' to the allies, and the way of so doing was the *guerre de course*. 'Brest is so placed as though God had made it expressly for the purpose of the destruction of the commerce of these two nations [England and Holland]. The most skilful policy is the shaking of the buttresses of the League by means of a subtle and widespread form of war.' The 'buttresses of the League' were the sea Powers and their commerce; the 'form of war' proposed was squadronal attacks on trade combined with the action of numerous individual corsairs. This was set on foot. In 1696 the French fleet, which could not be kept at Toulon for want of supplies, returned to Brest. The allied fleet then returned home.

With the two main fleets once again in home waters a situation not far removed from a stalemate arose. Forgetting the several plans for conjunct attempts against the Brest fleet, the English ministers were at a loss to discover to what use, other than that of defence against invasion and trade, their fleet could be put. In June Godolphin was asking the King for his 'speedy direction how our great useless fleet should act'. All that he himself could suggest was that the fleet should go off Brest and threaten it while the towns on the coast of Normandy and in the Bay should be bombarded by squadrons of bomb vessels—a singularly futile proposal. The Lords Justices were equally unable to suggest how their weapon should be employed beyond giving protection to the trade to the westward. When they asked the Admiralty for their views, their suggestion was that the privateer bases of the enemy should be bombarded and cruising squadrons should be sent out to suppress the privateers at sea. Thus none of the ideas went farther than measures of defence, and, so long as the army and navy were treated as two separate services, with separate objects, this was inevitable. So the situation resolved itself into the army being sent to the Continent where its contribution was too small to produce a decision, and the greater part of the naval strength was absorbed by the duty of watching the undefeated French fleet. As a result there was insufficient force available to furnish adequate

convoys for the trade or to blockade the privateers in their ports. The French fleet at Brest, like the German fleet at Wilhelmshaven at a later date, was effectively 'containing' the British, and British trade was suffering severely. At the same time the economic pressure upon France was insufficient seriously to affect her power of resisting the allies.

The withdrawal of the allied fleet from the Mediterranean was a grave disappointment to the Emperor, depriving him as it did of the support he needed at sea. He pointed out that it left the sea open for the movement of French armies into Spain and Italy, and that, unless the fleet should return, Barcelona would fall; and the fall of that city would cause Catalonia to succumb. In reply to his entreaties he was told that a squadron would be sent out again as soon as the difficulties of provisioning it could be overcome. Those difficulties were very real. Even the fleet in home waters could only be sent to sea at half its strength owing to lack of provisions. The fundamental cause of this deplorable situation was financial exhaustion, and that exhaustion was largely due to loss of trade and shipping. The loss of trade and shipping was due primarily to the continued existence of the French fleet which made the action of the corsair and other squadrons possible, and that continued existence was due to a strategy which had failed to make its destruction the first of the national objects. An attempt was being made to do two things at the same time with forces inadequate to either. Moreover, on those occasions on which conjunct operations were prepared or set in motion, the administrative machine failed totally to provide the means in time. It is permissible to think that, if the efforts expended in Flanders had been devoted to the destruction of the French fleet when it lay within reach at Brest, the staying power of England would have been greater and the exhaustion of France which eventually brought peace at Ryswick would have come sooner and lasted longer.

The Treaty of Ryswick halted the French King's career of conquest but did not bring about a permanent peace. A new international problem arose in the succession to the Spanish throne. Two Partition Treaties, in 1698 and 1699, attempted to solve the question of the inheritance to the Spanish Dominions on the death of the King. The second of these had a particular interest to the statesmen of England, since certain of its proposals

affected England's sea power in the important elements of bases. In the division proposed of the Spanish possessions between France and the Empire, the Two Sicilies were to fall to France. The war of 1689–97 had demonstrated very clearly England's interest in the Mediterranean and the importance of her being able to maintain a fleet in that sea. It had brought out the weakness that resulted from the lack of a permanent base. If France were to possess Naples and Sicily, in the very heart of the sea, in addition to her existing base at Toulon, her power of exercising command in the Mediterranean would be greatly increased and England's power of defending her commerce with the Levant, as well as of influencing events at sea and on land, would be correspondingly diminished. So long as Spain continued in alliance with England an English fleet would be able to make use of Cadiz. But alliances are never permanent, and though William expressed confidence in the maintenance of friendship with Spain, he recognized that England needed bases of her own, in which she could assemble the stores of a fleet in peace, and of which she would have full control in war: for matters had not always gone easily in Cadiz. The King therefore claimed that, if Spain should fall under the domination of France through a French prince succeeding to the Spanish throne, England should receive Port Mahon and either Gibraltar or Ceuta in compensation. In the event this situation did not arise for the Emperor rejected the proposed treaty; but William's insistence on this point of strategy shows his clear understanding of the needs of sea power in its important element of bases.

'Queen Anne's War' broke out in 1701. The British object, expressed in one sentence, was to reduce the exorbitant power of France. What part, in that task, did the statesmen of Britain assign to sea power? And of what, at that moment, did the sea power of the contending nations consist?

The British and the Dutch were, as they had been before, allies. Their joint fleets of capital ships numbered about twice that of France. But, as before, both the allies were unready at the time of the outbreak of war. Severe economies had pared down the British fleet after the peace in 1697, and all the representations which the King had made of the need for putting things in order had fallen on deaf ears in Parliament. In 1699 he had pointed out the deficiencies both of the fleet and

of the land defences, but without result. Hence when the crisis came in 1701 no more than half of the 130 British capital ships were fit for the sea, and the number of seamen, which had normally been maintained in peace at 15,000, had been reduced to 7,000. In spite, too, of the great difficulties that had been experienced in manning the fleet in the last war, no steps had been taken to establish a better system of recruitment. It was not that it was impossible to discern either the need or the means of meeting it. Both were plain to many men, among them Defoe, who wrote an able tract outlining both: but he was a century ahead of his time and nothing was done. In the matter of bases the allies were less well off than they had been in the last war. Cadiz, then at the service of the allies, was now in the hands of the enemy—one of Louis XIV's first acts before the war was to take steps to strengthen its defences—and Portugal, under the terms of a treaty with France of 1701, was committed to closing her ports to the allies. That arrangement, however, did not last long, for when war began she soon found her trade exposed to the action of the sea Powers, and the King, finding the marked disadvantages to which the French treaty exposed Portuguese shipping, threw the treaty over. 'If your master', he wrote to the French minister, 'had sent thirty ships of the line to cruise between Lisbon and Setubal, I had never quitted his alliance.'

In the element of shipping the Navigation Acts continued to encourage shipping and seamen. Acts were passed with the object of improving the types and defensibility of merchant ships. The dangers of complete dependence on the Baltic for naval stores were so intensified owing to a war between the northern Powers that steps were at last taken to free the country from this absolute dependence, and to remedy its lack of self-sufficiency by developing the resources of the Empire. An Act was passed in 1704 with this object. The preamble stated that

'The Royal Navy and Navigation of England wherein under God the wealth, safety, and strength of this Kingdom are so much concerned, depends on the due supply of stores necessary for the same, which now being brought in mostly from foreign parts, in foreign shipping, at exorbitant and arbitrary rates, to the great prejudice of the trade and navigation of this Kingdom, may be provided in a more certain and beneficial manner from his Majesty's Dominions.'

The strategical problem of how to make the best use of England's national strength again became the subject of dispute. The dispute resolved itself into the question of whether she employed her resources in all their forms—geographical, naval, military, financial, colonial, and industrial—with better effect by strengthening the armies of her allies or by weakening the armies of her enemies.

Apart from the many, and highly influential cross-currents in the political sphere which affected opinions,[1] the Tories, as a whole, advocated the 'maritime', and the Whigs the 'continental', policy. The 'maritime' school argued that without money France could not maintain the vast military forces she needed for a war of the magnitude of that of Louis XIV, for her own internal resources were inadequate to meet the costs and must be supplemented by her trade. In this war, too, she was allied with Spain and would benefit from the import of the bullion from Spanish America. She was therefore more vulnerable than in the earlier war to her sea communications, and it was there that England, with her sea power, was strong, and could be stronger if she confined her efforts to a single object, at sea and oversea. By so doing she would weaken the enemy more than she could strengthen her allies with the comparatively small contribution she was capable of making on land. The principal criticism of the strategy that was adopted in this war was expressed by Swift in his *Conduct of the Allies*, in which the following sentence stresses the belief that the enemy effort depended upon money: 'With half the charge we have been at we might have maintained our quota of 40,000 men in Flanders, and at the same time have so distressed the Spaniards in the north and south seas of America *as to prevent any returns of money from thence except in our own bottoms.*' This appreciation rested mainly on the estimate of France's dependence on the sea. Whether she was as dependent on the Spanish treasure as the 'maritime' strategists assumed her to be is, even now, uncertain.

A French economist has estimated that France may have received 3 million dollars a year in the course of the years from 1670–1698,[2] a figure whose loss cannot be considered decisive.

[1] For these cf. Trevelyan, *Blenheim*, particularly chaps. ix and xiv, and Churchill, *Marlborough*, vol. ii, chaps. ii and iv.

[2] Girard, *Le Commerce français à Séville et à Cadiz au temps des Habsbourgs*, p. 454.

On the other hand, a recent French naval writer[1] describes the French sea communications as 'capital' and the bullion supplies as essential to carrying on the war. 'Above all, the Spanish treasury is empty; that of France is nearly so: the only financial resources which can enable the two Crowns to face the growing costs of war are precisely those regularly brought by the Treasure fleets, which carry tens of millions of livres to Europe from the Indies on every voyage.' In the Mediterranean an active French commerce was both a source of wealth and a national necessity, importing foodstuffs from the Barbary coast which were badly needed in consequence of the upheavals in agriculture caused not only by the long sequence of wars but also by the times of bad harvests. 'Maintenir cette navigation est une nécessité absolue.' Thus, even if the British mercantilist ideas of the time overestimated the effect which the cutting off of French communications would produce, the error was not unnatural,[2] and was largely shared by the French themselves.

And there was yet another consideration, affecting the choice of strategy. By making her principal effort at sea and destroying French sea power in all its elements, Great Britain, it was urged, would be taking the most effective step towards assuring her own security. French sea power, like that of England, sprang from the possession of fighting ships, shipping, and colonies. A century earlier it had not existed, but during the recent years it had grown until now it constituted an actual menace to England. Defoe, writing towards the end of the war, laid stress upon this and upon the significance of the colonial factor in strategy. He argued that so long as France held Cape Breton she could continue her Newfoundland fishery and thereby

'will keep up and increase their nursery of seamen; for 'tis chiefly if not wholly to their trade that the greatness of France is owing . . . as appears by the insignificant figure they made at sea in the time of Queen Elizabeth and even so lately as the siege of Rochel, compared with the mighty fleets they have since put to sea and with which they have twice fought the united fleets of Great Britain and Holland; where, though they were twice beaten, yet once got the better: and

[1] Capitaine de Fregate Chômel, in *La Revue maritime*, Feb. 1938, p. 155.

[2] Cf. Lavisse, *Histoire de France*, vol. vii, book ii, chap. ii, p. 108; Clamageron, *Histoire de l'impôt de France*, p. 110; Macpherson, *History of Great Britain* (1713), vol. ii; Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, passim.

had we been either time alone they must in all probability have bettered us; so much stronger are they by sea than either we or the Dutch alone.'

Hence the essential call of security demanded that the destruction of French sea power in all its elements should take a primary place in the British strategy.

The success of the 'maritime' policy depended as ever on the destruction of the French fleet. So long as that mass was in existence and being it would, as it had in King William's war, absorb the resources of the two sea Powers. Superior though they were in numbers, their strength was largely consumed in countering the threats of the enemy, defending their own commerce, and meeting the numerous demands of their allies. The one decisive form of isolation is blockade, but it was no more possible to blockade the many ports in France and Spain through which goods could enter those countries than it had been to blockade those of Holland until the enemy fleet had been so disabled that the main body of the fleet could be dispersed into detachments in the many stations in which they would be needed. The coastal trade, too, played an important part in strategy. It was not only one of the distributive systems of the country, it was also the only channel by which the bulky supplies of naval stores needed for building and refitting the ships of war reached the naval arsenals; for those goods could not be moved by the primitive system then existing of road communications.

Here, then, were four distinct considerations affecting the use to which the country's sea power should be put. The political, in the differing interests of the Tory and the Whig; the economic, of whether France could or could not continue a long war without the support of the Spanish bullion and her own sea-borne commerce; the purely strategical, of whether those supplies could be stopped, and if so at what cost to the interests of the allies; and that of taking the opportunity which the war provided of eliminating what was regarded as a growing danger to England—the sea power of France.

Though Great Britain and Holland were in alliance, and though there was agreement as to the share which each should take in the effort at sea, their combined strength was not represented by the sum total of their two navies. For one thing, all

the old differences that there had been since the time of Elizabeth concerning trading with the common enemy still persisted. The temporary bridging over of the differences which had been made in the last war had not lasted long, and had not been renewed. The Dutch plea that the practice was necessary in order to furnish the means of fighting, falsified though it had been by the events of the Third Dutch War, was still advanced and acted upon. Thus in 1703, when the Dutch request for an additional 10,000 English troops to be sent to Flanders was granted, on the express condition that trade with the enemy would cease, that condition was openly broken and the trade continued. 'Whatever the States General may resolve', wrote Stanhope, 'they will never be able to hinder their people from trading where there is hope of gain.' For another, the Dutch were heavily committed on land, through the need of providing from 80,000 to 100,000 troops to defend their positions. They were therefore either unwilling or unable to fulfil their obligations to furnish the full agreed quota of three Dutch ships to every five British, and throughout the ten years from 1702 to 1711 the average number of their contribution was twenty ships in place of the forty-three which should have been furnished, according to the terms of the treaty. This gave rise to hard feelings and reproaches in England, unfortunate in an alliance. The complaint that this defection threw an unfair burden on the British fleet was undoubtedly true; but some compensation was derived from it, for it forced the British Parliament to maintain their own fleet at a proper strength, it eliminated an old rival at sea, and it brought home to English statesmen the lesson, of which they had already had some previous painful experience, of the unwisdom of depending upon others in the vital matter of sea power.

The importance attached to keeping the Spanish treasure out of the French coffers, which was one of the bases of the policy of the 'maritime' school, found expression before the outbreak of the war. When matters were becoming acute one French squadron was sent to Cadiz and another to the West Indies. These moves were interpreted in London to mean that the French intended to seize the Spanish treasure fleet, then expected soon to arrive, and to carry it into King Louis's own ports 'the better to enable him to carry on the war'. To prevent

this, English squadrons were sent to the coast of Spain and the West Indies to intercept the treasure fleet and to endeavour to induce the Spaniards in the colonies in the Indies to renounce the rule of the Bourbon Prince and place themselves under the protection of the Austrian claimant to the Spanish throne. The words of the instructions to the admiral, John Benbow, indicate the importance ministers attached to the treasure. 'You will easily imagine the vast advantage to her Majesty if you can intercept the French taking the Spanish flota and Galleons to Europe.' The action had a preventive object. If the treasure were stopped, war might be rendered impossible. The same idea was to recur on more than one occasion at later dates.

On the question of the major strategy of the war the 'continental' view prevailed over the 'maritime'. Parliament voted 40,000 men in place of the 10,000 provided for by the Treaty of 1678: the defeat of the French army in Flanders was made the principal object. What part the fleet should play in this was to be settled. As we have so often seen, each of England's allies desired the help of the fleet in the area in which its own interests lay. The Emperor, whose ruling passion was the conquest of Naples, called for its services in the Adriatic, to protect his troops crossing that sea into Italy, and, in the Gulf of Lions, to prevent French troops from reaching Naples. The German Princes in the north asked that the fleet and army should undertake military diversions on the west coast of France in order to relieve the pressure upon themselves. In London there was more than one suggestion, including the sending of the fleet to carry a body of troops 'to attempt something on the coasts of Spain or Portugal' and the undertaking of offensive and defensive operations in the West Indies.

One man had a clear view. King William's intentions, expressed shortly before his death, were that the allied sea power should be used to obtain the command of the sea in the Mediterranean. With his experience of the last war, and his reading of the international situation in the one that was coming, he had seen how greatly the command of that sea must influence the war and further the efforts of the allies. France coveted Naples: she would probably desire to send an army to Spain. The free use of the sea was the most valuable asset she could possess for achieving both of those ends. To deprive her

of that asset was plainly desirable. In the hands of the allies the command of the sea would contribute to the success of the inevitable operations in Flanders, for if the sea route was barred to the French armies in the Mediterranean they must move by land. This would involve the use of larger forces and of a greatly increased service of transport in the south of France, and both of these would have to be withdrawn from Flanders. In other words, King William wished the allied sea power to be used to create an effective diversion in favour of the campaign in the principal theatre where the decision must finally be sought.

This conception furnished the governing factor of the initial strategy. Command of the Mediterranean was impossible without a base at the continuous and unbroken disposal of the fleet, a place where it would not be dependent on the whims of another Power, and where the stores of all kinds needed by the ships could be assembled in good time and in ample quantity. As Great Britain possessed no base she must, as the first of her measures, acquire one. The place selected was Cadiz. By its capture the Franco-Spanish enemies would lose a commanding position in the entrance to the Straits, the Allies themselves would have a position in which to winter and, what was of particular importance in the matter of the treasure fleets, one from which the approaching galleons could be intercepted on their way to the alternative treasure port, San Lucar, the seaport of Seville. This did not complete the purpose of a Mediterranean strategy. Portugal, who was still under French domination, would be influenced, susceptible as she was to pressure from the sea, by the presence of a British fleet at Cadiz, capable of interrupting her trade in the approaches to the Tagus. The capture of Cadiz was regarded as a means to a still further end. It was a step towards the capture of Toulon, the destruction of the French sea power in the Mediterranean, and therewith the opening of the way to an invasion of France by the allies on a large scale from the south. The capture of Toulon, Marlborough said at a later stage, had been the object in view from the very beginning of the war. The Emperor finally agreed, stipulating that Prince Eugene of Hesse Darmstadt should be present.

This great design on Cadiz failed. The expedition sent in 1702 failed, primarily in consequence of the reckless reductions

that had been made in the army in the orgy of disarmament after the last war when the fine military force of 87,000 men was cut down to 7,000. A new army had to be raised and hastily trained, and it was an army largely untrained and lacking discipline that was sent, after considerable delay, on this vital enterprise. There was, to be sure, a failure also in command: both the military and naval commanders lacked energy. The admiral, Rooke, was hostile to this scheme, objecting to keeping the fleet abroad so late in the year. In the hands of other men even the great disabilities under which the expedition was launched might have succeeded, but this does not excuse those whose lack of preparations for war handicapped, from the beginning, the enterprise. A demand for an inquiry into the failure was not pressed, for it would have exposed the dilatory manner in which the expedition was prepared. A cover for the ministers and the admiral was provided by the capture of a substantial part of a treasure fleet and the destruction of several French ships of the line at Vigo. The Government exalted this victory to the utmost. Their vote of thanks to the admiral indicated the importance they attached to the Spanish treasure: 'You have not only spoiled the enemy but you have enriched your own country. . . . France had endeavoured to support its ambitions by the riches of the Indies: your success, Sir, hath only left them the burden of Spain and stript them of the assistance of it.' But the benefits which would have followed the capture of Cadiz would have far outweighed those of the destruction of the galleons.

The question of what the strategy for 1703 should be came under discussion at the end of the year. The advocates of 'maritime' war pressed for their favourite plan of attacking the enemy in the Indies and 'depriving the enemy of the supplies of money and plate which they seem to rely on for the conduct of the war'. That proposal, which left out of account the destruction of the French fleets, was rightly rejected, though some comparatively small forces were sent to the Caribbean which frittered away time and material in raids on French islands but contributed nothing to the security of the trade, the islands, or the common cause. In the words of a contemporary historian, the operations were 'attended with a continual and vast expense and cost the lives of many brave officers and seamen'.

Apart from this slight dissipation of force the Mediterranean held the field as the theatre where the use of sea power was most needed. There the Emperor was repeating his demands for ships to protect his transports across the Adriatic, from Trieste to the Po and down the sea to Naples and Sicily, and in the Gulf of Lions to stop the movements of French troops from Toulon to Italy. There, too, possibilities were arising out of a revolt of the Camisards in the Cevennes. The appearance of a fleet off the coast of Piedmont might induce the hesitating Duke of Savoy to join the allies. What we to-day call 'commando' raids might be used to force dispersion on the French armies—Nottingham, a leader in the Tory party and of the school of 'maritime' war, told the Grand Pensionary of Holland, 'I have long thought that no war can be so dangerous to France as one carried on in this way.' What is noticeable about all these and other proposals which poured in on the ministers is that one and all left untouched the one great matter—the destruction of the enemy fighting forces at sea. They all aimed at attempting to make use of the sea before the enemies' fighting forces had been weakened or disabled, and while it was still strong enough to interfere effectively with any seaborne expeditions, to inflict injury on the trade and colonies, and to occupy so much of the attention of the allied fleets that steps could not be taken seriously to interfere with the arrival of the treasure to which so much importance was attached. So the year 1703 saw no more than desultory operations at sea, operations without a settled and connected purpose. On the other hand, it witnessed a diplomatic operation of high strategical importance. The Methuen Treaty gave the allies the use of Lisbon as a base.

The year 1704 saw the control of strategy fall definitely into the master hand of Marlborough. No English statesman, not even Chatham himself, had a more comprehensive grasp of the problems of sea power and the interdependence of the sea and land forces. The story of the march to the Danube and the victory of Blenheim is familiar to everyone. Less familiar, perhaps, is the plan which that great soldier intended to be carried out, in conjunction, in the Mediterranean. His view was that the greatest help which sea power could render to the common cause was the capture of Toulon, and this view he imposed on the Cabinet. 'The operations of the fleet', wrote the Secretary

of State, 'can nowhere be so useful as in the Mediterranean.' But whether this could be effected depended upon whether troops were available, and this, in turn, depended upon the Duke of Savoy. If the Duke could not, or would not, co-operate in an attack on Toulon the action of the fleet would be confined to helping the Emperor in his campaign against the Two Sicilies, but it was impressed on the commander in the Mediterranean that every persuasion was to be used to further the Toulon attack, which 'was to be preferred to any service'. Unfortunately the Duke of Savoy declined to participate and the scheme fell through, and a series of moves of the opposing fleets took place which, as they were matters of local strategy, need not detain us.

But one uncalculated strategical event occurred. Gibraltar was taken by the fleet. The vast strategical significance of this was at once recognized in Paris. The Toulon fleet was at once ordered to sea with categorical orders to retake the Rock. It was met by the allied fleet off Malaga on 13 August and a battle was fought, tactically indecisive, but strategically an allied success. The French fleet retired to Toulon, where a *Te Deum* was sung for a victory of which a modern French naval historian has caustically written that 'while the French had the laurels the English had the fruit'. The value of 'the fruit' was no less appreciated in London than in Paris. Steps were at once taken to put the neglected Spanish defences in order, and this was well, for attempts to recover the place began so soon as the fleet had retired to Lisbon for its winter refit. Every one of the attempts failed, and the reason for the failures was that the fleet at Lisbon was at hand, and on each occasion was able to come to the support of the garrison in time, though by a narrow margin. Without Lisbon as a wintering base no fleet could have reached the spot in time, and the Rock must have been lost. That winter campaign impresses not only the need for bases and the need for adequate defences at a base, but also the fact that local defences, however adequate, are by themselves insufficient unless the sea is kept open. Every fortress that becomes isolated is bound to fall. A base without a fleet, as we have seen at Singapore, is a mere hostage to the enemy.

The governing idea of the plans for 1705 was once more a concentration of effort in Flanders, for which 25,000 men were

voted, combined with support to the Emperor in the Mediterranean. The fleet, now in possession of bases at Lisbon and Gibraltar, was able to remain abroad throughout the year and thus to maintain a continuous control over movements by sea in the western basin of the sea. As before, insistent demands were made by the allies for help, the Emperor in Sicily, the Duke of Savoy on the coast of Piedmont. A new situation was also developing in Spain, where the Catalans were showing an increased disposition to rise in favour of the Austrian Pretender. The crucial question which ministers had to face in considering the use of their sea power was in which of these employments it could produce the greatest effects in favour of the campaign in Flanders. The decision to which they came was that a successful rising in Catalonia would embarrass France the most as it would create the greatest diversion of her army. But before the Catalans would rise they would need a greater assurance of help than a fleet alone could give. Troops would be required to form a nucleus round which they could gather. Whether they would rise in great enough strength to affect the situation had also to be considered; if not, an alternative objective was at hand—Cadiz. An army of some 7,000 men was accordingly raised with the object of attacking either Barcelona or Cadiz according to the prospects of local help in each. But at the same time Toulon and the French fleet there were not forgotten. If either of the land Powers in the Mediterranean should at last be found willing to co-operate in an attack on Toulon, this operation was to be preferred to supporting a Catalan rising. Neither Power, however, would do so. The Duke was too deeply engaged on his frontier in Savoy to spare troops from his own defence; the Emperor, as usual, was absorbed in his designs against Naples. The expedition, therefore, went to Barcelona, which it captured, and by the end of the summer of 1706 the whole of Catalonia was in the hands of the allies. So, and with these objects, began the 'First Peninsular War'.

At the end of the year the fleet, which had been working with the army in the campaign on the coast of Spain, had to return to Lisbon to refit, for there were no stores or facilities available in Barcelona or Gibraltar. Before it could resume its station off the Catalan coast in the spring of 1706 a strong French army, supported by the fleet from Toulon, had arrived off Barcelona

with the categorical command from the King: 'Je vous ordonne de prendre Barcelone.' Twenty-five thousand French troops were thus diverted to Spain, and the small English garrison of four thousand were besieged by land and blockaded by sea. King Charles sent out an urgent cry for help. Help came from Lisbon. In the very nick of time, when the fortifications had been breached and an assault was about to be delivered, the allied fleet was reported to be approaching. The French admiral did not await its coming but retired at once to Toulon, and the army, deprived, as it had been on an earlier occasion, of its support, abandoned the siege and retreated to the Pyrenees.

The summer of 1706 saw severe reverses to the allied army in other parts of Spain, but, in compensation, it saw also the victory of Ramillies. That victory opened up, among other things, possibilities in the Mediterranean. The French had suffered such heavy losses in the campaign of Ramillies that it seemed probable that, to reinforce Flanders, they would have had to weaken their army in Provence. If this were so, the moment was propitious to strike against the south of France, with Toulon and the French fleet as the immediate objectives. An invasion of Provence by the Austrian and Piedmontese armies might take Toulon and destroy the French fleet. France would then be threatened with invasion from the south, and, while the destruction of the fleet would be of the greatest service to the Emperor, securing his communications with Sicily, it would also set free ships for the protection of trade, and also, possibly, for operations against that old and favourite objective, the Spanish treasure fleets.

This admirable scheme for a co-ordinated land and sea strategy whose results would be felt in both the military and economic spheres failed. It failed because the Emperor, like many another of Britain's continental allies at other times, was either unable to appreciate the influence which the enemy fleet was exerting on the military campaigns, or too self-centred to subordinate his own immediate interests to those of the common cause. 'The Council at Vienna were so earnest for the reduction of Naples that neither the solicitation of her Britannic Majesty, the repeated endeavours of the Marquis de Piz and Monsieur Rechteren, his Royal Highness's and the Dutch envoys, had any

measure of prevalence with the Imperial Court. . . .'[1] The Emperor was blind to the fact that the prompt capture of Toulon would give him Naples 'in the pick-up'. In consequence of his one-track mind delays were imposed on the start of the expedition, the enemy was given both warning of the attack and time to strengthen his defences and reinforce his garrison. The two irreplaceable elements of Surprise[2] and Time were sacrificed. When, at last, the expedition reached the approaches to the fortress, the strength of the defences deterred even the usually bold Prince Eugene from continuing the attempt, pressed though he was to push on by the British admiral and the Duke of Savoy. While he pondered, sickness set in, and with sickness, despondency. The attempt was abandoned.

Though the expedition failed to achieve what had been hoped, it had one important measure of success. One, and not the least, of its aims had been the destruction of the Toulon fleet. That fleet now destroyed itself. To save it from the expected bombardment by the allied army the great ships were sunk in the shallow waters of the harbour. It was intended that they would be raised again if the danger should pass, but when the danger was over they were so strained and otherwise injured by their immersion that few, if any, of them could be made fit for service except at a cost that was beyond the power of the State to meet. A most sensible relief was thus afforded to the allied navies who were finding increasing difficulties in meeting the intensive attack upon trade. Fresh hopes of success in this attack were as high in Paris as those entertained by the German planners of the submarine warfare in our own day. In 1917 the German staff promised that they would effect an allied collapse in six months. In 1705 the Intendant of the French Navy promised a victory over the allies in two, or at most three, years. The strategy of the *guerre de course* was intended to take the form of massed attacks by groups of from four to six heavy ships, accompanied by lesser vessels, as well as scattered attacks by independent privateer units; hence the need for strengthening the allied convoy defence was pressing. The freeing of some of

[1] *A Letter from a Minister of State at Turin . . . relating to the expedition into Provence and the siege of Toulon* (London, 1707).

[2] Marlborough wrote to Wratislaw on 21 Sept.: 'If we had more troops, and had arrived five days sooner, success was certain.' It was the old story of 'too little and too late'!

the fleet from the task of dealing with the Toulon squadron was thus of no small importance. The heavy French squadrons inflicted great damage but, in the view of a modern French naval historian, the support they were able to give to the independent corsairs was insufficient.

'N'étant ni appuyés ni abrités par les vaisseaux du Roi, nos corsaires devaient fatalement être refoulés peu à peu vers des parages de plus en plus lointains, ou détruits un par un par les forces organisées anglo-hollandaises lorsque rien n'a plus gêné celles-ci dans leur chasse offensive.'[1]

Among other things it served to enable more protection to be given to the Austrian sea communications and to the commerce in the Mediterranean. Still more, however, was needed, and there was one way by means of which ships could be used with greater economy: the possession of a more advanced base than Gibraltar. This Marlborough saw clearly. He urged the capture of Minorca with its excellent harbour, Port Mahon. In 1708 an expedition was therefore sent which took the island. 'England', wrote Stanhope, 'ought never to part with this island which will give the law to the Mediterranean in time of War and Peace.' Unfortunately England had to part with the island forty-eight years later, when, owing to misdirection of the strategy and neglect, she lost her superiority in the inland sea and the island, isolated, had to surrender.

By 1709 France was short of food. A bad harvest in 1707 and an exceptionally hard winter in 1708 caused such poverty and hunger throughout the country that King Louis became inclined to peace. But the demands of the allies were too severe for him to accept. The Dutch claimed the Barrier fortresses; the English cried for 'no peace without Spain' and for the destruction of the defences of Dunkirk. There was the question of who should possess the Two Sicilies ('any Minister who gave up the Two Sicilies should answer for it with his head', observed one statesman). The colonists in North America and the West Indies were demanding the expulsion of the French from those regions from which they had ravaged the colonies and their trade. All these desires proved insurmountable obstacles to peace.

[1] Captain Chomel in *Revue maritime*, Feb. 1938, p. 174.

As the war had to continue, its form had to be settled. A powerful French army was holding a strongly fortified line in Flanders. To storm these defences would certainly be costly; but it might be unnecessary if full advantage could be taken of the food situation in France. A hungry and disillusioned people might succumb to the pressure of cutting off the supplies of food which France, normally self-supporting, was now obliged to import from oversea. Sea power might drive the last nail into her coffin. Orders were therefore given to stop all corn ships bound to French ports, 'her Majesty judging it to be of the highest importance to her affairs, as well as to those of all her allies, to distress the enemy as much as possible by taking the most effectual measures for preventing them receiving such supplies at this juncture'. These orders were given on 20 June 1709. All sorts of corn were declared contraband, a squadron was sent to intercept corn ships from the Baltic, the Mediterranean fleet was directed to stop all vessels going to French ports from the Levant, Barbary, and Genoa, and cruising ships were stationed off the coast of Holland and in the Soundings. But France tightened her belt and held out.

Great as the allied sea power now was, it still proved barely equal to all the demands made upon it. Trade continued to suffer and, with that, the nation's power of maintaining its sea forces diminished likewise. The final years of the war at sea from 1710 to the peace were years of a continuous struggle for the security of the trade routes of the military lines of supply of the armies in Spain which were dependent on sea-borne grain, since all the grain-growing districts were in the enemy's hands, and of the Emperor's armies in Italy.

During the last years of the war some attempt was made to divert the enemy's forces from the main theatre by the use of amphibious threats to the northern and western French coasts and in the Mediterranean. In 1708 a series of diversions were attempted in the Channel by an embarked force of 5,000 men working from the Isle of Wight. In 1710 a landing by a very small force—about 700 men—was made at Cette with the object of drawing forces away from Catalonia: an expedition to which Sidney Smith drew the Duke of Wellington's attention in 1813, calling it 'one of the best concerted schemes of the whole war, though for reasons of unforeseen accidents and

mistakes in the execution it did not succeed'. Yet another small diversionary landing was attempted at the mouth of the Charente, where salt was produced—an essential commodity for provisioning ships—but it effected little, as it was on too small a scale. Looking at the whole length of the war, however, this form of diversion was not largely used, in spite of the advocacy of those who, like Nottingham, believed it to be the most effectual type of operation. The ministerial view, expressed by Addison in reply to opposition to the critics of the 'continental' strategy, was that England could not rely on exhausting France by diversionary or excentric attacks. Her aim must be to bring about an outnumbering of France's troops. Her naval effort was an indirect and undoubtedly important contribution to the military campaigns, but she must also raise an army on a larger scale. To the objection that she was already doing more than her share Addison replied that that was no reason for her not to make greater effort still. If a ship was in a storm in which all might perish, it would be madness for some to stand idle because others would not work. 'Let us imitate', he concluded, 'the vigilance and activity of the common enemy rather than the supineness of our friends.'

To what extent were the efforts of Great Britain deflected, in this war, from the service of the common cause to furthering her own interests or feathering her own nest oversea? One of the common accusations made by certain schools of continental writers, with a dull and persistent monotony, is that Britain's policy has consistently been first to stir up the peace-loving nations of Europe into conflict with each other and, having thus embroiled them in wars, to leave her allies in the lurch while she profits by their preoccupations to seize the colonies and trade she covets for her own aggrandizement.[1]

The colonial theatres played a very minor part in Queen Anne's war; indeed it was the fact that so little attention was paid to efforts in the colonies that formed one of Swift's principal criticisms of British strategy in his *Conduct of the Allies*. Such operations as were conducted in the colonial seas had

[1] (e.g. Tirpitz: 'For centuries the Anglo-Saxons have set the peoples of the European continent one against another' (*Memoirs*, p. 317). The same theme is pursued by Maltzahn in his *Naval Warfare*, by De Germiny in *Les Brigandages maritimes de l'Angleterre*, and by Lumbroso in *Napoleone e il Mediterraneo*.)

three main objects: the political object of attempting to detach the Spanish colonists in the Caribbean from the Bourbon cause; the economic object of preventing the Western treasure from reaching the French treasury; and the defensive objects of protecting the islands and trade of the Caribbean and of freeing the North American colonists from the constant menace and injuries to which they had been subjected from the French in Canada in the form of raids by land and attacks at sea on their shipping from Cape Breton. None of these objects was informed with the intention of 'imperial' expansion, nor were they made at the price of reducing the assistance which Britain was making to her allies in Europe.

The reason and the object of sending a squadron to the West Indies in 1701, before the outbreak of war, have already been referred to. It was a precautionary measure, made in reply to the sailing of a French squadron, carrying troops, whose aim was the capture of Barbados and the seizure of the Spanish treasure fleet for the use of the King of France, 'the better to enable him to carry on the war'. The object assigned to the admiral was threefold in nature: the defence of the trade and colonies, the prevention of supplies of money reaching the French coffers, and the detaching of the Spanish colonies from the Bourbon cause and gaining them for that of the rival Austrian claimant. The fact that no troops were carried indicates that no conquests were in view. In the following year, as the Spaniards in the colonies were still havering, a proposal was made to send an allied Anglo-Dutch force of 8,000 men to the Indies with the expressed object of occupying the principal ports at which the treasure was assembled and whence it sailed, so as to deprive the enemy of 'the supplies of money and plate which they seem to rely on for the support of the war'—the phrase constantly recurs—and in the hopes that this manifestation of force would induce the colonists to throw their lot in with the allies: but the idea was dropped as it was considered that, so far from obtaining the support of the people, it would have the opposite effect and unite them more closely with the French. Some small forces were sent later, primarily for the defence of certain of the British islands and with the purely strategical aim of capturing the two principal French naval bases, Martinique and Guadeloupe, from which privateers

raided the shipping and marauders attacked the British islands. Some desultory and ill-concerted attacks were made on French islands to which reference has been made earlier.

After the battle of Malaga, when France turned her efforts to the *guerre de course*, she also sent expeditions to annoy the colonies. A strong French squadron with landing forces was dispatched to capture Barbados and Jamaica, the two principal points in the British naval defence, to raid the coast of Virginia, to alarm New York, and to give support to operations in Acadia and Newfoundland. The colonists called for military help, but were told that none could be given as all the available land forces were needed for the campaigns then in progress in Europe. It was felt, too, that more should be done by the colonists themselves for their own defence. 'The people', wrote the Governor of Nevis, 'expect the Queen to do everything for them; they do not endeavour to help themselves.' Thus there was no weakening of the allied cause for the sake of British colonial interests: if anything, they gave way to the interests of the allies.

In 1707 the Elizabethan policy of striking at the Spanish treasure fleets in the West Indies was resumed as more force was then available. A small squadron of capital ships was ordered thither to intercept the treasure. It made one effective capture of a fleet loaded with bullion estimated at a value of 15 million sterling, of the results of which great hopes were entertained. Sunderland expected it would prove a fatal blow to France, 'for I believe this was one of their last resources for carrying on the war'. Though this hope was not fulfilled, those who believed that French resistance would be weakened for want of money had some grounds for their belief; for the same thought was causing anxiety in France itself. Chamillart, the French Minister of Finance, had told his King that the finances were so exhausted that he could not be sure of finding the money to pay the army in the year to come, great sums were still owing to the troops, the revenues of 1708 had been forestalled, taxation had reached its limits; it would be better to make peace at once if only it could be had on reasonable terms than to continue so disastrous a war. Thus, though the British statesmen who advocated a 'maritime' strategy may have put too high a value upon its results, there were at least foundations for their views; and their proposal was not based on the mere advantages

that would accrue to English interests, commercial or colonial, but because (apart from the political aspects of the question) this sort of warfare was believed to be the most effective form of contribution which Britain could make to the common cause. The urgency of the French need of money was shown in the almost frantic scenes which accompanied the safe homecoming of the trading and treasure fleets. Of one convoy that arrived in 1712 Saint-Simon wrote that it had been awaited with the greatest impatience and fear, for Spain was in extreme want of it, commerce was languishing, disorder was threatening. The money factor appears in French writings which show that the 'maritime' view, mistaken though it may have been, was not confined to the Tories in London. Louis XIV, writing to Amelot, said, 'Le principal objet de la guerre présente est celui du commerce des Indes et des richesses qu'elles produisent';[1] and the reason for this was given by the pacific Abbé de Saint-Pierre: 'If we can make our commerce flourish we shall have as many troops as we want; if we allow our commerce to languish, we shall have fewer soldiers and the less money with which to pay for their keep.'

The injuries inflicted by the *guerre de course*, like those inflicted in our own day by the submarines, obliged a great expenditure of effort in defence of shipping, largely in the form of stronger convoy protection. One effect that this better protection would produce was foreseen in the colonies. 'It is very reasonable to believe,' wrote the Governor of Virginia early in 1709, 'that we shall be more infested with the French privateers than formerly, since the interruption they have found in the Channel by the prudent disposition of the cruisers obliges them to come in greater numbers to America.'[2] Ministers in London unfortunately were less foreseeing and pooh-poohed the warning, with the result that West Indian and American shipping suffered until naval reinforcements arrived. But it was not in London only that there was unpreparedness. The defences of the West Indian islands, their batteries and forts, their local land forces—all responsibilities of the local administration—were neglected, and the talk ran in Martinique that while the English were

[1] E. W. Dahlgren, *Les Relations commerciales et maritimes entre la France et les côtes de l'Océan Pacifique*, vol. i, p. 561.

[2] As the submarines were driven westward in 1941. Cf. p. 325.

'amusing themselves' in Catalonia the French in the Indies would sweep them out of their Western colonies.

On a broad survey of the war as a whole one can perceive one thread running continuously through the strategy. From the beginning, originating in the mind of King William, there is a clear recognition of the importance of gaining the command of the Mediterranean. The key position was Toulon. To its capture Marlborough said in 1711 that 'her Majesty from the beginning of the war had looked as the most effective means to finish it'. But the obstacles in the way of attaining this great military object were many and various. First and foremost was the unreadiness with which the war was begun, owing to the reckless disarmament indulged in by Parliament after the last war, which crippled the navy and, still more disastrously, the army. There was the constant refusal of the military allies in the Mediterranean to co-operate, together with the Emperor's insistence on confining his efforts to reducing his rebellious Hungarian subjects and on conquering the Two Sicilies. There were the heavy demands which the defence of trade made upon the depleted navy. There were the requests from the colonies for more protection at sea. There was the defection of the Dutch, who failed consistently to supply their quota of fighting ships. Finally, and fundamentally, there was the French fleet. It was the French fleet which was the great stumbling-block to success. It stood in the way of the command of the Mediterranean; it diverted the allied strength to defensive purposes, in particular the defence of trade, which, by absorbing so much of its strength, reduced its power to undertake offensive operations, among them the operation of exerting economic pressure. It was unfortunate that the Emperor, alive as he was to the need for security in his own military communications at sea and insistent as were his own demands for naval help, should have been unable to recognize the fact that the step which would most materially have advanced his desires was his own co-operation with the sea Powers in the capture of the key position, Toulon, and the consequent elimination of the threat to those communications by the disappearance of the fleet which interrupted them. Hardly less unfortunate was the British ministry's failure to appreciate at an earlier date than 1708 the strategical importance of Minorca, and the part its possession would play

in dominating the Mediterranean and contributing to the general command of the sea. Here some continental strategists were ahead of the English. In August of 1704 they pointed out the advantages to be derived from its capture and the ease with which, at that time, it could be taken.

'The fleet will not only have one of the best ports in the world in case of accidents, but command in the Mediterranean, secure the Levant trade, keep the coast of Italy in dependence, relieve the Duke of Savoy by hindering the continual transport of the enemy's troops into Italy; and above all it would animate the intentions of the Catalonians, who are disposed to declare for their lawful King, and make this province submit upon the reduction of which all Spain seems to depend.'[1]

In place of beginning the war in Spain by obtaining a base which would enable the fleet to act with the greatest advantage they opened their campaign without one nearer than Gibraltar, where no facilities existed, where they could not lie and repair in the winter, where the fleet lay at a considerable distance from the enemy base at Toulon and from the line of passage of the French troops into Italy. The full control of the Mediterranean would certainly have been acquired at an earlier stage if ministers had recognized the importance of Port Mahon and had disposed the troops needed for its capture. The elemental character of bases in the cosmos of sea power is amply demonstrated in the effects of the successive occupations of Lisbon, Gibraltar, and Port Mahon in this war of Queen Anne. In later times we have had to pay dearly when this lesson has been forgotten or ignored.

[1] The full text of the memorial will be found in Owen, *War at Sea under Queen Anne*, p. 129.

IV

SEA POWER DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

PART I. 1714–48

DURING the years of warfare between 1688 and 1714 the sea power of Great Britain had made great strides in all its three elements of fighting ships, shipping, and bases. While the number of her own men-of-war had increased, those of her principal opponents, France and Spain, had diminished. The navy of Holland, her rival for a century and her recent ally, had declined rapidly after the Third Dutch War, owing in part to the heavy strain thrown on Dutch resources by the needs of defence on land, but still more through the growingly commercial spirit of her people. Opulence was preferred to defence, and security was sought under the protection afforded by the treaty of mutual assistance with Britain instead of by Holland's own exertions and self-denial. The number of her capital ships fell from fifty-three to forty during the years from 1702 to 1711, and after the war the Dutch people ceased to interest themselves in their fighting navy. The naval career was no longer sought, and this great maritime nation had to descend to the unworthy expedient of officering its fleet from foreign sources. The building of ships for the navy practically ceased: a few small vessels, fit only for the defence of trade against the pirates of the Mediterranean, were launched by the Admiralties of Friesland, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Zeeland between 1713 and 1746. Thus a nation whose fortunes and very existence rested upon sea power committed suicide and became a dependent on the aid of another. The danger of such dependence on another Power had been experienced by Great Britain during the recent war, when Dutch assistance had throughout fallen short of the agreed quotas. The three great wars of coalitions that were to follow in the eighteenth century were to emphasize the lesson that a nation must depend upon itself, and not upon the uncertain manner in which treaties may be interpreted, for its security in a vital matter in which improvisation is impossible. In the first of these wars the Dutch quotas were again never completed; in the second, the aid asked for from the Dutch was

refused; in the third, not only was the aid refused but the late ally was found in the ranks of the enemies. Queen Anne's war had brought out another essential fact. England was now deeply concerned in the Balance of Power in Europe, and this threw upon her the burden of supporting the movements of armies oversea, both her own and those of her allies. If she was to be able to do this, and at the same time to afford the necessary security to her own interests at sea and oversea in her trade and colonies, she must first possess a navy equal to the performance of both duties.

In the second element, of shipping, British sea power had increased in spite of the heavy losses suffered during the French *guerre de course*. Four thousand ships were stated to have been lost during King William's war and 1,146 in the first five years of Queen Anne's. In 1707 a note of despair was being sounded by Lord Haversham: 'Your ships have been taken by your enemies as the Dutch take your herrings. . . . Your merchants are beggared, your commerce is broken, your manufacturers ruined.' But even when he spoke the tide had already begun to turn owing to the greater number of cruising ships that were becoming available through the sinking of the French fleet at Toulon and the lessened demands in the Mediterranean which followed, though more slowly than they need have. A year later the 'Cruisers and Convoys Act' of 1708, which allotted a force of forty-three 'cruisers' specifically to the protection of trade in home waters, may have contributed to the improvement. By 1712 trade figures were actually higher than they had been before the war.[1] So we have one of the very many examples of what constitutes the criterion of British cruiser strength. It is not, as it has recently been asserted to be, the number of cruisers of an opponent, but the number and the nature of the duties which cruisers have to perform.

In the matter of supplies of naval stores the Act of 1704 had stimulated the supply from the Northern colonies; but the principal source was still the Baltic. The danger of dependence on a foreign source of these vital materials had been acutely felt during the recent war. In 1700 Sweden had been attacked by a coalition of Denmark, Poland, and Russia, seeking her

[1] G. Chalmers, *Estimates of the Comparative Strength of Great Britain*, pp. 89–90 (1794).

dismemberment. In order to guarantee Sweden against her enemies and to 'preserve the tranquillity in the North'—in other words to maintain the peaceful balance of power essential for ensuring that supplies of naval stores should not be interrupted—Britain concluded the Treaty of Altona with Sweden. It was a treaty of mutual assistance, and accordingly an Anglo-Dutch fleet went to the Baltic to support Sweden against a Danish fleet. That fleet, of thirty-eight sail, then found itself confronted with an allied fleet of sixty-one sail behind which there was an army of 5,000 men ready to cross the sea and seize Elsinore if the Danes proved obdurate and continued the war. In the face of this overwhelming superiority Denmark gave way and peace was restored. But though Sweden had received this aid from Britain, the Swedish monopolists in the tar industry refused supplies to her except in Swedish ships, at prohibitive prices, and in quantities to be settled by themselves that were inadequate to her needs: and the British envoy in Stockholm reminded his government 'how much it was in the power of the King of Sweden either to forward the fitting out of the Royal Navy or to keep it in harbour'. In this lay the key of British policy in the Baltic.

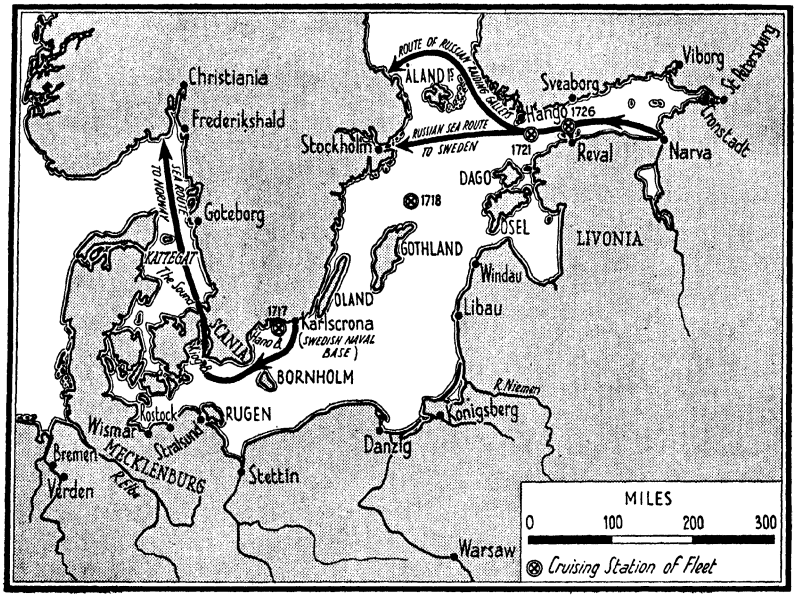
In the third element, bases, Britain was now well provided. She emerged from the war in 1714 with two bases in the Mediterranean, Minorca and Gibraltar. During the period to follow, up to the peace in 1783, the question of whether Gibraltar should be returned to Spain arose on several occasions, on each to be rejected. In 1718 Stanhope, who in common with many others thought its cost excessive and preferred Port Mahon as the main base, offered to restore the Rock to Spain as an inducement to Cardinal Alberoni to abandon his Italian ventures. Fortunately both the Cardinal and his King rejected the offer with contempt. In 1720 the matter was raised again. The Lord Justices, in agreement with Stanhope, proposed to surrender Gibraltar, asking in return Hispaniola and Florida. This offer was also spurned by Spain who insisted on an unconditional return, without any equivalent. In 1721 King George I privately promised the King of Spain to take the first favourable opportunity to obtain the consent of Parliament to the cession. The proposal was not made public till 1728. It had no chance of being adopted. Feeling in the country would never listen to

it, and Parliament was well aware of the feeling.[1] In 1729 and 1748 the question came up, but tentatively only, and came to nothing. In 1757, Port Mahon having been lost through the gross errors in the conduct of the war by the Duke of Newcastle and his colleagues of the Inner Council of the Cabinet, Pitt offered Gibraltar to Spain on condition of a Spanish alliance, Spanish assistance in the recapture of Port Mahon, and the abandonment of Spanish claims in Central America. Happily the offer once more failed; for Spain was already contemplating joining France, when she would recover the Rock for nothing; and Minorca, for which the surrender was to have been made, was recovered by Britain through the success of her own arms in the war. Finally, in 1783, when Spain pressed for the return of Gibraltar and Minorca, George III threw his weight into the scales of surrender. If it were to be kept, Spain should have Florida and Minorca; 'but I would wish', he said, 'if possible to be rid of Gibraltar and to have as much possession in the West Indies as possible.'[2] The King was opposed by the Cabinet, who were aware that the country would not have tolerated the surrender of the Rock after its great record of resistance in the three years' siege. In later times the suggestion has more than once been made that the base should be given for a variety of reasons—its untenability, its uselessness under modern conditions, the advantages to be derived from the resulting goodwill of Spain and of a possible alliance with her. The transitory nature of international relations of which history has afforded so many examples, and continues to do so, and the ease with which reasons have always been found for not fulfilling the conditions of an alliance if fulfilment entails inconvenience, cannot be left out of account in exchanging the bone of possession for the shadow of a promise of future help or friendship.

The problem of the Baltic had arisen once more during the War of the Spanish Succession. While the forces of Great Britain were engaged to the hilt in the south of Europe, Charles XII of Sweden had been pursuing a war of conquest in the north. His defeat at Poltava in 1709 brought this to a stop, and

[1] Sir Richard Lodge in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. xvi, p. 13.

[2] The King to Lord Shelburne 11 Dec. 1782. *Correspondence of King George III*, vol. vi, no. 4019.



MAP IV. PURPOSES OF BRITISH FLEETS IN THE BALTIC, 1715–1727

1715 To protect British trade against Swedish privateers.

1716 To prevent Swedish invasion of Norway by sea through Kattegat; to guard against expected Swedish expedition from Goteborg in support of Jacobite movement in Scotland.

1717 As in 1716. Swedish fleet in Karlscrona watched by British in Hano Bay: fleet covers convoys to Russia.

1718 As in 1717. Swedish fleet in Karlscrona watched from Hano Bay. British fleet based on Bornholm. Charles XII invades Norway by land, is killed at Frederickshald. Swedish aggression ends.

1719 To protect Sweden against Russian invasion. Russian fleet after carrying troops to Sweden retires withdrawing army to Reval.

1720 To protect Sweden against renewed Russian attack. Russian fleet blockaded in Cronstadt, but Russian rowing galleys raid Swedish coast.

1721 As in 1720. British fleet cruises off Hango Head, blocks Russian fleet and army. Russian galleys again raid Swedish coast north of Stockholm. Russo-Swedish Peace of Nystad.

1725 Fleet to Baltic to draw Sweden into Triple Alliance v. Spain and the Emperor.

1726 To protect Sweden against attack by Russia and Holstein. Fleet cruises off Reval, confines Russian fleet to port.

1727 To protect Denmark and Sweden against Russia. Sweden enters Alliance of Hanover, thereby contributing to maintenance of European peace.

the occasion of Sweden's weakness and distress that followed was at once seized by Saxony and Denmark to attack her and attempt her dismemberment. In this hour of danger Sweden called on Britain to come to her help in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Altona, but the many demands upon the navy at that moment were absorbing the whole of Britain's naval strength; and ministers could only regretfully reply that 'on account of the great and burdensome war we have so long been and are still engaged in against France, which employs our fleets and our treasure to the utmost extent of our abilities already', they could not give the help desired. During the years which followed, Sweden, in her endeavours to crush her enemies, adopted measures at sea which alienated the friendship of Britain, stopping all trade in the Baltic and thereby cutting off the British supplies of naval stores. King Charles turned a deaf ear to all Britain's representations, and continued so to offend her even when the great war with France was over in 1714. Among other acts he issued an ordinance specifically forbidding all neutral trade in the Baltic.

In the eyes of British ministers 'no treaty, law or reason could justify this measure'. The moment chosen for this act was singularly inopportune for Sweden, for British needs of naval stores were then pressing. The dockyards were so empty that, according to Lord Townshend, if the Baltic trade were stopped, 'it will be impossible for his Majesty to fit out any ships of war in the next year, by which means the whole navy will be rendered perfectly useless'. But the fleet was now free to take whatever steps were needed for the defence of British interests.

Townshend's words provide the touchstone of British policy in the north of Europe in the years following 1715. It was vital to Britain that her navy should be furnished with its needs. It was immaterial to her whether those needs were threatened by Denmark, by Sweden, or by Russia. There was no question of a political preference for a Charles of Sweden or a Peter of Russia—whichever threatened to upset the balance of power in the Baltic or to interrupt, by any other means, the supplies on which the security of Great Britain depended, became automatically her enemy. So, in each of the years 1715, 1716, 1717, 1718, 1719, 1720, 1721, 1726, and 1727 British fleets were sent to the Baltic, always with the same object—to prevent that

Power which was endeavouring to establish its supremacy in the Baltic from destroying its opponents. Carteret's instructions of 6 May 1719, in which he was directed to impress upon Sweden the importance of a close understanding or union with Britain, indicate the relation between British policy and sea power. He was directed to point out that it was absolutely necessary for Sweden to have the friendship of Denmark, Poland, and Germany in order to strengthen her hands against the Czar, and

'that the dominions which the Swedes have lost on the side of Finland and Livonia being a rich and fertile country and situated towards those of the Czar of Muscovy, a powerful and dangerous neighbour, are necessary both for their subsistence and safety, for should the Czar remain possessed of those acquisitions, whose ambitious views are manifest, the opportunity they give him of increasing his shipping and navigation and fitting out considerable fleets would not only enable him, whensoever he should please, to land an army at the very gates of Stockholm, but would undoubtedly at one time or other tempt him to extend his conquest over the whole kingdom of Sweden whereby he might become entire master of the Baltic Sea. This is a consideration of such importance to the commerce of our subjects and even to their safety, which could not be so well provided for without the naval stores we draw from those parts, that you are to labour this point with the utmost dexterity and application.'[1]

At one time the fleet had the duty of assisting Russia and Denmark against Sweden, at another of preventing Sweden from being crushed by the other two Powers. In this there was complete consistency. The object was throughout the same. The same, too, was the nature of the help. A superior fleet could prevent any would-be invader, whether Swede, Russian, or Dane, from sending his army across the sea to crush his opponent on land. The British fleet commanded the line of passage and communications of the armies of the contesting Powers. But while it could do this, and so guard against an invasion on a major scale, it could not prevent powerful raids from being made by Russian forces into Sweden, conducted in large oared galleys capable of movement across the narrow stretches of sea and through rockbound waters, in windless

[1] *Diplomatic Instructions*, Sweden, 1689–1727, p. 109.

weather when the great ships could not move; for the fleet did not dispose of a flotilla of light craft which alone could have dealt with these self-propelled and shallow-draught vessels. Hence the coast of Sweden was most cruelly ravaged on more than one occasion, not because sea power was inoperative but because the particular types of craft that were needed in those waters could not be furnished.

Though both Sweden and Denmark were saved from conquest by the British sea power, fleets alone could not stop the career of Russia on the continental mainland. The military power needed to call a halt to Peter the Great was lacking. That lack could only have been made good by the continental military Powers, the Empire and Prussia; but neither of these would co-operate. Russia thereby extended her dominions, and during the same time her naval power came into being and was thenceforward to constitute a new factor in the European system.

During these years of Baltic troubles, other difficulties, calling for the use of British sea power, arose in the Mediterranean. In 1718 Spain, having secretly prepared an expedition, sent it, without a declaration of war, and seized the island of Sardinia, assigned by the Treaty of Utrecht to the Empire; and subsequently Sicily, assigned to Savoy. British statesmen did not allow this violation of a treaty to pass unchallenged. A fleet was at once sent to the Mediterranean to act as circumstances might demand for ejecting the intruders in company with the allied armies of the Empire and Savoy. The Spanish fleet which had escorted the expedition to Sicily was destroyed in a battle off Cape Passaro and, with the command of the sea thus immediately established, an Austrian army was carried into Sicily which drove the Spanish invaders from Messina to Palermo, supported as it moved along the coast by the British fleet, as we have recently seen another army supported on the coasts of Sicily and Calabria. In the face of the British fleet no reinforcements of any effective size could reach the Spanish army, which, outnumbered and deprived of supplies by sea, was forced to surrender, and Spain was obliged to evacuate the two islands she had illegally occupied. The fact that the fleet could effect so complete an isolation of the enemy's army was due greatly to the possession of the bases it required. Minorca served as a

base of supply and refitting and was invaluable for those purposes; but a base of operations closer to the scene of action was also needed. Such an advanced base was Messina, and the holding of that harbour became the most essential duty of the army in the opening phase of the campaign. But when Messina was lost everything centred on the retention of another port, Milazzo. Unless the allied army had been able to hold that base, the fleet could not have remained in effective command of the sea and cut off the supplies of the enemy army. Unless the fleet had been able to stay continuously on the spot, the Spanish army could have been reinforced and rendered superior to the allies. 'I may without vanity say', wrote the admiral, 'that had I not remained on the coasts of Italy and at Naples, Milazzo with that little army in it must have been entirely lost to the Emperor.' The interdependence of land and sea forces, of which we in our day have had such striking examples in the Mediterranean, was very fully illustrated in this comparatively small campaign.

Weak though Spain then was at sea, she had made a remarkable revival under Cardinal Alberoni, and a Spanish fleet was again a factor in European affairs which could not be treated as negligible. It was this which largely influenced the British attitude towards Spain's ambitions in Sicily. In the hands of a non-maritime State Sicily constituted no threat to British interests in the Mediterranean. In those of a maritime Power the Levant trade was threatened and the action of British sea power in any campaign in the Mediterranean would be impeded. Similar considerations were soon to affect British relations with the Empire itself. After Alberoni's dismissal his place was taken by the Dutch adventurer Ripperda, who initiated a policy of an alliance between Spain and the Empire the object of which was the mutual benefit of those Powers at the expense of Britain. By the terms of this agreement Spain was to recover Minorca and Gibraltar, the Emperor was to obtain a footing and share in the East Indian trade. An imperial trading port was to be established at Ostend from which maritime commerce with the Indies would be developed. British opposition to this Ostend project, though influenced by the new commercial competition which it foreshadowed, was due less to that consideration than to the facts that trade would infallibly

create a navy and Britain would again be faced with the danger of a powerful military State with a navy at its command in the ports of the Low Countries across the Narrow Seas—the old threat which had lain at the bottom of the Elizabethan policy of aiding the Dutch against Spain. A report of July 1725 outlined this aspect of policy in relation to sea power. By the nature of things a navy would spring up in the Low Countries

'which may prove much more inconvenient to us than a fleet in the Mediterranean or the Adriatic Seas. . . . Command of the sea has frequently passed from one nation to another, and though Great Britain has continued longer in possession of the superiority than perhaps any other nation ever did, yet all human affairs are subject to great vicissitudes. We have seen one great maritime Power established in the North in our memory.'[1]

A non-maritime Empire in the Low Countries constituted no danger to Britain, but if that Empire should become maritime, with a base across the Narrow Seas, and trade should develop in the outer oceans to create rivalries and disputes, a new and dangerous situation would arise. Hence this proposal met with opposition in London.

Notwithstanding British disfavour the negotiations between the Empire and Spain proceeded. When they were completed they were followed, in August 1725, by a peremptory demand from the Queen of Spain for the immediate surrender of Gibraltar. A demand couched in these brusque terms could only be refused. In November a joint treaty was signed between Spain and the Empire which provided for Austrian assistance to recover the Rock and Minorca. As there was no doubt that this meant war, and that the alliance threatened France as well as England, the two countries drew together for mutual protection in the face of a common danger. In the eyes of the British statesmen there was one means by which war might be prevented. Both Vienna and Madrid were short of money and their needs could only be met from the imported Western treasure. 'Nothing', wrote the Duke of Newcastle, 'but the safe return of their galleons from the Indies could preserve their credit.' Hence, in order to deprive the Austro-Spanish coalition of the power to fight, the British Cabinet decided to prevent the sailing of the treasure fleets. They ordered a strong squadron

[1] Viz. Russia.

to the West Indies with instructions to hold up the galleons, using force if necessary. At the same time precautionary measures were taken in home waters against any form of counter-attack on the United Kingdom from Spain. In this application of what we of to-day would call 'sanctions' France played a dubious part. She not only gave no support but even urged the recall of the squadron. British ministers, however, were not to be turned from their path of taking what, in their eyes, was the one measure which could prevent the outbreak of a war which, once begun, might spread over Europe, and the squadron proceeded to institute a blockade of the ports from which the treasure fleets sailed. But Spain was not to be deterred. In 1727, without a declaration of war, she laid siege to Gibraltar and called on the Emperor for his promised help. The blockade of the galleons, though it failed to influence Spain, had its effect on Austria. The Emperor, deprived of the supplies and subsidies that he needed and had counted upon, declined to assist, and Gibraltar, kept open for reinforcements and supplies by sea, easily repulsed the Spanish attempts at assault. A contemporary writer, Bishop Hoadly, expressed the opinion that Britain, by her action in stopping the movements of the treasure, prevented a European war, 'depriving the Courts of Vienna and Madrid of the means of putting into effect the dangerous course which they had projected'.[1]

These three episodes, in the Baltic, Sicily, and the West Indies, small as they appear when compared with the events of the great wars that were to follow, deserve more attention than they normally receive in our general histories. They illustrate both the care with which statesmen of that period watched the course of events with their eyes fixed upon the effect which the policy of other States would have upon British sea power. They illustrate, too, the manner in which the sea power of the country was used without hesitation when treaties were broken or aggressions attempted. Sea power could act in two ways. It could prevent enemy armies from proceeding across the sea to invade their victims; it could close the ports of the disturber of the peace to trade. These are the actions of that which we call 'sea power', and whether 'command of the sea' is established,

[1] *An Enquiry into the Reasons for the Conduct of Great Britain in regard to the present State of Affairs in Europe* (Dublin, 1727).

and control exercised, by vessels navigating under sail on the surface of the sea, or by some other means of propulsion, under the sea or above its surface, is immaterial. The action, by whatever means exercised, is the action of sea power, and the vessels which perform the services are units of a 'navy' whose force and numbers have to be calculated in peace and provided in accordance with the needs.

Twelve years elapsed between the short quarrel with Spain in 1727 and the beginning of a new war with her in 1739. During that interval the understanding which had existed between Great Britain and France had gradually weakened, and France and Spain had drawn together. In 1733 a Family Compact between them was arranged the existence of which, though not its terms, was known in London. The natural implication was that common action between the two Powers was to be expected and that Britain must be in a condition to meet the resultant naval combination. On paper she was in that condition. Her capital ships numbered 124 to 91 of the enemy—50 French and 41 Spanish. These figures do not represent the actual available strength of any of the three navies at the outbreak of war, for during peace ships were laid up, repairs did not keep pace with defects, and even those whose hulls were in good order needed rigging and storing: and this could not be quickly done. In 1739 one-third of the British capital ships were unfit for the sea, and the proportion of the enemy's was probably higher. Manning remained a problem. Peace establishments were determined by Parliament, who voted a sum sufficient to provide some 16,000 men, a number adequate for the services called for in peace but which needed trebling, or more than trebling, in war. In spite of the difficulties which had been experienced in the last great war and the warnings given by men like Defoe of the need of an effective, and just, means of raising seamen for the navy, Parliament had done nothing to remedy the defects and even those ships that were otherwise fit for the sea could not be manned. In France less difficulties were experienced as an *inscription* of seamen had been in existence since the time of Colbert.

Thus, apart from 'cruisers' of which there was always a grave deficiency, the British navy with its 124 ships to 91 was potentially on a 'Two Power' basis. The one-third superiority

in numbers was just sufficient to furnish the reserve needed to maintain an approximate numerical equality in actual service at sea. The whole of that reserve was absorbed in providing the necessary reliefs and replacements of ships worn out and damaged in the continuous cruising at sea which was the indispensable foundation of British strategy. The drain on the British fleet was bound to be far greater than the drain on the enemy, whose fleets could remain in harbour suffering no injuries or strain until particular occasions arose—to attack a convoy, to send an expedition oversea—while constant readiness was enjoined upon the British fleet to counter the action of the enemy who could choose the moment of his operations and make his movements in the fullest strength possible. One factor affecting the strength the enemy could muster and maintain was his possession of stores which he, like Great Britain, drew from the Baltic, and hence it is easy to recognize the importance attached by British Governments to the upholding of the right to cut off the supplies of naval stores which the northern Powers and Holland attempted to send and carry to France and Spain. That the material margin of a one-third superiority over the Bourbon Powers was not excessive is illustrated by the figures of the navies in 1745 when it just sufficed to maintain seventy-eight British ships to a known seventy-seven and a small but unknown additional number of the combined enemy. Though great changes have taken place in the material of navies, the need for this reserve still remains: a fact too often ignored in modern times.

The war of 1739–48 can be roughly divided into three strategical phases. The first is that of the duel between Great Britain and Spain before the outbreak of the European war in the end of 1740. This Anglo-Spanish duel arose out of what were asserted to be injustices committed by Spain upon British ships and seamen in the West Indies.[1] The second phase, beginning a little more than a year later, was started by the attempt to dismember the Empire whose integrity Britain was pledged to maintain. Prussia, Bavaria, and Spain, with help from France, were engaged in this attempted partition, though

[1] For letters throwing light on the origins of 'the War of Jenkins's Ear' cf. Professor Laughton in the *English Historical Review*, Oct. 1889, p. 741; Temperley, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. iii, p. iii; Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies*—an exhaustive examination of policy and strategy.

all were signatories to a treaty guaranteeing the succession of the Queen of Hungary. Britain threw in her lot with the Queen, Holland remained neutral. The third phase began in the spring of 1744, when France, who until then had acted only as an auxiliary to Bavaria, became herself a principal, with the definite object of annexing the Austrian Low Countries—Belgium of to-day. Though warned that this would mean open war with Britain and that this in turn would infallibly be a long war, contrary to French interests, the King of France took the risk, hoping to mitigate it by making an invasion of England, secretly prepared, without a declaration of war. This third phase of the war lasted for four years.

In the first phase of the war the British object was to force Spain to abandon her interference with British trade in the West Indies. The obvious method of exerting pressure on Spain was the traditional one—the stoppage of her treasure supplies. The two main points at which the treasure fleet could be intercepted were the ports of departure from which the treasure sailed and the ports of its arrival in Spain. It was not, however, assumed that this alone would suffice, for long experience had shown the difficulties of an effective blockade in both regions. Walpole put the matter thus: 'It is true our navy is much superior to theirs, but by a navy alone we cannot propose to force them to a peace. We must attack them on land at some place or other, and for that purpose we must have a sufficient land force.' Unfortunately, owing to the persistent neglect of the army, a sufficient land force for expeditionary purposes did not exist and the recruitment of the 12,000 men needed took over twelve months. The campaign, which began with an attempt to capture the great trading-centre, Cartagena in the Indies, and went on to other attacks on Santiago and Panama, was a succession of failures. All the attacks were repulsed; fever took a devastating toll of both the navy and the army. Though the failures in the field were undoubted failures of command, the fundamental reason for the defeats was ministerial indecision and want of preparation. Though war was decided on in June 1739 and orders were then issued to blockade Cadiz, no war plans were made,[1] or even discussed, nor

[1] *Minutes of the Privy Council*, 3 June 1739; Newcastle Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 33004.

were any steps taken to recruit land forces until September, nor was any decision made as to what should be done until December. Only on the last day of the year, seven months after hostilities had been ordered, were instructions issued for assembling troops and the necessary transport vessels; and another six months were to elapse before the expedition sailed. The enemy in the meantime had ample warning and, as no steps were taken to prevent him, he was able to reinforce both his garrisons and his naval forces in the Indies. The Inner Committee of the Privy Council which was responsible for the conduct of the war launched the expedition under the most hampering conditions, having neither decided what they would undertake nor provided the means of undertaking that upon which they decided; and while they were preparing this oversea expedition they took no steps to deal with the main naval forces of Spain which lay in Ferrol. Insufficient forces were assigned to the blockade of Cadiz, which was never effectively closed. This was in part due to the need for keeping an eye on Cartagena in order to protect Minorca against attempts at capture by forces from the Spanish ports on the east coast of Spain; in other words, the strategy adopted was beyond the power of the means available. There were two principal reasons why the means were insufficient: neglect by successive governments to keep the ships of the navy in an effective condition whereby a bare two-thirds were fit for service; neglect to establish any system of manning the fleet. As is always done on such occasions a committee was appointed to examine the question of manning. Its recommendations, which included making a registration of all seamen, were submitted to Parliament and rejected by a large majority—Pitt was among its opponents. So, between the refusal of Parliament to take any steps to enable the fleet to be manned and the seamen's refusal to serve in the navy, the fleet was largely impotent, the enemy held his own, and the kingdom was exposed to danger. Though the actual enemy, Spain, was weak at sea, the uncertain attitude of France had to be considered, for she, announcing her intention to oppose any British conquests in the West Indies, sent a strong squadron thither and fitted out a fleet in home waters. Her active intervention at any moment on the side of Spain had therefore to be guarded against. She was the 'non-belligerent' of whose disturbing influence we have had

some experience in recent years, immobilizing no negligible portion of the British strength at sea, and selecting its moment for launching its attack.

Thus during this first phase of the war which began with reprisals in June 1739 the British aim was to deprive Spain of the benefits she derived from her oversea trade and possessions. The means taken were to intercept Spanish shipping off the coast of Spain and to seize ports in the West Indies through which the trade passed. Measures for defence against invasion, for the protection of shipping, for the security of the bases at Gibraltar and Port Mahon, and for meeting any action which France, though outwardly neutral, might take—'It not being safe to depend upon the faith of that neutrality', as the Duke of Newcastle said—were all, in varying degrees, put into force. But partly owing to the neglected state of the navy and partly to the indecision of the Cabinet and its lack of any settled plan as to how it intended to conduct the war, the forces were everywhere insufficient and the efforts dissipated, and British shipping suffered considerable losses at the hands of the Spanish privateers owing to lack of the vessels of the 'cruiser' classes needed for its defence. The expedition was sent to the West Indies and failed. The Cabinet, in deciding to send it, rejected the alternative plan proposed by the Admiral of the Fleet of a conjunct attack on the Spanish fleet then assembled at Ferrol: a plan based upon the sound principle that the primary objective of attack should be the fighting forces which defend the trade or colonies, not the trade or colonies themselves. They acted also against the strongly expressed opinion of the Admiral in the Indies, who warned the Government of the climatic dangers. To add to this, there was the long delay both in making the decision and in raising and equipping the army which had been seriously neglected. As a result, the expedition arrived in the middle of the sickly season and suffered grievous losses from yellow fever: and the enemy had had time to reinforce his garrisons. Finally, what chances of success still remained were ruined by the incompetent conduct of the military commander.

The second phase of the war began in the end of 1740 when, after interminable delays, the expedition to the West Indies was on the point of departure. On 20 October the Emperor died.

Headed by Frederick of Prussia, a number of States proceeded to dismember the Empire whose integrity they had one and all promised to maintain. Frederick, in characteristic fashion, after making protest of his friendship to the Queen of Hungary and pretence of coming to her assistance, invaded Silesia without warning; Bavaria laid claim to a large part of the Austrian dominions, particularly Bohemia and Austria; Spain supported the Bavarian claims and herself demanded the cession of the provinces in Italy she had lost in an earlier war; France, herself another guarantor of the integrity of the Empire, prepared to support the other claimants with her land and sea forces. Britain remained. She was under an agreement to support the Queen of Hungary with 12,000 troops and the Queen called on her for that help. But with her disposable army on the Atlantic, and with the dubious attitude of France, she had no army to spare: the 10,000 troops which were all that remained were needed within the kingdom for its defence against a possible French attack. She had, however, her sea power, and there was one theatre in which it could contribute to the defence of the Empire: the Mediterranean. Spain could only reach the northern provinces in Italy which she coveted by sea, apart from the alternative long and costly march through France. Orders were therefore given to the Admiral in the Mediterranean to prevent any attempt by Spain to send an army to Italy across the Gulf of Lions. But while the order was given, the means of executing it were not provided. No reinforcement was sent to the small squadron already engaged in tasks beyond its strength in the observation of Cadiz and Cartagena, and hence when the first detachment of a Spanish army 12,000 strong, carried in a fleet of fifty-two transports, sailed from Barcelona it made the passage to Genoa in complete safety, covered against the thirteen ships of the British squadron by a combined Franco-Spanish fleet of twenty-eight ships.

The principal object set during the next two years was to protect the Austrian possessions in Italy against Spanish seaborne attack. The Spanish army which had arrived there was thenceforward prevented from receiving further reinforcements by sea, and such troops as were sent from Spain to Italy had to march by the tedious and costly land route through France. The British fleet, now reinforced, blockaded Toulon, where the

combined Franco-Spanish fleet lay, keeping it under close observation from the Bay of Hyères, with Minorca as a repairing base. The command of the Mediterranean and the support of the Austrian army was the contribution made by sea power to the common cause. The West Indian operations came to a gradual end.

While the Spanish attack was thus withstood in Italy, affairs went ill in other parts of the Continent. The Bavarians took Prague, Silesia was lost to Prussia; and, in the spring of 1742, France threatened the Austrian Netherlands. A menace to those provinces from a naval Power was always bound to excite anxiety in England, and 16,000 troops were sent to assist in the defence. At once the old question arose in Parliament of whether Britain should engage in land warfare on the Continent. The 'maritime' school argued that there was no need, from the point of view of Britain's own security, to defend the Low Countries, since she could be safe against the combined Bourbon Powers if she maintained her superiority at sea; moreover, if the allied continental Powers did but choose to devote their attention to the defence of their own territories, they were fully capable of holding them without British aid. The essence of the reply of the 'continental' school was that it was by no means certain that the Empire could defend the Low Countries. It was essential to prevent a French victory, or the break-up of the Empire, since, if France were to dominate the Continent, that superiority at sea on which the maritime thesis depended would no longer exist. France, with the whole of the resources of Europe at her disposal, freed from the need of keeping up a great army since her rivals would be crushed, could outbuild Britain at sea. Portugal, Holland, and the Italian States would then be forced into France's orbit, the Baltic would be closed, the British navy would be deprived of its essential supplies, the ports of the Continent would be shut to British trade. The Duke of Newcastle put the matter thus: 'France will outdo us at sea when they have nothing to fear on land. I have always maintained that our marine should protect our alliances on the Continent, and so, by diverting the expense of France, enable us to maintain our superiority at sea.' Cardinal Fleury had used almost identical words in 1740. 'As we have no land war to fear, it seems to me that we can transfer a certain increase of

expenses in favour of the navy' and advocated an encouragement of privateers. Horace Walpole at the same time wrote: 'Nothing but a diversion on the continent can save us.'[1] If no land diversion to the enemy's resources were made and England had to rely solely on her own forces for defence against an invasion from France, 'I am afraid that by next spring the seat of war will be in this island'. We should not boast for long of our sea power, said another statesman, if the Low Countries were in the hands of France. We shall see these sentiments repeated in one or another form throughout all those periods when some Power has shown an inclination to become the unchallenged ruler of Europe.

These arguments held the field in 1742. British troops were sent to Flanders. What then was the function of sea power? It was still to aid the Queen of Hungary by guarding Italy against invasion by sea, to weaken Spain by the stoppage of her trade and bullion, to ensure the security of the British trade on which Britain and her allies depended for the financial needs of the war, to defend the country against invasion and the colonies against capture or isolation, and to maintain the communications of the army in Flanders. To do all these things taxed the resources of the navy to the utmost. The losses of shipping for the want of sufficient ships of the lesser types became highly disturbing, and the mercantile community made bitter complaint of the want of attention which, they asserted, was paid to the needs of trade protection. A Bill was submitted to Parliament similar to the 'Cruisers and Convoys Act' of 1706 which provided for the allocation of a number of ships specifically for trade defence, practically creating a second, and independent, navy. Though the Bill did not pass, a marked increase in the number of vessels engaged in trade protection followed. In spite, too, of the increasingly hostile attitude of France and the warnings of the unreadiness of the fleet to meet a French attack, no serious steps were taken by the Cabinet to keep a fleet superior to the French in readiness.

The third phase of the war began in the first days of 1744. The King of France, tired of fighting for the benefit of others and without profit to himself, decided to seize the Austrian Netherlands. To the warning of his military adviser that this

[1] Walpole to Trevor, 23 Sept. 1740, *Hist. MSS. Comm.* xiv, Part IX, p. 54.

would infallibly lead to open war with Britain and that such a war would be long and detrimental to French interests, he replied that war was inevitable at some time and that the danger of a long war could be eliminated by a single sudden and unexpected blow. With the British fleet unready and laid up in the winter, and with no more than some 10,000 troops altogether in the country, and these scattered in small garrisons, an invasion launched under cover of intense secrecy had every prospect of success. A French fleet and an invasionary army were therefore prepared in the winter of 1743. But the secret leaked out, the British fleet was hastily mobilized, and the French plan was shattered, their fleet only escaping destruction through the favours of a dark night and a sudden most violent gale which carried the fleet back to shelter in Brest.[1]

It was now war with France and Spain. Holland was therefore called on to fulfil her obligations under the terms of the Treaty of 1678 which included the furnishing of a squadron of twenty ships of the line. Her conduct affords one of the many illustrations of why the statesmen of Great Britain in the past were not content to depend upon foreign aid in the vital matter of British superiority at sea. The Dutch neither sent the numbers which they had engaged to send, nor were the ships that were sent so provisioned and otherwise equipped as to make them fit for the services required of them. Moreover, they insisted, as they had done on so many earlier occasions, on maintaining their commerce with the enemy. A contemporary British protest, written in 1746, thus expressed the indignation excited by this conduct:

'The Dutch, who by the defensive treaty concluded in 1678 ought to send twenty sail of ships to be employed for his Majesty's service, do give themselves no sort of concern to comply with their engagements to a nation which has always been their most intimate, as well as their most ancient, friend, but instead thereof are covering the sea with their ships, carrying supplies and provisions and naval stores to our enemies, and providing them with every destructive means of ruining our commerce and even endangering our common safety.'

The open entry of France into the war as a principal vastly

[1] For particulars of the French plans cf. Colin, *Louis XV et les Jacobites*; Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*; Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739–1748*.

increased the number of heavy demands upon Britain's sea power. After repelling the attempt at invasion and establishing her superiority in the Mediterranean, following an indecisive battle, in 1744, she had to meet a renewed threat of invasion in 1745 after the defeat at Fontenoy and the French occupation of Ostend; she had to prevent French reinforcements from reaching Scotland to support the rising of 'the '45'; to protect her shipping in the Soundings and the Bay, now threatened by the French fleet at Brest; to continue to maintain a strong fleet in the Mediterranean 'to assist, protect, and defend the States and Dominions belonging to the Queen of Hungary, the King of Sardinia and the Grand Duke (of Tuscany), his Majesty's allies'.[1] The French, after their disappointments in the invasion of 1744 and in the battle off Toulon, abandoned attempts to gain the command of the sea by fleet action and, as their predecessors had done in the wars of William III and Anne, adopted the strategy of the *guerre de course*, sending out several squadrons of heavy ships to attack the military and commercial communications of the allies in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic: a form of warfare precisely analogous to that used by Germany in the use of her heavy ships and of her 'wolf pack' submarine strategy. These many demands, all of a defensive character or in the service of her allies, absorbing as they did the whole of her available sea forces—those, that is to say, which it was then possible to fit, store, and man—left her unable to exert economic pressure on an effective scale upon her enemy. As it was not possible to provide a strong force at sea to the westward, French convoys were therefore able to sail under the protection of comparatively weak escorts to and from the French colonies, and she continued, for a time, to enjoy much of the benefits of her colonial trade. The country had, in fact, to pass through a period of the defensive, making herself secure at sea while she was building up her neglected strength, before she could undertake the forms of offensive of which she was capable.

This dreary tale of defensive—and therefore indecisive—warfare was relieved by one stroke, rendered possible by sea power, a stroke small in military stature but to prove far-reaching in strategic effect: the capture of Louisbourg, the naval base at the entry to the St. Lawrence and the keyhole to Canada. It was

[1] Instructions to the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Fleet.

not ministers in London consumed with what are called 'imperialistic' ambitions who initiated and launched this expedition: the proposal came from the Governor of Massachusetts, and was in the direct line of descent of those which had been attempted in the wars of William III and Anne. And its purpose, like theirs, was basically defensive. It was the expression of the desire for security against those attacks on land and at sea from Canada which had inflicted such constant losses on the Northern colonists and hampered their peaceful development. It was informed also with the conception of strengthening British sea power. Let the Governor, however, speak for himself and his aims. The consequences of success, he wrote, would be

'the preservation of Nova Scotia and gaining Canada as well as Cape Breton which would secure to his Majesty the whole Northern Continent, gaining the whole fishery exclusive of the French, increasing greatly the nursery of seamen for the Royal Navy, and securing the navigation of Great Britain to and from the Northern Colonies as far as Virginia; all which would be an equivalent for the expense of a French war, let the consequences of it in Europe be what they may.'

The expedition was prepared in Massachusetts. The troops were volunteers and numbered 4,000, carried in ninety transports and protected by a small Royal squadron brought from the West Indies for the purpose and a flotilla of thirteen small vessels of the Massachusetts Colonial Marine. It took Cape Breton Island. The way to the heart of Canada up the St. Lawrence was now open for those who had the command of the sea. This expedition was not made at the expense of Britain's allies. It caused no withdrawal of forces from the Mediterranean and no relaxation of the aid given to them. The troops, being colonial volunteers, could in no case have been employed in European waters; the ships were among those already in service in the western seas. None were taken from the European services. Thus this small operation furnished no support to the frequently made allegation that Britain, having first engaged the peaceful peoples of Europe in strife, then leaves them in the lurch and proceeds to feather her own nest by the capture of their colonies.

The situation improved in 1746. The threatened invasion from Dunkirk was dropped, in face of the superiority of the British squadron in the Narrow Seas, the Jacobite campaign,

lacking the promised French help which could not reach the United Kingdom, came to an end, the British grip on the Mediterranean became stronger with the breaking up of the concentration of the allied navies of the Bourbon Powers whose strength was now dissipated in squadronal raiding. So it became possible to reduce the fleet in the Mediterranean and strengthen the forces in the Bay, while at the same time more ships were being gradually brought forward from the reserve. The results soon made themselves felt. By 1747 a strong squadron was available for cruising to the westward, and during that year two French squadrons attempting to carry large convoys to the East and West Indies were intercepted and destroyed. French trade, now lacking defence, practically ceased to sail, with the result of an almost immediate intensification of the financial distresses of France. So the three great services which British sea power rendered to the allies were protecting their territories against seaborne attack, moving and supporting their armies by sea, and weakening the French military effort by the dislocation of finance as well as causing grave economic distress arising out of a loss of raw materials.

But these results had been slow in maturing owing to the unpreparedness of the navy and the vacillations of the ministry. It was not until 1742, two years after the outbreak of war with Spain, that a sufficient fleet was sent to the Spanish theatre to oppose the fleets of Spain and 'non-belligerent' France. It was not until 1746, two years after the entry of France into the war as a principal, that it became possible to provide adequate forces at sea in the two essential areas, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. It was only after the command of the sea in the western approaches had been firmly established by the two victories at sea in 1747, victories that were possible only because strength at sea had been at last built up, that French resolution began to waver. The fact that France was disposed to make peace in 1748 was due to two things: her exhaustion, and the prospects of the complete loss of her colonies. She had won great military victories on land which had put her in possession of Flanders, for which she had gone to war with Britain. She had occupied Dutch Brabant and, having taken the great fortress of Bergen op Zoom, had every prospect of being able to overrun the United Provinces and to demand Luxembourg and

the Barrier. She had defeated an allied attempt to invade Provence, forced the allies back to the defensive in Italy, and was in a position to seize Tuscany. All of these fair prospects were overshadowed by her condition at home and oversea, the results of the war at sea. The British command of the sea had deprived her of the wealth she needed for the maintenance of the life of the nation and the burden of the costly war on land; her internal condition was deplorable, and there was no reason to think it could improve. She had begun the war under unfavourable financial and economic conditions due to her long and costly wars under Louis XIV, from the effects of which she had not recovered, to a succession of bad harvests, to a shortage of raw materials, and to an excessive taxation. The war at sea accentuated an already existing distress and blackened every prospect of recovery, for the British conquest of Cape Breton and the domination of the Caribbean Sea exposed Canada to invasion and the rich West Indian islands to isolation and possible capture. To save the colonies and the colonial trade which, in the eyes of many contemporary French statesmen, were essential to the upkeep and increase of her military strength, France consented to accept terms of peace utterly incommensurate with her conquests in Europe. To obtain the restitution of that keyhole to Canada, Cape Breton, she restored all her conquests in the Low Countries. It is not too much to say that if the statesmen of Britain had not allowed the country's sea power to deteriorate in peace and had directed its efforts in war with single-mindedness and energy, the conditions which produced these results would have been brought about sooner and at a lesser cost.

Part II. 1748–83

The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was to prove a truce only. The war that ended in 1748 was no more than the preliminary round of a struggle between Great Britain and France for empire in North America and India. Whether French dominion should be established across the whole American continent from the Alleghanies to the Pacific and British possessions be confined for all time to the strip held by the existing colonies; and whether Britain should be ejected from her trading settlements in India and the whole of that sub-continent fall under French rule,

would depend upon which Power could establish superiority on land in each continent. In America, though the British colonists numbered some 2 millions to the 50,000 or 60,000 of the French in Canada, they were militarily inferior to them. No organized system of local defence had been created in the British colonies capable of opposing the encroachments of the unified and military government of Canada. Still less would opposition be possible if the existing French forces in their colony should be reinforced by regular troops from metropolitan France. In India, though the East India Companies of both nations maintained comparatively numerous bodies of native troops, the decision would lie with that Power which could bring into the field the greater number of regular European troops: and that could come by sea only. The British forces at the outbreak of the war amounted to no more than a battalion.

Thus the safety of the British territories and interests in both the western and eastern hemispheres depended on the existence of an efficient disposable military force, adequate in numbers, and of power to transport it to either continent and to prevent the enemy from sending superior forces to the theatres concerned. The disposable military force, however, did not exist. In the same way as the army had been destroyed after the Peace of Utrecht, so it had again been destroyed after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. The 40,000 men of 1748 were reduced to 8,000 in 1751, a number lower than even the modest 10,000 which had been the normal peace establishment and sufficed only to provide the garrisons scattered about the country. The figure of 10,000 was, however, restored a few years later.

The foundation of this system of security was sea power: fighting ships to command and control the lines of communications across the sea, shipping to carry the armies, seamen to man the fighting, the transport, and the trading ships, bases in the theatres where services were required. The accepted criterion of British fighting strength was the combined fighting strength of the two Bourbon Powers, the coalition for whose hostility Britain had to be prepared. At the time of the approach of hostilities the number of British ships of the line was 98, that of the two allies 103—composed of 63 French and some 40 Spaniards. Since the preceding war the efforts of two French Ministers of Marine, Rouillé (1749–54) and Machault, had been directed

towards restoring the navy of France to its ancient glory under Colbert, and a ten years' programme of shipbuilding had been proposed which, if carried through, would produce 110 capital ships besides a proper establishment of frigates and light craft. But the budgets had been reduced, and when war came in 1756 France had sixty-three ships built and seven on the stocks. Paper figures, however, do not represent available strength, and of that number forty-five only were fit for the sea, the remainder being out of repair or unready, while those under construction lacked the material for their completion—a fact which contributes to an understanding of the importance attached by British ministers to resisting the attempts of the northern Powers and the Dutch to supply the enemy Powers with naval stores and shipbuilding materials and at the same time to emphasize what we to-day have been experiencing, the character of shipbuilding and all that relates to that industry as an element of sea power.

In partial mitigation of the numerical superiority attributed to the Bourbon allies Britain could call upon Holland for help, under the terms of the Treaty of 1678. This she did, but the Dutch found reasons for not complying. On the other hand, Spanish intervention on the side of France was not immediately likely, for Spain had neither interest in French expansion in North America nor inclination once more to become involved in a war with Britain: the King of Spain is reported to have said in 1750, 'la paz con Inglaterra, y con todo el mundo guerra'. But considerable as the British superiority over France appears from these figures, it fell short of her needs, for like those of France a number of ships were out of repair or unfit for various reasons for service; and while France had little that she must defend, Britain had the extended responsibilities of her scattered trade and possessions whose defence could be assured in no other way than by fleets constantly cruising at sea, whose strength was continuously bound to be drained by the injuries inseparable from wind and weather and from sickness. Thus, during this war, 130,000 men in the sea service died from disease. The loss from sickness fell more heavily on the British than the French, whose cruises were short and who spent the greater part of their time in harbour.

Relations with France, which had been uneasy for some time,

came to a climax in 1754, when a body of the local militia forces of Virginia, sent to uphold the claim to territories in the Ohio valley, were overwhelmed by a superior French force from Canada, with its Indian allies. Ministers in London decided to send a reinforcement of British regular troops and some 800 men sailed for Halifax in January 1755. France reacted quickly, and strongly. She prepared a force of 3,000 troops and a squadron of ships of the line to escort it, which sailed from Brest in May. The preparation of this force made war practically inevitable. If those troops should reach their destination and thereby establish an immediate French military superiority, the war would begin under conditions of grave disadvantage to Britain. The Cabinet therefore decided to arrest them on the way. A squadron was dispatched to cruise off Louisbourg with orders to seize any French men-of-war or transports carrying troops bound to Canada. It sailed a week ahead of the French expedition but missed it—thick weather, gales, and the taking by the French of an unusual route enabled all but two of the French squadron to get through to the St. Lawrence. So the stroke intended in this manœuvring for position failed, and the failure compromised the British political position without any strategical advantage. It gave Holland the excuse for refusing her help on the plea that Britain was the aggressor, comfortably ignoring the previous French attack on the British colonial forces and territory. 'We have done too much or too little' was the laconic comment of the Lord Chancellor. If the whole body of the squadron could not be intercepted it would have been better to have left it alone.

While one squadron was thus engaged across the Atlantic, another, sent out a little later, endeavoured to intercept certain French squadrons known to be at sea returning from America and Spain, and to prevent the squadron at Toulon from joining the Brest fleet. It cruised from July to September but, under the combined disadvantages of the size of the area to be covered, the lack of cruisers for scouting, and the bad weather, it failed to sight either of these forces; but it swept up 300 sail of merchantmen with their crews, numbering from 6,000 to 8,000 men. Though this measure was stigmatized as 'vexing your enemies for a little muck', it was not without some favourable military consequences. The loss of the shipping and seamen was a definite

blow at French sea power, and, in the Admiralty's view, contributed to the safety of the country from invasion by depriving the enemy of transport at a moment when the British sea forces were disabled and the land forces negligible. For in the late autumn of 1755 both the British squadrons referred to, constituting the bulk of the available ships, were worn out with cruising; 2,000 seamen had died, 4,000 were sick in hospital, and others for whom there was no room in hospital were scattered in their homes. The French fleet had not suffered to any corresponding extent and 100,000 troops were reported to be massed in northern France awaiting only the transports to take them across the Channel—as Hitler's army was waiting from June to August until his barges were assembled.

What had happened had been that a great effort had been made and had failed, with exhaustion and exposure to a counter-stroke as the result. The Admiralty expressed a strategical truism in saying: 'The greater the effort that is made for some important object in order to give it the greater certainty of success, the greater will your inability be to make another such effort for any purpose whatever. . . . If the object had been obtained, the bad condition of our navy had been of little consideration: as we failed it was of the utmost.'

While the fleet was in this disabled condition at the end of the year 1755 and was being called upon to guard the kingdom against invasion, prevent French reinforcements from reaching Canada, and to defend the trade, another threat arose. Reports came in that an armament was in preparation at Toulon aimed at the British naval base, Minorca. Defence against invasion of the United Kingdom and protection of the colonies was best assured by a strong fleet watching the point of departure. 'The best defence for our colonies as well as our coasts', wrote the Admiralty, 'is to have such a squadron to the westward as may in all probability either keep the French in harbour or give them battle with advantage if they come out.' In that sentence lies the key of the defence of a maritime empire, the only modification needed to bring it into line with the Empire of to-day being the substitution of 'close to the enemy's point of departure' for 'to the westward'. The enemy may have more than one point of departure, with forces in each, and a navy strong enough to place forces off each is the essential need; and each of those

forces must be of such strength as will, in the words of the memorandum, enable it 'to give battle with advantage'. This demands superior strength. A mere superiority of total numbers on paper is no measure of adequacy. In wise words that are applicable with no more than an alteration of technicalities to the changed conditions of modern times the Admiralty pointed out the error of supposing that numbers alone, irrespective of the readiness of the ships, was a test of sufficiency of a British fleet. 'It must never be forgotten . . . that a naval strength should never be rated by the number of ships in harbour, or even in commission, but only by that number which is fitted, stored, victualled and manned: while the ships are incomplete in any of these respects they are useless, as if they did not exist.' Ships in want of repair, of men, of provisions, or newly commissioned 'may parade at Plymouth or Spithead, their state being known to the Government only; they may create terror and respect abroad, they may produce confidence or blame at home, but they cannot sail or fight till they are what is called by seamen "completely fitted for the sea".' A large margin of superiority was needed to keep a squadron or fleet at sea, in constant readiness lest the enemy should seize a moment of weakness or absence, and 'less than 30 ships of the line completed and manned will not keep 20 constantly at sea even in the summer'. With so many ships crippled at the end of the year 1755 the superiority necessary to do this, and at the same time to detach a squadron to the Mediterranean to deal with the impending movement from Toulon, did not exist. Priority had necessarily to be given to the home theatre—on two previous occasions, as we have seen, severe defeats had been suffered in the battles with Tromp and Tourville through weakening the fleet at home in order to provide a squadron for the Mediterranean. There was therefore delay in dispatching a squadron, and when sent, it was not of a strength to ensure 'giving battle with advantage'. The result was that a French expeditionary force sailed from Toulon unopposed, landed in Minorca whose defences had been neglected and from whose garrison many officers were absent, and the naval base was lost.

The main reason for the delay in sending the squadron was that there were not enough ships to meet the threat at home as well as the threat abroad. The threat of invasion appears to

have been in reality no more than a gigantic feint. The preparations were certainly on a gigantic scale. Flat boats were being built in the Channel ports, troops were actually assembled at St. Malo, la Hougue, Cherbourg, Honfleur, Dieppe, Calais, and Dunkirk—a formidable force indeed if it could be transported across the Channel. The real object, according to the French military historian, 'had no other aim than that of diverting the enemy's attention from the expedition which Versailles was preparing at the same time against the island of Minorca'.[1] The feint, if feint it was, served its purpose. But though there were misjudgements and delay in sending out a squadron to dispute the passage of the enemy's expedition, and weakness on the part of the admiral who commanded it, the fundamental reason for the loss of Minorca lay in the fact that ministers had failed to furnish a navy adequate to its duties. The needs of the navy as set out by the Admiralty in August 1756 were for 202 capital ships and frigates. The number actually available was 134. Though the country had lain under the threat of war for over two years, ministers had not taken steps to provide the means of waging it, and Pitt was justified in his philippic of the preceding May when he had said: 'We have provoked before we can defend, we have neglected after provocation, and in every quarter of the world we are inferior to France.' Minorca was lost, as Singapore was to be lost two centuries later, because responsibilities in two oceans cannot be defended with a one-ocean sea power.

The attack on Minorca had been made without a declaration of war. When the news reached London in May 1756 war was declared. In the months of manœuvring for position which had preceded this culminating event ministers had had a great question to determine. A war with France, the object of which was the security of the British colonies in North America, was certainly approaching. How was it to be fought? The security of those colonies, it was obvious, would depend upon the control of the sea communications of the armies in America. Was the existing sea power of Britain sufficient to ensure the maintenance of the command of the sea if France were free to devote the whole of her great resources and wealth to her navy? The question was an old one. It had arisen, as we have seen, in

[1] General Count Pajol, *Les Guerres sous Louis XV*, vol. iv, p. 30.

earlier wars, and the opinion had always been that unless French resources were diverted from the sea to the land, Britain could not maintain her necessary superiority at sea. This, however, was not the only factor in the Cabinet's problem. It was complicated by a further matter—the risk to which the King's electorate of Hanover was exposed. If France should invade Hanover, all the fruits of a victory overseas might have to be sacrificed in order to recover Hanover at the peace. So it was argued that the one way in which the maintenance of British superiority at sea could be ensured, and Hanover retained without surrenders of American conquests, was by means of a continental alliance or alliances.[1]

While British statesmen were thus considering these aspects of their strategy, thoughts, almost identical, were occupying the minds of the statesmen in Paris. They saw that so long as England was protected by her navy she was secure against invasion, but that Hanover was undefended. 'It seemed therefore, having regard to the forces of France, that *there* was the vulnerable point through which we should try to strike at our enemy, and the Council was divided on the question of whether we should limit ourselves to a maritime war or should at the same time carry the war into Germany.' The Minister of Marine, M. Machault, argued on the other hand that, as England's great superiority at sea would compel France to make efforts for which the whole of her resources would hardly suffice, therefore it would be a mistake to divert any of them to a land campaign. He suggested therefore that it would be expedient to propose to George II that his German possessions should be neutralized in the coming war. The opposite view was taken by M. d'Argenson: 'As the French conquests in the Low Countries in the previous war had forced England to return Louisbourg to France at the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, and as similarly that peace, so humiliating to France, has had to be accepted if Canada were to be kept, so in the coming struggle 'On doit conquérir l'Amerique en Allemagne'. In Germany France could be superior. In America, because of Britain's superiority at sea, she could not. 'Ainsi se forma le sage projet d'attaquer le pays de Hanovre.' England would be forced, because of the King's

[1] For detailed accounts of the considerations and discussions cf. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*; Basil Williams, *Life of Pitt*.

love for his electorate, to rescind her American conquests. Moreover, in order to defend it, she must either create an army, which could only be done by compulsion, or she must hire troops at an exorbitant rate, which would exhaust her financially, produce discontent at home, and paralyse the efforts in America.[1] D'Argenson's opinion carried the day.

In so far as the British discussions at the early stages of the war related to sea power, the conflict of opinion followed the conventional lines. Pitt, before he came into office, was an outstanding opponent of land operations on the Continent. Britain, he said, should do as Athens had done and put herself on board her ships. She should fight in that region where she could be superior—at sea and in America. So long as she attended to her power at sea she was capable of fighting her own battles without foreign assistance. Foreign subsidies and foreign troops were both a waste of money and a diversion of effort. But the weight of opinion went, as it had gone in earlier times, into the other scale and supported the view that, unless France were forced to divert some of her strength to the land, British sea power would not prove sufficient to provide the offensive and defensive strength necessary for the purposes of the war. An Admiralty memorandum, replying to the criticism that adequate force had not been sent in time to the Mediterranean for the defence of Minorca, observed among other things that 'no comparison can be made between the present war and those since the Revolution (1688) in every one of which there was a powerful alliance on the Continent at war with France which employed the force and finances of that Kingdom and effectually prevented dangerous attempts on us or our colonies . . .'; and referred to the difficulty, even under those conditions, that had been experienced in the preceding war in maintaining at the same time strong fleets in the Mediterranean and in the home waters. It was not, it was said, until most of the Mediterranean fleet had been brought home that it had been possible to form that force to the westward which had struck the decisive blows at sea after 1746.

Thus the decision to engage in a continental alliance was due mainly to the conviction of its necessity for the maintenance of British superiority at sea and to guard against being forced to bargain away the fruits of victory in the colonies. It was not for

[1] Pajol, op. cit., vol. iv, p. 19.

the reason that Frederick of Prussia was a 'Protestant Hero', or that British ministers had a new-found sympathy for him in his Silesian aggression, that help was to be given him. Though at a later date, after the Prussian Treaty had been arranged, Pitt eulogized the Prussian King, as statesmen must necessarily eulogize their allies, he was under no illusions as to the character of that individual. 'The King of Prussia is a mischievous rascal, a base friend, a bad ally, a bad relation and a bad neighbour: in fact, the most dangerous and evil-disposed Prince in Europe.'

The Prussian alliance was made in May 1756. Throughout that year things went from bad to worse. Minorca was lost, Calcutta was taken, reverses were suffered in America. These were the direct result of ministerial neglect of the nation's sea power in peace and of frittering away their available assets in war. When, as a result of this succession of strategical failures, Pitt was taken into office a new turn was given to affairs. The principles upon which he based his strategy were simple. He defined the object of the war—the security of the North American colonies. He defined the means of attaining it—military victory in America. Military victory could be won by no other means than superiority of force, and military superiority could only be established in America if there were command of the sea. To obtain command, and exercise control of the sea lines of communication, demanded strengthening of the British and weakening of the French sea forces. To weaken those of the enemy, his resources must be reduced and diverted from the sea to the land. To reduce them, his source of wealth, foreign trade, must be closed; to divert them his land forces must be drawn from the German front. The means of so diverting the land forces lay in using British sea power to convey armies to points on the coast of France of such importance to her that she must take steps to prevent their capture or destruction.

The help for which Frederick had initially asked was for naval support in the Baltic, to guard against a Russian seaborne attack on the coast. It was not practicable to give help in this form. Ships could not be spared from the many services for which they were needed, nor, as earlier experience in the Baltic in the Northern War had shown, were the great ships capable of acting effectively against invasionary armies carried in light-draught self-propelled galleys through shallow waters in the

calms of a Baltic summer. Frederick agreed, however, to the alternative strategy of diversionary attacks, a strategy that was no invention of Pitt's, for it dated back to the wars of Marlborough. What was new was the scale on which it was intended to operate. Earlier expeditions had consisted of some 5,000 or 6,000 troops. Those now planned would employ some 10,000 or even more. These operations would be covered against interruption by a strong fleet off Brest which would simultaneously protect the country against invasion, prevent the sailing of French reinforcements to America, and give protection to the trade in the Bay and the Soundings against large-scale attack. At the same time the economic weapon was kept sharp by the adoption of the 'Rule of War of 1756', which frustrated an attempt made by the French to maintain their colonial trade by allowing neutrals to carry French colonial goods, thereby to obtain a great part of the financial benefits of that trade. British ministers argued that a trade closed to neutrals in peace could not be thrown open to them in war in order to avoid the consequences of weakness at sea. The maintenance of British trade was no less essential to the British effort, and the interdependence of the navy and commerce as elements of sea power was expressed in words similar to those used by writers of the seventeenth century. 'Our trade depends upon a proper exertion of our maritime strength: that trade and maritime force depend upon each other. . . . The riches, which are the true resources of the country, depend upon commerce.' It was with those riches that allies could be kept in the field.

Therein, in a nutshell, was what was called 'Pitt's system'. The starting-point of it lay in a clear recognition of 'the object'. Every undertaking in war, whether political, maritime, or military, must contribute in one or another way towards the attainment of a defined object. The great military object was superiority in the decisive theatre. England must fight where she could be strongest and that was oversea. She must build upon the foundation of command of the sea, and that foundation must be well and truly laid. Under Pitt's driving force the fleets at home and abroad were strengthened, the bases of the enemy fleets were kept under observation, the squadron in the Indian seas was reinforced, the coasts of the enemy were threatened and his trade was stopped. A strong army was

sent to America to open an extensive campaign by the capture of the key point of Louisbourg. Pitt even sought the assistance of Spain in order to recover the lost base in Minorca, offering to restore Gibraltar in return for help in its recapture. Very fortunately Spain rejected the proposal and Minorca was recovered at the peace by other and less important restitutions of conquests made for that purpose. We, who have seen what Gibraltar has meant to Britain and her allies in the two German wars, may well be thankful for her refusal.

The object of a diversion is to weaken the enemy in a major, or decisive, theatre. Its essence, therefore, is that the objective selected shall be one of such importance to the enemy that he must take steps to defend it; that the forces he sends shall exceed the number employed; and that they shall be withdrawn for as long as possible from the major theatre; long enough, if a decision is aimed at, for that decision to be reached. The places selected by Pitt were, in 1757 Rochefort, in 1758 St. Malo and Cherbourg. The instructions he gave the commanders for the first of these expeditions indicated the intentions. An endeavour was to be made to capture the naval base, destroy 'all docks, magazines, arsenals and shipping that shall be found there, thus impairing the strength and resources of the French Navy'[1] and to create a diversion which 'should engage the enemy to employ in their own defence a considerable part of their forces'. Unfortunately the commanders were unequal to their task and the attempt on Rochefort failed. St. Malo, as it had long been, was a great privateer base. There, though considerable damage was done, and a quantity of shipping and stores was burnt, the diversionary effect was small as the army did not wait long enough to force a withdrawal of troops from Germany. At Cherbourg, too, though the tactical operation was successfully performed, the strategical purpose was missed for the same reason. Finally, a severe repulse was suffered at St. Cast. This, following the disappointments of the previous expeditions, created dissatisfaction with this type of strategy; but the minister might justly complain that he was ill served by his commanders of whom he had not had an unfettered choice. But he discovered one of the true temper, James Wolfe, and, disappointing

[1] Fourteen capital ships in active commission then lay in the port, as well as a further four, and several frigates, under construction on the stocks.

though the expeditions were, he could claim that the 10,000 troops that had been employed had kept three times their number away from the German front.

The year 1759 witnessed the culmination of Pitt's policy of strengthening of the navy and concentrating his efforts upon a single object. The strengthening of the fleet had by then made it possible to equip adequate squadrons for service in both the Atlantic and the Straits and to conduct a watch upon the principal naval forces in both seas. Thereby the French counter-attack in the form of invasion was defeated. An intended junction of the Toulon and Brest forces was prevented by the Mediterranean squadron, which intercepted the Toulon squadron off the coast of Portugal and destroyed it in August: the Western squadron fell upon the Brest fleet in Quiberon Bay in November while attempting to take up its position for the intended invasion. The final, and decisive, fruit of his policy of concentrating upon a single object was the capture of Quebec.

Though Pitt had been opposed to taking part in military operations in Germany and had declared that he would not 'send a single drop of English blood to the Elbe to be lost in that ocean of fire', he consented, after the Cherbourg expedition, to send some troops thither which, in the following year, took part in the battle of Minden[1] which saved Hanover.

The policy of the alliance with Prussia and of extending the British effort into the German theatre was severely challenged in the following year (1760) in a pamphlet rivalling in importance and dialectical skill Swift's *Conduct of the Allies*. In this it was denied that there was any need for diverting French resources from the sea to the land, that the country was under any moral obligation to the King to defend or keep his electorate of Hanover, or that, if it were lost, the British conquests in the colonies would have to be restored to France at the peace in order to recover it.[2] These assertions were hotly opposed in a series of replies in which the many arguments used previously again found their place. If France had had no continental engagements she could, with half the money and men she had used in Germany, have increased her navy. She could then have supported her armies oversea and those conquests Britain had made in America, the Indies, and Africa could not have

[1] 1 Aug. 1759.

[2] See *ante*, p. 130.

been made. Invasion had been averted by a very narrow margin. But for France's military commitments she could have had a fleet of sixty ships, instead of twenty-one, at Quiberon Bay. The British margin of superiority would not have existed but for the diversion of French resources from the sea to Germany, owing to the alliance with Prussia. Who can say, asked the writer, whether the French will not succeed in invading us if they have no other business in their hands?

The question was the eternal one of 'Isolation or Alliances' to which each generation has to find the answer. England, isolated in the war from 1778 to 1783, was not invaded; but she survived rather through the incompetence of her enemies than her sea power; and she lost her North American colonies. She survived against Napoleon while single-handed from 1803 to 1805. Lord Salisbury, commenting on the proposal that England should join the Triple Alliance, dismissed the dangers attributed to isolation with a reference to the Napoleonic struggle.

'Count Hatzfeldt speaks of our isolation as constituting a serious danger to us. Have we ever felt that danger practically? If we had succumbed in the Revolutionary Wars, our fall would not have been due to our isolation. We had many allies, but they would not have saved us if the French Emperor had been able to command the Channel. Except during his reign we have never even been in danger.'[1]

The problem arises in a new form with every change of the grouping of the Powers and of the development of new weapons, but one thread constantly runs through it—the need for command, not only of the Channel but of the oceans. For the Dominions and colonies, as we have so plainly seen in the recent war, are in danger or safety according to whether the sea is a bridge for the enemy or a moat for themselves. Command of the sea is the indispensable basis of security, and whether the instrument which exercises that command swims, floats, or flies is a mere matter of detail. The problem of isolation or alliance to-day, as in 1760, is one of whether the Empire can, with its unaided resources, provide the necessary instruments in the quantity required.

To return to the British statesmen's use of their sea power in

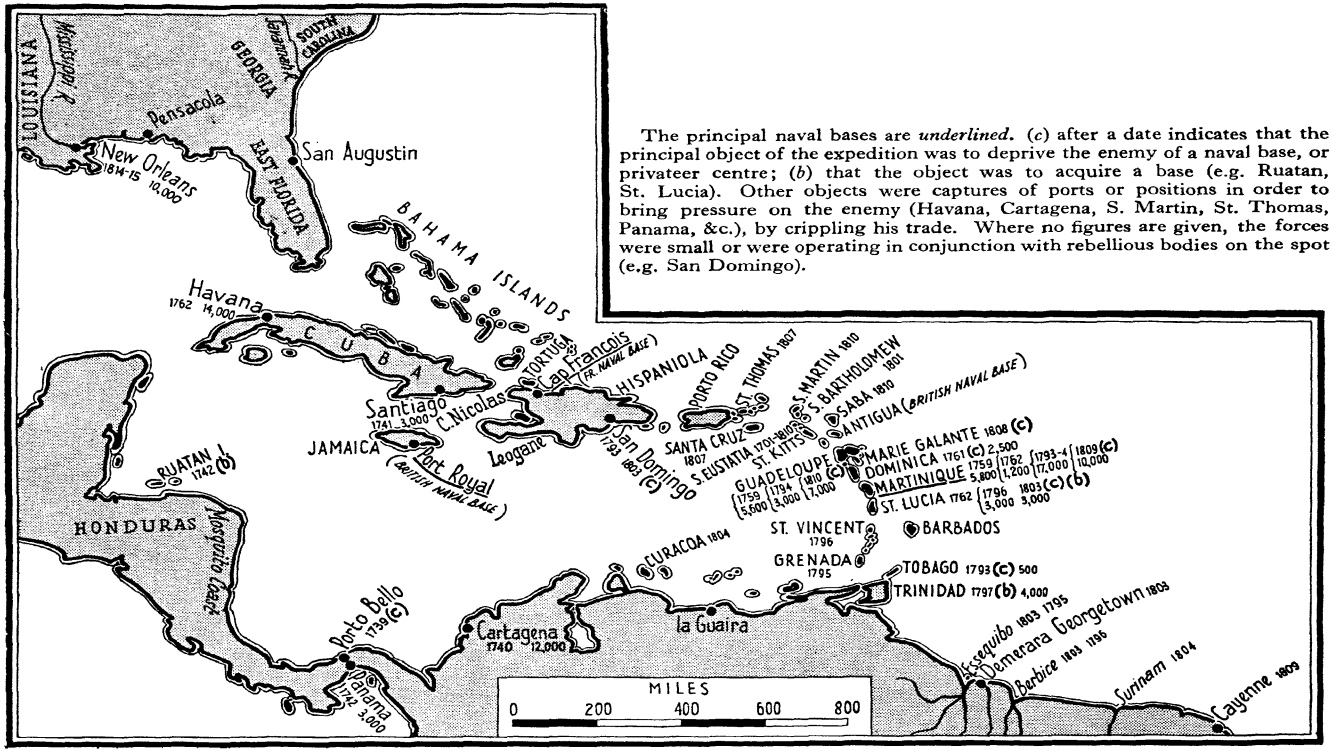
[1] Temperley and Penson, *British Documents* no. 200, p. 218. Compare Sir Edward Grey in 1911, *post*, pp. 278–9.

the Seven Years' War. The victories at sea and in the colonies in 1759 and 1760 not only assured the success of the army in Canada and secured the kingdom at home against invasion: they also enabled a closer watch to be kept upon all the French ports from Dunkirk to Marseilles. French trade almost completely ceased to sail. The Rule of 1756 was upheld in spite of protests from the northern Powers and even the threat of a northern coalition, though some steps were taken to remove what was an admitted grievance of the neutrals—the predatory activities of some of the British privateers. Restraints were imposed upon them.

Pitt's aims had by now extended beyond their original scope of the protection of the Northern Colonies. He sought a final settlement of the problem of British security in the total extinction of French sea power. His plans for 1761 embraced the captures of the major French bases in the Indian Ocean and the West Indies—Mauritius, Dominica, St. Lucia, Martinique. But as the year approached, Spain was showing such signs of hostility that there was reason to prepare for her throwing in her lot with France. She was putting forward claims of many kinds and making active preparations of her sea and land forces. It was thus undesirable to diminish the forces in home waters, so the expedition to Mauritius was set aside and in its place one was mounted against the island of Belleisle. The objects of this operation were a strengthening of British sea power through the occupation of a position between the French and Spanish ports, and the intensification of the control of the French coastal routes; for these played an important part in the distributive system of France, and by them her naval arsenals were supplied with their more bulky goods which could not be moved by inland communications. An additional reason was that of securing a pawn which could be used at the peace to obtain the restoration of the lost base in Minorca. In June 1761 Belleisle was captured.

As the summer of 1761 proceeded Spain's demands and preparation intensified.[1] One thing forced her to defer taking action. Her treasure fleet was still abroad and she could not risk declaring war until the silver bullets were safe in harbour.

[1] A 'Family Pact' between France and Spain, joined later by Naples, was signed on 15 Aug. 1761.



The principal naval bases are *underlined*. (*c*) after a date indicates that the principal object of the expedition was to deprive the enemy of a naval base, or privateer centre; (*b*) that the object was to acquire a base (e.g. Ruatan, St. Lucia). Other objects were captures of ports or positions in order to bring pressure on the enemy (Havana, Cartagena, S. Martin, St. Thomas, Panama, &c.), by crippling his trade. Where no figures are given, the forces were small or were operating in conjunction with rebellious bodies on the spot (e.g. San Domingo).

MAP V. WEST INDIES. CONJUNCT EXPEDITIONS, 1729–1815

Pitt, convinced that she was waiting only until the arrival of the treasure to declare war, proposed bringing the Spanish claims to a head with an ultimatum which, if it were rejected, would at once be followed up by steps to intercept the home-coming treasure fleet. The Cabinet, in which a strong party prevailed in favour of peace and which clung to the flattering hope that Spain could be kept out of the war by blandishments, rejected his proposal, and Pitt resigned. In the late autumn the treasure fleet duly arrived in safety. From that moment Spain's attitude hardened. She took a higher tone in her demands, and the Cabinet found itself forced to do that which they had previously refused to sanction and send a peremptory note to Spain, asking her intentions. No satisfactory reply being received, war was declared in the winter of 1761. The Mediterranean fleet was reinforced, a watch was established off Cadiz, and a body of troops was sent to Lisbon to protect Portugal, who was threatened with an invasion by the two Bourbon Powers; for Spain's reward was to include the annexation of Portugal as well as the recovery of Gibraltar.

Spain's vulnerability lay, as it had lain aforetime, in her western treasure. Though the opportunity of depriving her of the supply of that year had been missed, and the resources so received might sustain her for a while, it would not suffice over a long period. There was one outstanding focal point in her Western commercial system, Havana: there the whole organization of the trading and treasure of the Spanish Indies centred. Therefore a British expedition was organized and dispatched to Havana, which was taken in August 1762. It was an undertaking far more costly than it need have been. The troops paid with their lives in thousands for the indecision and delays of the Cabinet, owing to which the expedition missed the cooler season of the year and, arriving at an inclement season, lost over a third of their number through sickness.[1] On the other side of the world Manila, the centre of the trade of the Eastern Seas, was taken by another expedition. Its capture did not affect either the course of the war or the terms of the peace, as the news did not reach England until after the ratification of the peace in 1763, but the loss of Havana proved a deadly blow to Spain.

[1] The army lost 560 men in battle, 4,708 from sickness. The navy lost 86 seamen and marines in battle and 1,300 from sickness

It brought home to both France and Spain the hopelessness of their combined efforts and the certainty that worse would follow if the war continued.

Peace came in 1763. Many of the oversea conquests were then restored to both enemies, some of them in compensation for enemy successes on the Continent; but Canada became a British colony, the Northern Colonies were freed from the threat that had been their bane for nearly a century, and the Mediterranean base of Minorca returned into British hands. The strategy of which the dominant note had been to fight where the greatest superiority could be established and of making the command of the sea the primary object of the fighting forces had justified itself to the hilt.

The strategical problem of the third great war of the eighteenth century differed profoundly from those of its two predecessors: but there were certain points common to all. In both the earlier wars the country had started under the severe handicap of naval and military unreadiness. Navy and army had been neglected before 1739 and 1755. Ships, as we have seen, figured on paper but were unfit for the sea; no means of manning the navy in war other than the crude, wasteful, and ineffective system of bounties and the press had been developed; the army had been reduced to a shadow. In spite of the warning which these wars so patently afforded of the danger, and the costliness, of this policy of neglect, the outbreak of a new war found the country as unprepared as before. In the interval between the peace in 1763 and the outbreak of the revolt in the North American colonies the navy was again allowed to decline under the twin influences of corruption and a cry for economy. Seventy-six ships of the line were broken up, and though they were replaced by sixty-eight of new construction, the repairs and upkeep of the fleet were neglected, the supplies of naval stores were not maintained. The Government would not take the unpopular step of imposing the taxation needed to keep the navy in condition, though its deficiencies were brought constantly to its attention. When Admiral Hawke, disgusted at the Government's oblivion to the needs of the navy resigned the office of First Lord, he said that 'the late peace establishment will not keep up four-score ships of the line in perfect order, especially

when it is clipped ten or twelve thousand every year by the Minister of the Extraordinary Estimate', and his successor, Lord Sandwich, in answer to a motion to the effect that the navy had rapidly declined while its expense had increased, could only reply that the responsibility did not rest with the minister alone, but with the Cabinet as a whole: an excuse which, as the biographer of the admiral remarks, 'though it is always in the power of the First Lord to resign (as some have when their province has been egregiously interfered with) was more to the purpose than the public knew'.[1] The vote for the navy, which had been for £2,800,000 in 1766, was reduced in 1767 to £1,800,000 and in 1768 to £1,500,000; and still further reductions were being advocated in 1769. Burke raised his voice in protest in words that are as true to-day as they then were:

'Of all the public services, that of the Navy is the one in which tampering may be of the greatest danger, which can worst be supplied in an emergency, and of which any failure draws after it the largest and heaviest train of consequences. I am far from saying that this or any other service ought not to be conducted with economy. But I will never suffer the sacred name of economy to be bestowed upon arbitrary defalcation of charge.... When the author talks of savings in the Navy Estimates, it is incumbent on him to let us know not what sums he will cut off but what branch of that establishment he deems superfluous.'

But Burke's cry was unheeded and apathy continued.

A sudden call came without warning in 1770. Without any declaration of war, or even the presentment of a demand for the possession of the Falkland Islands, a Spanish force descended upon Port Egmont and ejected the weak British garrison. Spain abruptly laid claim to the islands. The Cabinet, after some delay, ordered the commissioning of a fleet of sixteen capital ships; and, as it appeared later that France was preparing to support Spain, gave directions for preparing a further twenty-five. The demonstration proved sufficient. France withheld her hand, Spain, unsupported, bowed to necessity, and peace was preserved. But of the two-score vessels thus mobilized not more than a dozen were, according to Pitt, actually ready for the sea: a remark which quickly found its way to Paris with the

[1] Burrows, *Life of Hawke*, p. 465.

recommendation that Versailles should adopt a firm attitude.[1] Lord Sandwich, commenting on the episode two years later, considered that Britain by her unreadiness had played with fire.

'Had we broke with Spain the other day, I am convinced that we should have lost the East Indies and possibly Gibraltar, and suffered by the capture of an immense number of our merchantmen, before we could have had a fleet in readiness so as to venture to detach any considerable force from home. . . . We had not above fifteen ships fit for the sea and I believe the French and Spaniards were superior to us and more forward in their preparations.[2]

In the same speech in which Pitt spoke of the neglected state of the navy[3] he outlined his opinion of its needs. He called for a navy with fleets in both of those seas in which the two probable enemies of Britain maintained naval forces—the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Here we get in fact his interpretation of the 'Two-Power Standard' of his day.

'The first and acknowledged object of national defence in this country is to maintain such a superior force at home that even the united fleets of France and Spain may never be masters in the Channel. . . . The second naval object with a British Minister should be to maintain at all times a powerful Western Squadron. In the profoundest peace it should be respectable; in war it should be formidable . . . the third object, indispensable as I conceive, in the distribution of our navy, is to maintain such a force in the Bay of Gibraltar as may be sufficient to cover that garrison, to watch the motions of the Spaniards, and to keep open the communication with Minorca.'

In other words, Britain, with her interests and responsibilities exposed to attack by two Powers in two oceans, needed a navy capable of providing fleets adequate to meet the combined probable enemies, in both theatres simultaneously. We of to-day, who have seen the overrunning of our Eastern possessions and the imminent danger to which our Dominions in the Pacific have been exposed through lack of sea power, may well wish that Chatham's doctrines had been applied to the situation after 1918. But while Chatham thus outlined the foundation of British security, and though in his earlier days he had opposed

[1] Basil Williams, *Life of William Pitt*, vol. iii, p. 273 n.
[2] Sandwich to Lord North, 10 Sept. 1772 (*Sandwich Papers*, vol. iii, p. 24).
[3] 22 Nov. 1770.

the dispatch of troops to the German theatre, he now rejected the view that war could be confined to the sea. 'Those who speak of confining a great war to naval operations only speak without knowledge or experience.' There were 25 millions of French and Spaniards to a bare 7 millions of British. 'In this I see a self-evident impossibility for this country to contend with the united forces of the House of Bourbon merely upon the strength of its own resources.' Thus while Pitt ranged himself with those who recognized that the security of the country demanded, and could be furnished by, superior sea power, he agreed also with those who regarded it as impossible that Britain could maintain the necessary superiority in that sea power when opposed to the great resources of the Bourbon coalition, if that coalition were free to concentrate its efforts against her. Allies were therefore necessary, and Britain must be able to assist those allies. To do that, land forces were essential. How and where those land forces should be employed was a question of where they could be used most effectively. Sea power conferred mobility which greatly multiplied their numerical strength.

Neither the opinions of Chatham nor those of Burke carried the day. Reductions in the navy continued. They were insisted upon by Lord North in view of what he deemed the improbability of war. In anticipation of a prolonged peace, an anticipation which has more than once been the immediate precursor of a great war, he wrote, on 5 September 1772, to Lord Sandwich: 'I do not recollect to have seen a more pacific appearance of affairs than there is at this moment. This is the time, if ever there was a time, for a reasonable and judicious economy. . . . Great peace establishments will, if we do not take care, prove our ruin.' The First Lord did not share North's optimism. He did not think 'appearances abroad are so very favourable, especially since the late event in Sweden, which if it occasions an alliance with Russia, will most likely draw us into a war in the course of the next year. In that case I am sure I need not point out to you the immense advantage it will be to us to have a formidable fleet in readiness.'[1] The ruin came in due course, but that which brought it was not a great peace establishment. It was caused by the unreadiness of the navy and the refusal of ministers to face facts. While the statesmen of

[1] Sandwich to North, 10 Sept. 1772, *Sandwich Papers*, vol. i, p. 24.

Britain were reducing their navy and deliberately turning deaf ears to the exhortations of those who spoke with the authority of experience and wisdom, and were allowing the sea power which had proved so potent a weapon of defence and offence to sink into impotence, the statesmen of France were fostering the rebirth of their navy. Under an energetic minister, Choiseul, spurred by the disasters they had suffered at sea, and supported by all classes and corporations throughout the country, the French navy was being given a new life and an added efficiency. The three existing dockyards were being remodelled, two new ones were added, the French East India Company was rescued from failure, measures were adopted for the preservation of shipbuilding timber—measures of a character similar to those adopted by Queen Elizabeth—a building programme was begun which should provide eighty ships of the line and forty-five frigates, supplies of munitions and naval stores were built up, naval administration was reformed. Nor were efforts confined to administrative and material needs. The study of naval science was encouraged, the 'Académie de Marine' was reformed, practical skill in the handling of ships and fleets was developed by the institution of 'squadrons of exercise', and plans for war with Britain were exhaustively produced and considered.[1]

As the dispute between the British Government and the Northern colonists grew more acute, France and Spain watched the situation closely, seeing in it the opportunity for humiliating their late conqueror. Though Spain was unable to do anything in 1775, having suffered a severe defeat with heavy losses in an expedition to Algiers, she set herself busily to increasing her navy, building extensively at Havana, Cartagena, and Ferrol with the aim of adding another forty to the existing sixty of her capital ships. Her minister, Osuna, hoped that these, in combination with a calculated seventy of France, would be a match for the four-score ships which Britain was assumed to be able to put to sea.[2] The French minister, Vergennes, was no less eager than Osuna to profit from Britain's embarrassments. Providence, he said, had marked this as the moment for reducing

[1] For details of these matters cf. Lacour-Gayet, *La Marine militaire de la France sous le règne de Louis XV*, chap. xxii; Contre-Amiral R. Castex, *Les Idées militaires de la Marine du XVIIIième siècle*, chap. vii.

[2] Osuna to Vergennes, 10 Aug. 1775. Quoted in Doniol, *Histoire de la participation de la France à l'établissement des États-Unis*, vol. i, p. 375.

her to a second-class Power. Two things were essential. Every effort must be made to prevent a reconciliation between the two British communities; nothing must be done to provoke a European war which might divert some of the efforts of the coalition from the combined attack on Britain. For this reason no attempt must be made to subjugate and annex Portugal, greatly as Spain desired it; for it might provoke intervention by some other Power. There was also a fear that Britain, exploiting the hatred of the Czarina for the Empire and the cupidity of the Prussian King, would create an Anglo-Russian-Prussian alliance the effect of which would be to force France to come to the aid of the Empire in fulfilment of her treaty and so divert French resources from the sea to the land. In this we hear an echo of the voices of those in England who expressed the need for continental alliances for the purpose of maintaining British superiority in sea power. But for the time—in 1775— the policy in Paris was to watch events and to lull Britain with assurances of French neutrality. Later, clandestine aid in many forms was extended to the colonists whose privateers were afforded the hospitality of French ports and to whom quantities of ammunition were sent by a highly organized private concern with the connivance of the Government.

Though the colonists had no regular organized naval forces, they possessed a sea-minded population throughout their sea coast extensively engaged upon maritime pursuits, and a large body of experienced and hardy seamen many of whom had taken part in warlike operations in the preceding wars. Some had fought in the combined expeditions which captured Louisbourg in 1745[1] and again in 1757, against Quebec in 1759 and Havana in 1762, and many more in the normal course of defending their trading ships when engaged in pirate-infested waters. They had furnished some 1,800 men to the Royal Navy, a number, as events were to show, far below their capacity; for in the last year of the war over 25,000 seamen served in the 'Continental Navy' and the privateers. Shipbuilding was a flourishing industry. In 1775 one-third of the vessels on the British registry were colonial-built. Moreover, under the fostering care of British governments since 1704, the colonial forests

[1] The Massachusetts Colonial Marine provided 10 vessels, Connecticut 2, and Rhode Island 1 in the first Louisbourg expedition.

had become an important source of supply of naval stores, timber, spars, pitch, and tar in particular, until, at the time of the outbreak of war, the quantities drawn from the colonies exceeded those derived from the Baltic. Pitt showed his understanding of the matter when he called America 'the fountain of our wealth, the source of our strength and the basis of our sea power'. Unhappily his vision was not shared by the statesmen in power and all this mighty and increasing contribution to Britain's sea power and security was thrown away. The last shipment of colonial spars reached England just before the skirmish at Bunker's Hill, and thenceforward the supplies which had served the needs of Britain reached her no longer but went to her enemy, France; and Britain, with her storehouses already denuded by the policy of retrenchment condemned by Burke, now once more found herself in the position from which she had so long striven to free herself by developing her colonial resources—the position of being dependent, in a matter vital to her national life, upon the whims, political sentiments, and commercial interests of the northern Powers. Those Powers in due course seized the opportunity to form a combination with the object of forcing upon Britain their own views concerning the nature of contraband goods and the rights of trading in those goods in war.[1]

On the outbreak of the rebellion in the colonies, ministers in London had, in a new form, the old question of how they should conduct the coming war. Should they confine their operations to the sea, making use only of the weapon of economic pressure, or should the war be carried into the colonies, using military force? On the one hand were those like Barrington who not only dissented from the policy which had caused the war but believed it would prove impossible to reduce a numerous and virile people by military action, and were convinced that even if it should prove possible to defeat them in the field, it would not be practicable permanently to hold a dissatisfied people in subjection, except at a ruinous cost. He argued that the distress and discontent which would arise from the stoppage of the commerce which was the foundation of the life and prosperity of the colonists, combined with the burden that would fall on them through having to furnish their own protection against

[1] See *post*, p. 153.

the Indian tribes, would ere long incline them 'to submit to a certain degree'. Timely concessions could then quickly be made which would bridge over the differences. On the other hand, the contention was that rebellion was in force, and that rebellion, whether it occurred in an English city or a colonial province, must be repressed by military force. That view prevailed. In consequence, the function of the navy was to convey an army and its supplies to America, to stop the commerce of the colonists, to deprive them of the munitions they needed, and to defend the country's seaborne trade. The demands these many duties made upon existing cruisers were in excess of the powers of those depleted forces. Colonial privateers captured transport and supply vessels and from their cargoes supplied themselves with many of their needs, while neutral vessels provided the remainder: 90 per cent. of the colonists' powder came from oversea. Whether the form of pressure advocated by Barrington would have proved decisive if efforts had been concentrated on a single object instead of being dispersed as they were can only be a matter of speculation; but a contemporary American speaker said that the privation inflicted by the stoppage of commerce 'would probably have caused that war to end differently but for French aid'. But the navy, reduced as it had been, did not possess the number of ships and vessels simultaneously to move armies to distant theatres, to close the ports of the enemy to commerce, and to protect shipping, against which attacks were made not only in the western ocean but as far afield as the west coast of Africa, the island of St. Helena which was the landfall of home-coming East India fleets, the North Sea, and the Channel.

The first phase of the war ended with the surrender of Saratoga in October 1777. France at once prepared to throw the whole weight of her restored sea power into the scale. The starvation of the British navy which had contributed to the colonial success now made itself felt in a more far-reaching form. It proved impossible to provide a fleet in the Channel superior to the Brest fleet and at the same time a squadron for the Mediterranean to deal with whatever activity might be intended by the force at Toulon, essential as it obviously was to prevent that force from either joining the fleet at Brest or sailing to America. There had been no lack of warning during the last two years

that France might intervene and that she might be joined by Spain. In June 1776 reports had shown that France and Spain 'have or will soon have, a larger number of ships in commission in Europe than we have, and they may have double the number unless we immediately take proper steps to keep pace with them in our equipments'. In October the First Lord submitted proposals by which eighty-three ships of the line would be made ready in twelve months; but nothing was done. Throughout 1777 it was known that there was great activity in the dockyards at Brest, Rochefort, and Cadiz and that ships were being sent to both the East and West Indies, but still ministers persisted in their apathy and the fleet's unreadiness continued. When at last France showed her hand in March 1778, by announcing her recognition of the independence of the United States and her conclusion of an alliance with them, she had built up her fleets in the Mediterranean and Atlantic to a force of sixty-five capital ships and sixty-two frigates,[1] to meet which, or such of them as were actually fitted for the sea, the British admiral who was appointed to command the fleet at home found six ships only 'fit to meet a seaman's eye', though he had been assured he would find thirty-five; and none were available for dispatch to the Mediterranean. The situation which had lost the country its base at Port Mahon in 1756 was now being repeated; but this time it was not only a base that was at stake. It was an empire. Plain as it was that the proper course was to intercept the Toulon squadron in the Straits of Gibraltar, it was not possible to furnish the force needed as no ships could be spared from home until June. While every effort was now made to bring forward more ships, the Toulon squadron, consisting of thirteen capital ships, sailed, unopposed, and was already well on its way to America where the British squadron contained

[1] Distributed thus:

Ports	*Capital ships of 50 guns and above*	*Frigates, &c.*
Brest . .	42	42
Rochefort .	5	..
Toulon . .	18	20
	65	62

Besides a number of lesser cruising vessels at Rochefort

three heavy ships only. Mahan, commenting on this situation, observed:

'When war with France threatened, the Ministry, having long warning, committed an unpardonable fault in allowing such a force to be confronted by one so superior as that which sailed from Toulon, in April 1778. This should have been stopped on its way, or failing that, its arrival in America should have been preceded by a British reinforcement. As it was, the government was saved from a tremendous disaster only by the efficiency of its admiral.'[1]

A reinforcement did sail, but not until June, and then it was too late. The unpardonable fault did not lie merely in the failure to intercept or to reinforce in time: it lay in the neglect of the navy during many years since 1763 and the condition of impotence to which it had been reduced which made it impossible at this juncture to fit out effective ships or, when fitted, to man them.

During these spring months of 1778 the six ships at home had been increased to twenty and with these the admiral sailed in June to meet the Brest fleet, only to find himself outnumbered by a body of thirty-two ships. The odds were too great and he returned to port to obtain a reinforcement. A month later he sailed again, this time with thirty ships, and met the enemy with a like number on 27 July off Ushant where an indecisive engagement took place. Decisive battles between materially equal forces are rare, particularly at the beginning of a war. 'When men are equally inured and disciplined in war', Admiral Shovell had said many years earlier, ''tis, without a miracle, number that gains the victory.' St. Vincent expressed the same idea, saying, 'I have often told you that two fleets of equal force can never produce decisive results unless they are equally determined to fight it out, or the commander-in-chief in one of them bitches it so as to misconduct his line'. Even Nelson himself, though in his own battles he was to show that skill can replace numbers, said 'only numbers can annihilate'. No government, and least of all one like that of Lord North which had provided neither ships nor the opportunities for the practice of manoeuvres in peace, is entitled, in so vital a matter as the naval defence of a maritime empire, to assume that it may count, on the outbreak of war, to such a superiority of skill in its officers

[1] *The Royal Navy*, Laird Clowes and others, vol. iii, p. 411.

and men as will take the place of numbers. In Keppel's fleet there was superiority neither in numbers nor skill. The ships had lain in port without exercises at sea for years, the officers were without practice in tactical work. The economies which had depleted the material had also rusted the individuals, and it was an untrained fleet which fought off Ushant on 27 July 1778. There are many 'ifs' in history, but of one of them there can be no dispute. A decisive victory off Ushant would have changed the course of the world's history. The comment of the great naval historian, Sir John Laughton, carries a lesson applicable to all times, even the times of to-day:

'With the French Navy crushed, the assistance of France to America could not have been given; d'Estaing [the Toulon squadron] must have been at once recalled; Spain would have remained neutral, and the colonies would, for the time at least, have returned to their allegiance. Nothing of this happened because we could not defeat the French fleet on the 27th July; because Keppel's tactics were bad; because the fleet was a mere congeries of ships and their crews a mob of newly raised untrained men. The price we then paid for the neglect of the Government was the loss of our prestige in Europe, the loss of our colonies in America, and an increase of more than 100 millions to the national debt.'[1]

It was not to be the last time, nor was the cost the greatest, that the country was to have to pay for supposed economies and neglect of the needs of its sea power.

The French intervention changed the object of the war. The British aim now was to hold what it could in America rather than to attempt conquest and to direct all possible efforts against the new enemy, France. 'The principal object', said the instructions to Lord Howe, 'must now be the distressing France and defending his Majesty's possessions against any hostile attempts.' The one way of 'distressing' France was striking her in her commerce and colonies, hence the West Indies became a theatre of the war. Encouraged by Britain's difficulties and by her weakness at sea, Spain threw in her lot with France in 1779 and a combined Franco-Spanish fleet of sixty-six sail ranged the Channel, to which the Navy could only oppose one of thirty-nine sail. Fifty thousand troops with 400 transports lay ready at Le Havre to invade the Isle of Wight. 'Not their own

[1] Letters of Lord Barham, vol. i, p. xxxii, Navy Records Society.

preparations', says Mahan with full justice, 'but the inefficiency of their enemies, in counsel and preparation, saved the British islands from invasion.'[1] At the same time the West Indian islands of Grenada and St. Vincent were lost. The importance attached to the West Indies is expressed in a letter from the King in September 1779: 'Our islands must be defended even at the risk of an invasion of this island. If we lose our sugar islands it will be impossible to raise money to continue the war. . . .' We get at this moment of crisis another echo of the doctrine of the British need for diverting the enemy's resources from the sea to the land. The First Lord then wrote:

'It will be asked why, when we have as great, if not a greater, force than ever we had, the enemy are superior to us. To this it is to be answered that England till this time was never engaged in a sea war with the House of Bourbon thoroughly united, their naval force unbroken, and having no other war or object to draw off their attention and resources. We unfortunately have an additional war on our hands which essentially drains our resources and employs a very considerable part of our army and navy: we have no one friend or ally to assist us: on the contrary all those who ought to be our allies except Portugal act against us in supplying our enemies with the means of equipping their fleets.'[2]

Yet there was another and a simpler explanation of Britain's difficulties, given by the First Lord himself—the ministerial delays in putting the navy in a condition to fight: 'If our equipment had begun sooner and had an effectual blow been struck against the French fleet before they were joined by Spain, we should probably still have been triumphant everywhere.'

The United Provinces, with Holland at their head, stood first among 'those who ought to be our allies'. By a Treaty of 1678 they had bound themselves to come to the help of Britain if she were attacked. When Spain declared war on her in 1779 the Dutch were called upon to make good their obligation under that treaty, but, as nations will do when it does not suit their convenience, or their interpretation of their interests, to consummate the terms of an engagement, they found reasons for declining, saying that, though the republic 'had bound itself by treaties to aid and assist the Kingdom of Great Britain whenever

[1] Laird Clowes, *The Royal Navy*, vol. iii, p. 445.
[2] Sandwich Papers, vol. iii, p. 170.

that Power should be attacked or threatened with an unjust war', and to declare war on the aggressor, 'it never had given up the right to examine the causes of the war and investigate and maturely weigh the reasons and motives which may enforce the *casus foederis*'. Further, they asserted that the succours claimable by Great Britain were confined to wars begun in Europe. So, neither for the first nor for the last time, the danger of relying upon the help of another nation in a matter of vital national importance in a country's existence was illustrated.

While Holland in this manner refused to fulfil her obligations under the Treaty of 1678, she called loudly upon Britain to fulfil hers under another treaty, that of 1674, which allowed the Dutch to convey to any nations at war with Britain all kinds of naval stores: a treaty wrung from Britain as a direct result of the failure at sea in 1667 which itself arose from the laying up of the British capital ships in the winter of 1666. To this call the Cabinet in April 1780 replied that as Holland refused to fulfil her engagements to come to Britain's help, and as 'all treaties are in their nature reciprocal', the plain consequence was that 'those on the part of the King cease to be binding' and they were, therefore, suspended. Matters remained in suspense until the discovery in the autumn of the draft of a Treaty of Commerce and Alliance between the United States and United Provinces. The Dutch replies to the British demands for an explanation proving unsatisfactory, and an active enemy whose fighting contribution was comparatively slight being preferred to a non-belligerent who was giving substantial aid to the enemy by affording him the facilities of its ports and in other ways, the British Government declared war on the United Provinces in December 1780.[1] The Dutch trade came to an immediate end, the rich profits which had flowed from the traffic with Britain's enemy disappeared, and the island of St. Eustatius which had been an entrepôt in the Caribbean for the enemy's fleet supplies was captured. An expedition was sent to capture the Cape of Good Hope to prevent it from becoming a base for the French on the route to India and to deprive Mauritius, the French base in the Indian Ocean, of the supplies of food from the Cape, without

[1] The Dutch navy consisted of 22 capital ships and 27 cruisers. Nearly half the capital ships were serving in the two Indies and the Mediterranean, and only five were in commission at home.

which it could not support a large fleet and army: an expedition which was defeated by the superior energy of the French commander of a squadron which intercepted it on its way.

Ministers had another threat to meet in the same year when the Empress Catherine of Russia initiated a movement in the north of Europe which aimed at imposing limitations upon Britain's power of exercising economic pressure upon her enemies and of depriving those enemies of the means of equipping their fleets. Enemy goods, other than contraband, were declared immune from capture, neutral ships might not be stopped or searched without clear evidence, and, although the right to seize contraband goods was admitted, the value of the right to a maritime nation like Britain was cancelled by the refusal to recognize as contraband those very articles which most affected her weapon, the navy. Naval stores could not be brought under proclamation. The contention was based upon no ethical grounds. Its origin lay in the purely commercial fact that the northern Powers had goods to sell and the means of conducting a profitable commerce, while the Dutch made it their business to carry them and insisted on the right to give naval protection to neutral convoys; convoys which, as a British minister wrote, 'when licit wanted no protection and would suffer no interruption from us, but when illicit could not be protected by convoy'. Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, Austria, and Holland joined the Armed Neutrality in 1780, Portugal in 1782, the Two Sicilies in 1783, and Britain was then faced with the possibility that over four-score capital ships would be added to the country's enemies if ministers were to insist on exercising those rights which their predecessors from the days of Elizabeth onwards had stoutly upheld and fought for. Russia fitted out three squadrons, each of five capital ships, for the Mediterranean, the North Sea, and the coast of Portugal, and other Powers made similar preparations. But, apart from making some small concessions, the Cabinet stood firm on the general principles and prepared to maintain the country's maritime rights. It would be contrary to every principle of wisdom and policy, said the Secretary of State, to allow ships with suspect cargoes to pass unvisited: a war with the Bourbon Powers would be conducted with manifold disadvantages if Britain were not able to deprive the enemy of those supplies upon which their operations

depended. In the end the Armed Neutrality effected little—Catherine herself admitted, in 1782, that it degenerated into 'an Armed Nullity'.[1] The hollowness of the pretence that the foundation of this movement lay in some great moral principle, some so-called law of nature or of right, is illustrated by the very different attitude adopted by nations when circumstances either bring them into possession of sea power or into alliance with a sea Power, when they become strong supporters of belligerent rights at sea. When France was powerful at sea in 1681 her treatment of the neutral was more rigorous than Britain's. When Russia was Britain's ally in 1793 she pronounced in favour of the most rigorous exclusion of all neutral States from commerce with France.

In the second phase of the war created by the intervention of France and Spain all hinged upon sea power. In 1779, as said earlier, 50,000 men were assembled at St. Malo and Havre, with 400 transport vessels to carry them across the Channel so soon as the combined fleet of sixty-six French and Spanish ships should have destroyed the forty ships of the British fleet which alone stood between them and the conquest of Britain. Fortunately for Britain the enemy seamen were unequal to their task and 'It was not their own preparations, but the inefficiency of their enemies, in counsel and in preparation, saved the British islands from invasion'.[2] More islands in the West Indies passed into the hands of those who had superiority at sea. Gibraltar, besieged for three years, held out against the combined enemy forces by land and sea because it was possible on three occasions to throw in reliefs and reinforcements without which it must have fallen; but Minorca fell in February 1782, starved into surrender because no relief could be sent. Though Gibraltar was relieved in 1781, it was at the cost of allowing a powerful French fleet of twenty-six ships to leave Brest without interruption; for there was insufficient force at home simultaneously to perform the two duties, each of the highest importance—relieving the Mediterranean bases and holding in check the French fleet at Brest. A part of the unwatched Brest fleet, under the command of the ablest and most energetic admiral France has ever produced, went to India. On its way thither it intercepted

[1] Higgins and Colombos, *International Law of the Sea*, p. 444.
[2] Mahan, in Laird Clowes, op. cit., p. 445.

and disabled the British expedition already mentioned which was designed to capture the Cape of Good Hope. With the Cape thus secured against British attack the French squadron went on to India, where, superior to the existing British squadron, it defeated it, captured the essential base it had acquired at Trincomali in Ceylon, and brought a reinforcement of French troops to India which, acting in co-operation with the army of Hyder Ali, outnumbered the British forces and placed the whole of the British possessions on the Coromandel coast, and even Bengal itself, in jeopardy until the arrival of additional British ships whose detachment weakened the already unduly weak force in home waters. The other part of the Brest fleet went to the West Indies, where it interrupted the British operations then in progress, and from thence went to North America. There it was the predominant factor in effecting the stroke which finally decided the issue of the struggle with the colonies —the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. No one appreciated more clearly than Washington the importance of the command of the sea in that unhappy war. His clear understanding of the part which sea power must play in the struggle[1] stands out in strong contrast to the apathy and lack of foresight of the British ministers. The events of the first three years of the war had furnished him with a bitter experience. Until French sea power came to his aid the initiative lay largely with Britain owing to her ability to move her armies where she would by sea; movements to which he had to conform. But with the coming of a French fleet the situation was changed in his favour, though even in the autumn of 1778 he was far from easy in his mind. 'If the Spaniards would but join their fleets to France and commence hostilities', he wrote on 4 October, 'my doubts would all subside. Without it I fear the British Navy has it too much in its power to counteract the schemes of France.' In April 1781 his eyes were again looking anxiously towards the sea. 'If France delays timely aid it will avail us nothing if she attempts it hereafter. We are at the end of our tether, and now or never our deliverance must come.' Deliverance was on its way. Almost at the moment he was thus writing the Brest fleet was sailing unopposed. When it arrived on the American coast in

[1] For an appreciation of Washington as a naval strategist cf. Captain Dudley Knox, U.S.N., *The Naval Genius of George Washington* (1932).

the autumn, Washington pressed the French admiral for naval support in his intended campaign against Yorktown. 'The enterprise against York under the protection of your ships is as certain as any military operation can be rendered by a decisive superiority of strength', while on the other hand the army besieging York could only be fed by sea, 'under cover of a fleet mistress of the Chesapeak'. It was equally plain to him that superiority at sea was the indispensable foundation of the campaign he was contemplating in the year ahead. 'Your Excellency', he wrote to the admiral, 'will have observed that whatever efforts are made by the land forces, the Navy must have the casting vote in the present contest.'[1] As the loss of the command of the sea was the prime cause of the jeopardizing of the British possessions in India, so it was of the decisive defeat at Yorktown which finally convinced the British Government of the impossibility of recovering the Northern Colonies. It was the inability to maintain a fleet off Brest and at the same time another to relieve Gibraltar that enabled those French fleets to get to sea unfought and proceed upon their missions; that inability was primarily due to the neglect of the navy before the war.

Grievous as Britain's losses were in consequence of this neglect in peace and the subsequent misdirection of her effort during the war, it was her sea power which saved her from the further disasters which her enemies designed for her which, if they had been inflicted, would have reduced her, as Vergennes desired, to the rank of a second-class Power. The efficiency of her seamen, combined, as Mahan has said, with the inefficiency of some of her enemies, saved the country from invasion in 1779, enabled Gibraltar to hold out, and averted the danger which threatened her possessions in India. These successes, followed by Rodney's victory in 1782 which restored the command of the sea in the West Indies and baffled the intended attack on Jamaica, accompanied by the drain upon French and Spanish commerce, predisposed the enemies to abandon their designs; and peace followed in 1783. When so much was done with the inferior forces at the disposal of the sea commanders, little imagination is needed to discern how much might have been done, and what losses would have been avoided, if the statesmen of Britain had acted

[1] *The Correspondence of General Washington and Count de Grasse* (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1931), p. 150.

on principles advocated by Pitt and Burke and had attended to the needs of the country's sea power, maintaining it on a scale adequate to the extended services it was to be called upon to perform.

The losses sustained by the British navy from 1775 to 1783 numbered in all 199 ships and vessels. Roughly speaking, half were suffered in action with the enemy in one or another form, and half from the perils of the sea, hurricanes, wreck, foundering, and other accidents the risks of which are greater in war than in peace. The figures deserve consideration. They are:

Class of ship	*Enemy action*	*Perils of the sea*	*Total*
Capital ships . . .	1	15	16
Cruisers, heavy and light .	38	36	74
Flotilla (sloops, brigs &c.) .	70	39	109
	109	90	199

These figures remind us that the sea itself takes its toll in war; that the needs of sea power are not confined to the number of fighting ships in existence and readiness at the beginning of a war, but also to an extensive and efficient shipbuilding industry, fully provided with the raw materials of its work both to replace losses and to meet the demands upon sea power which invariably and inevitably increase as war proceeds. They remind us too that it is not only upon the requirements of 'pure' naval action—the campaigns of fleets, the attack and defence of commerce—that have to be calculated upon in making provision for the navy. Amphibious operations, always dangerous and costly, take their place in the strategy of a sea Power and have to be paid for. One-third of the cruisers lost were lost in those operations with the army and about one-sixth of the smaller craft. Different as the cruiser and the flotilla craft of to-day are from those of the sailing navy, the lesson is the same. Norway, the Channel, Greece, Crete, North Africa, the coasts of Italy and Normandy tell the same tale and point the same lesson—that of the folly of underestimating the number of cruising craft of all types and of dissipating the shipbuilding resources of the country.

V

SEA POWER DURING THE YEARS BETWEEN 1783 AND 1793

DURING the ten years that elapsed between the signing of the Peace of Paris in 1783 and the outbreak of the war with the French Republic in 1793 a series of situations arose which, in the eyes of the British statesmen, threatened the security and the interests of Great Britain. In each her sea power was affected, and in each also her sea power was the instrument with which she upheld her policy.

Britain's prestige had declined greatly during the late war. She had suffered severe losses in territory owing to her inability to meet the powerful combination at sea to which she had been opposed. She was, in consequence, partly despised and partly hated. In 1785 Frederick of Prussia looked on her as a country whose strength at sea was insufficient to withstand the confederation of France, Austria, Russia, and Spain, and possibly the Netherlands also, which, in his eyes, was likely to be arrayed against it. Though he himself was looking for allies, as a 'realist' he had no inclination to seek or accept support from what appeared to be so broken a reed. The northern Powers too, who had been disappointed in their efforts of 1780 to force Britain to abandon her maritime rights and accept their novel doctrine of 'Free Ships, Free Goods', renewed their efforts to do so in the belief that, in Britain's isolation and weakness, the pressure would prove effective.

It was due to Pitt's determination to restore and maintain that sea power that she was able to meet some of the challenges offered to her. Though, when he formed his first administration in December 1783, the country lay under the shadow of a threatened bankruptcy and was in urgent need of economy and the rehabilitation of its finances, Pitt had not shrunk from devoting money to the navy. In 1784 he raised the peace establishment of the navy from 15,000 to 18,000 men and set aside 2½ millions, out of a revenue of 25 millions raised with difficulty, for naval shipbuilding. He paid a close personal attention to much-needed reforms in the dockyards and to the

use of the merchants' yards for both building and repairing the ships of the navy, laying down in those yards no fewer than twenty-four capital ships. He kept a close touch with the Controller's department, then in the hands of one of the most, if not indeed the most, capable administrator the navy has ever possessed, Admiral Sir Charles Middleton, afterwards Lord Barham.

In 1788 he was criticized for having added 2,000 men to the naval establishment at a time when there was need for economy, and in face of the continual assurances given by foreign Powers of their friendly dispositions. Pitt replied that no one could wish more than he for economy, but the best economy that any country could practise in time of peace was to keep up such a force and take such measures of defence as would be most likely to render that peace permanent and induce its duration; so long as the necessary force for the country's defence was maintained, it was the less likely that its tranquillity would be disturbed.[1]

Two measures for seeking economy were proposed at this time: agreement with France for mutual naval reductions, and an increase in the local garrisons in the West Indies in order that smaller naval squadrons should be rendered possible. These suggestions aroused a legitimate anxiety in Parliament. France was displaying considerable activity in her naval establishments. She was strenuously engaged in developing the port of Cherbourg, a port whose use could only be directed against Britain. Moreover, she was not the only country whose navy Britain had to consider in a Europe that was far from peaceful. There was also no margin of superiority in the existing establishments which were still markedly below the standard of equality at sea with the two Bourbon Powers, the standard which had been deemed, and had proved, necessary throughout the century: and to their forces the navy of Russia might be added.[2] Fortunately the advances to France were rejected by Vergennes and the matter was not pursued.

The proposed increase to the West Indian garrisons was warmly debated in Parliament. It had the support of Pitt on the grounds that, though the ultimate security of the islands

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxvii (1788), p. 1309.

[2] Ibid. vol. xvii (1788), debate of 20 Mar.; *Annual Register*, 1789, pp. 143–4.

depended on the sea, fortifications were also necessary to guard against a *coup de main* either launched without a declaration of war or in the early stage of a war before reinforcements could arrive. Objections were forcibly urged by General Burgoyne. In the unhealthy climate it often happened that a third of the troops died within three months of their arrival, another third was in hospital, leaving no more than the remaining third for defence. Forts might be useful against *coups de main* in those parts where there were a few landing-places only, but they could not preserve the islands, where there were many, and might even prove a disadvantage if the enemy, landing elsewhere, ravaged the plantations and thereby evoked a cry from the planters for surrender. The forts would then prove an obstacle to reconquest. The cost—£180,000—was considerable, and the demand was beyond the scope of the existing military establishment. When the resources of the country were considered, any scheme that tended to diminish the disposable military forces by locking them up in garrisons, and to weaken the navy, should, he said, be resisted. His views were disputed by another military officer, Colonel Phipps, who argued that landing-places were not many but few, that West Indian islands had been lost in the late war owing to lack of local defences and in spite of the presence of a strong fleet in the Caribbean, which could not be everywhere. Martinique, he pointed out, with its small garrison of 800 men, had held out for a year though 15,000 troops had been sent against it. Forts were economical in the use of men: when a small number could thus defend an island, more were thereby made available for 'that essential service' the navy.

In the end the increase in the local defences was accepted by Parliament on the showing that it was not based on the supreme fallacy, an echo of which has been heard in our own day, that local defence can supplant, or be a substitute for, command of the sea, but on the need for adequate means to resist a sudden attack and to hold out until the arrival of a fleet. 'The combined strength of a fleet and forts would add much greater safety than could possibly be expected from a fleet alone.' The idea that a reduction in the strength of the navy could be rendered possible by adding to the strength of local defences found no support, but it was recognized that a fleet must be

able to count upon local defences to hold its base during a temporary absence; otherwise it would be tethered to that base and deprived of the power to act against its principal objective, the sea power of the enemy. Admiral Hughes, commanding in the Indian Ocean in the previous war, had been greatly hampered in his operations owing to the lack of a garrison and inadequate defences of his base, Trincomali. Thereby his fleet was tied to the protection of the base and was unable to protect shipping, co-operate with the army, and take the initiative against the French squadron under Suffren.

The connexion, or relation, between British sea power and continental alliances as seen by the British statesmen of the day is plain. While the restoration of her sea power would make her a desirable ally, she on her part in this time of financial stringency was in need of an ally to ensure that she would be able to maintain the superiority at sea which was needed for her own security as well as to enable her to conduct an effective offensive at sea against the vulnerable objectives of France, her trade and colonies: but sea power alone would not prevent French armies from overrunning and subduing the Dutch Netherlands and thereby acquiring positions from which France could strike at Britain across the Narrow Seas, at her Baltic trade, and at the route to India from the Cape and Ceylon. Nor were these the only considerations affecting the question of alliances or isolation. In earlier times, as we have seen, intervention in continental affairs had been regarded as necessary in order to prevent any single continental military Power from conquering Europe and thereby acquiring such resources, territories, and ports that it could in peace outbuild Britain and in war wrest from her the command of the sea. On the same principle strategy in war had been informed by the parallel necessity of diverting the resources of the enemy from the sea to the land.

Three foreign alliances were made in the years 1787 and 1788: a subsidiary alliance with Hesse Cassel in 1787, a defensive alliance with the United Provinces in April 1788, and one with Prussia in August of the same year. In the discussion in Parliament on the first of these, in November 1787, approval was expressed by Fox on the general principle of such alliances 'so far as they enabled us to reduce our military establishments

at home, and to apply the public treasure to the increase of our naval strength, the natural force of Great Britain'. He feared that the naval establishment was inadequate. Pitt, in reply, dissented from the view that such treaties were justified on those grounds only and stated that the Hessian treaty had not been made for that purpose but to meet immediate needs in support of Prussia.[1] Inasmuch, however, as the support of Prussia was related directly to the maintenance of British superiority at sea, the Hessian treaty was accepted as a contribution to the increase of British naval strength. The treaty with the United Provinces provided that if either party were attacked in any part of the world, the other would come to its help, by sea and land, and guarantee the possession of its territories. Britain was to furnish, within two months of being called upon, 10,000 troops, twelve ships of the line, and eight frigates; and on her part Holland engaged to send 6,000 troops, eight capital ships, and eight frigates: the cost in each case to be borne by the Power demanding help. The treaty was not wholly favoured by the Dutch, for two bones of contention of long standing were not removed. The British categorically refused to make any concession on the old matter of maritime rights or to restore Negapatam, the Dutch naval base on the Coromandel coast, though they expressed willingness to re-examine the question of Negapatam at a later date: but the opportunity for so doing never arose. The third treaty, with Prussia, was on similar lines. It provided that each party would assist the other to maintain its possessions if attacked, furnishing 20,000 land troops, but with the limiting provision that the Prussian troops were not to be used outside Europe or even at Gibraltar. This limitation, in the eyes of Parliament, seriously diminished the value of the treaty to Britain, since it would most probably be in the oversea theatres that such help would be needed. In addition, the British fleet was to assist Prussia if called upon.

These treaties, however essential they may have appeared for the purpose of obtaining allies, did nevertheless impose definite obligations upon Britain which fettered her freedom to conduct her national strategy. A by no means negligible proportion of her small army was committed to continental operations as well as an uncertain force of her navy, which might find itself com-

[1] *Annual Register*, 1788, pp. 84–7.

mitted to undertake duties in the Baltic such as those which Chatham in his day had definitely refused to undertake. The engagements tended to dissipate British strength and to divert British efforts in the important opening phases of a war from the high and primary purpose which should inform her strategy, that of destroying the sea power of her enemy.

A challenge to Britain's 'Low Country Policy' arose in 1787 when the internal discords of the Dutch Republic, which had been steadily increasing for some years, afforded an opportunity for France to intervene in favour of one of the contending political parties with the intention of attaining the domination of the Netherlands which it had been the settled policy of Britain for several centuries to prevent. The reason for that policy we have already seen: a strong military Power firmly established in the excellent harbours on the other side of the Narrow Seas would be in a position to prepare and launch an invasion of the British islands under favourable conditions of transport and protection—the attempted 'bolt from the Blue' invasion of 1744 had afforded an example of the reality of this danger. But it was now not only the danger of invasion that influenced the British statesmen's resistance to the absorption by France of the Netherlands. The sea communications of the Eastern Empire, the security of which rested upon sea power, were also menaced. A new French East India Company had been formed in 1785, and the possibility existed that it might be amalgamated with the Dutch East India Company. Paris was indulging in hopeful dreams of a French empire in the East. Proposals made by Britain in that year for a mutual reduction in the strength of the naval squadrons in the Eastern Seas were rejected by the French minister, Vergennes, for France had nothing to gain from reductions when her prospects of attaining superiority appeared so favourable. In that year, too, the party in Holland which arrogated to itself the title of the 'Patriots' had attempted to effect a Franco-Dutch alliance of which one aim was the overthrow of British power in India: and had even gone so far as to offer Trincomali to France as a naval base. Though that attempt failed, it appeared plain in London that the route to the East would be seriously threatened if France, dominating or in close alliance with the Dutch Netherlands,

had at her disposal, in addition to her base at Mauritius, the two positions of the Cape and Ceylon. This had been so well recognized in the recent war, during which Holland had joined the Bourbon Powers that, as we have seen, one expedition had been sent, and two others had been planned, for the capture of the Cape, and the first act of the British forces in the Eastern Seas had been the capture of Trincomali. The loss of that base had most seriously prejudiced the British naval and military operations on the Coromandel coast, and this had so fully impressed itself on the minds of the British ministers that, when the crisis arose in 1787, Pitt sent instructions to Lord Cornwallis in India directing him, if war should break out, at once to take steps to seize Trincomali. At the same time preparations were made to send another force from Britain for the capture of the Cape. Britain, said Pitt, would not allow France to become mistress of the Netherlands and thereby add greatly to her own naval strength and to her power of aggression against India.

The needs of naval bases in both of those focal areas, the Cape and Ceylon, had already so impressed the British statesmen that consideration had been given, in 1785, to acquiring a position in the region of the Cape for a naval base, either at Algoa Bay or in the present-day East London,[1] and in 1788 the needs of a base in the Bay of Bengal had led to the occupation of the Andaman Islands where a settlement was made at Port Cornwallis. Nor were these the only indications of the recognition of the need for bases in the Eastern Seas. Attention had been drawn earlier by private individuals to the strategical importance of Australia in relation both to the security of trade in those waters and to the exercise of command in the event of war with either Spain or the Dutch Republic. The harbours of New South Wales, it was pointed out, would furnish bases, and New Zealand could produce flax and timber, thereby diminishing the navy's dependence on the Baltic for certain of its supplies of naval stores.[2]

Thanks to the exertions of Pitt and Middleton, the minister was able to take a firm stand when the crisis of 1787 arose. Britain, with a fleet of forty sail of the line in readiness for the

[1] Holland Rose, *Pitt and National Revival*, pp. 435–6. The question of a penal settlement was also being considered.

[2] Holland Rose, op. cit., pp. 436–9.

sea, could face with confidence the possibility of war with France. In the settlement of this dispute Prussia played an influential part.

'The action of the Prussians was trenchant, but it could not have been so but for their confidence in the promised support of the Sea Power. Pitt's fostering care of the national resources, and the rehabilitation of the navy, had made it virtually impossible for the semi-bankrupt French state to enter single-handed on a war with Great Britain and Prussia. This was the determining factor in the problem; and every statesman at Paris, London and Berlin knew it.'

It was Pitt's care for the navy that brought a wavering Prussia into the alliance to begin with and then kept her up to the mark in readiness to march into Holland to support the Stadtholder: it 'ensured a preponderance that virtually decided the dispute'.[1]

Thus the effect of Britain's being once more strong at sea was twofold. It preserved the independence of Holland and it preserved peace.

Another acute crisis arose in 1790 when Spain, after a high-handed seizure of British ships in Nootka Sound, laid claim to the whole of that territory which is now Vancouver Island. Pitt was in a strong position to resist the Spanish attempt at aggression. Thanks to his attention to the navy ninety-three capital ships were in a condition for service and a fleet of forty sail of the line was quickly placed in active commission. The French Assembly made a gesture of supporting Spain, authorizing the equipment of forty-five sail, but King Louis and his ministers negatived the armament; and in October, Spain, isolated and faced with such a preponderance at sea and with the evidence of the readiness of Britain's allies, Prussia and Holland, to stand by her, recognizing Spain as the aggressor, withdrew her demands and a peaceful settlement followed. A later Controller of the Navy paid his tribute to Pitt for his diplomatic success: the mobilization of the fleet, he said, was 'a proof of great exertions, and speaks volumes as to the opinions of Mr. Pitt with respect to the necessity of having the navy in great strength and ready for immediate action'.[2]

Following close upon the heels of the Nootka Sound affair another problem arose calling for the use of British sea power

[1] Holland Rose, op. cit., pp. 377, 381.

[2] *Letters of Sir T. Byam Martin*, vol. iii, p. 382.

for the purpose of arresting the course of Russian aggression in the two theatres of the Baltic and Black Sea. In the Baltic the allied Powers, Britain, Holland, and Prussia, had sought, in 1789, to bring Poland into their orbit. The preservation of the balance of power in that sea was a dominant consideration in the eyes of the British ministers for the same reasons as those which had informed British policy for a full century and a half —the effect which the undisputed command of the Baltic zone would have upon the supply of materials essential to the maintenance of Britain's navy and her sea power. Britain was still dependent on the Baltic for the greater part of her naval stores, and this made her sensitive to all that tended to alter the balance of power in that sea. Hence, when war between Sweden and Russia broke out in 1788, she was deeply interested in that struggle, acutely alive to the effect which a Russian victory would have upon her own sea power.

The Polish problem, too, had its relation in Pitt's eyes to British sea power. An independent Poland could supply Britain with naval stores and so reduce her dependence on Russian supplies. So the attitude of his ministry towards the Polish question was influenced in part by the old consideration of naval stores which had first given rise to the attention paid to Baltic affairs in the days of Gustavus and Cromwell. In 1789 that distracted country, which had suffered partition at the hands of Russia, Prussia, and Austria in 1772, was once more threatened with extinction by Russia. To avert this an attempt was made to draw Poland into an existing alliance with Great Britain, Holland, and Prussia, the Prussian price being the cession of the port of Danzig. In favour of this it was argued that by allying herself with the three Powers Poland would save herself from the greater injury of Russian conquest, and her trade would be able to find its way to the sea through Prussian ports. In proposing this unpleasant course the two maritime Powers hoped 'to break the monopoly of Russia in the supply of naval stores, for which we are wholly dependent on the policy or caprice of that domineering Power. . . . It was found that many of the articles for which we had long been at the mercy of Russia were to be obtained more advantageously from Poland through the ports of Prussia.' Flax and masts from Lithuania, hemp from Vilna and Minsk, oak from Volhynia, could all be brought

more rapidly to England from the ports of Prussia than from Petersburg or Riga—it was calculated that a saving of as much as a year in the time of transport would result.

'It was not to be imagined that the trade of Russia in naval stores would be totally transferred at once to these new channels, yet it was an object of the first magnitude for the Maritime Powers to erect, if they could, a nearer and cheaper market to which they might have recourse, and which being in the hands of states naturally hostile to Russia, would leave England and Holland more at liberty to act on either side in the affairs of the North as justice and policy might require.'[1]

The proposal placed Poland in a dilemma. To obtain the support of the allies she must cede a treasured port: unless she should do so she would be at the mercy of the great and grasping Empress. She made her choice. She refused the offer, with the result that Russia, making a series of charges and complaints of a nature similar to those with which modern events have made us familiar when a pretext for the invasion of a neighbour is desired, marched her army into Poland and the second partition began.

In the Black Sea the cause of British anxiety lay in the threat which the Russian advance appeared to offer to Britain's sea power in the Mediterranean and the defence of the route to India. A series of Russian victories in the Black Sea, in a war with Turkey which had begun with the conquest of the Crimea in 1783, had put the fortress of Oczakow, close to the mouth of the Dneister, in Russian hands. If the Russian Black Sea fleet acquired a base more advanced towards the Sea of Marmora than Sebastopol, the conquest of Turkey would be facilitated; for an invasion could be more easily made by water than through the difficult country of Moldavia and Wallachia. The sea, wrote a contemporary writer,[2] was Turkey's weak side. 'One decisive action on that element would more fatally affect the security of the Turkish Empire than the loss of half a dozen battles on land.' The unfavourable prospects which the establishment of a Russian base at Oczakow opened up to Pitt were the overthrow of Turkey, the capture of Constantinople, the appearance of a Russian fleet in the Mediterranean, and the domination or conquest of Egypt; the whole constituting a

[1] *Annual Register*, 1792, Part 1, p. 35. [2] Ibid. 1788, p. 57.

threat to the route to India by way of the isthmus of Suez and the Red Sea. A contemporary writer of a few years earlier had condemned what he deemed the blindness of Britain's policy in its subservience to Russia, 'under the influence of which she had drawn an uncertain ally and a more than suspected friend from the bottom of the Bothnick Gulph to establish a new naval empire in the Mediterranean and Archipelago' bringing with it 'the prospect of continued broils, troubles and wars in the surrounding regions of Europe, Asia and Africa'. A further objection to the Russian retention of Oczakow, and one more immediately touching British sea power, was that, with the use of an ice-free port in the Black Sea, Russia would be able to supply France and Spain, Britain's principal naval opponents, with the naval stores they needed, sending them through the Mediterranean. To cut off these supplies on that route would be far more difficult, and involve a greater effort, than intercepting them in the North Sea or the Bay of Biscay.

Pitt's policy of attempting to stem the Russian march towards Turkey and the Mediterranean, and of bringing about a peace on what appeared reasonable terms between the Czarina and the Porte, met with acrid opposition in Parliament.[1] In face of that opposition and also the attitude of the allied States, a fleet of forty sail of the line which had been fitted out was not dispatched and Catherine had her way. The 'ifs' of history are many—perhaps it is futile to consider them. Pitt's biographer[2] offers one in the result of the minister's abandonment of his attempt, in the face of this opposition, to create a grouping of the weaker States of Europe at this time.

'Had he pushed his plans forward in the autumn of 1790 as soon as the dispute with Spain was settled, and maintained the naval armaments at their full strength, he would probably have gained a peaceful triumph over Catherine. In that case the accession of Poland, Sweden and Turkey to the Triple Alliance would naturally have followed. There would have been no invasion of France by Austria and Prussia, still less would there have been any spoliation of Poland.'

What the naval armament was capable of contributing to this common effort was the cutting of the sea lines of communication

[1] For the discussions cf. Holland Rose, op. cit., chap. xxvii, and *Parliamentary debates, passim.*

[2] Holland Rose, op. cit., p. 631.

of the Russian army in the western basin of the Black Sea and the closing of the Russian ports to trade in the Baltic. To neither of these could the Czarina have been indifferent.

During the autumn of 1791 the prospects of peace appeared to improve. The Russo-Turkish War had ended, Sweden was quiet, a reconciliation seemed possible between the King of France and his people. So, in introducing the budget on 17 February 1792, Pitt felt that he could predict that, although events might arise which could not be foreseen, 'unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country, when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than at the present time'. In accordance with this favourable prospect reductions were made in both the army and the navy, effecting a financial saving of £190,000. Even in July 1792, when the outlook was clouded by the entry of Austrian troops into France, hopes were still entertained that Britain would not be involved in war. Pitt and Grenville 'were not far-seeing schemers bent on undermining the liberties of France and Britain by a war on which the King had long resolved, but fallible mortals, unable to see a handsbreadth through the turmoil, but cherishing the hope that all would become clear'.[1] The reductions in the armed forces and the subsequent unreadiness of both the fighting services are prominent among the witnesses against the popular and continental delusion that the otherwise peaceful nations of Europe are inveigled into quarrels by Britain in order that she shall enrich herself with their trade and colonies, and then deserted by her while she gathers those coveted fruits.

[1] Holland Rose, *Pitt and the Great War*, p. 58. For a summary of the events see chap. v and p. 112. Cf. also Clapham, *Causes of the War of 1792*.

VI

THE WAR OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, 1793–1801

WHEN war broke out in the spring of 1793 it proved well that Pitt had not shrunk from devoting some of the national revenues to the navy during the lean years after 1783. Nevertheless, in spite of what he had done, the material strength of the navy was still far below the standard at which it had been found necessary to maintain it throughout the whole of the eighteenth century: that is, fitness to meet the combined strength of the two Bourbon Powers. Measured in terms of the effective number of capital ships—the commonly accepted basis of comparison—the British fleet numbered 115 ships, that of France 76. Spain also possessed 76, but of these not more than 60 would probably be fit for the sea. Whichever the correct figure, the British fleet was below the standard previously considered essential. But this is not all. The correct measure of the fighting strength of any mass is to be found in the total strength of the armaments of the ships of which it is composed. On the basis of weight of metal the British fleet of capital ships enjoyed a superiority over France alone not of the 50-odd per cent. implied by the numbers, but of one-sixth only; for the French ships of the line were more heavily armed than the British.[1] Moreover, though the capital-ship strength furnishes a primary means of comparison it does not constitute a complete representation of naval power. Dominated though naval warfare is by the massed bodies of fighting ships, the operations of war at sea are not confined to the battles and blockades in which these vessels are engaged. The services of giving direct protection to shipping and of exercising control over the movements of enemy shipping engaged in the carriage of troops and trade, and those of neutrals whose desire it is to sell their goods to the enemy, are performed by vessels of many smaller types of the 'cruiser' and 'flotilla' classes, the lack of which we have so painfully experienced during the wars of to-day. The naval historian James, writing in 1826, rightly reminded his readers that figures of the

[1] Broadside weight of discharge of British capital ships, 88,957 lb.; of French, 73,957 lb. James, *Naval History of Great Britain*, vol. 1, pp. 56–8.

enemy's strength at sea which omitted 'the swarm of brigs, schooners and armed craft whose depredations on British commerce are too important to be slighted, do not correctly represent the naval power of a state'. The vessel which we now call the 'cruiser' was then the frigate—the word 'cruiser' was not then the denomination of a class of ship but was used to describe all ships from capital ships to corvettes and lesser vessels, engaged in active service at sea. Of the frigate class Britain possessed 126 at the outbreak of war. Of the lesser light craft the sloops, corvettes, and other small vessels which, generally speaking, correspond to the destroyers, frigates, sloops, corvettes, and other light craft of to-day, and can be correctly called the 'flotilla'—there were no more than fifty-nine altogether. These numbers both of frigates and flotilla at once proved inadequate and a considerable expansion was called for; but though many were built, the need was never met, and throughout the war the constant cry from every commander at sea was his lack of frigates. Every war finds this country in this situation and she suffers heavy losses in consequence; yet the lesson seems never to impress itself upon her people and rulers.

Until the surrender of the French fleet at Toulon in August 1793, with the accompanying loss to the French navy, permanently or temporarily, of some twenty-four capital ships, a French Deputy, Jean Bon St. André, could say with some measure of truth that France was 'the most redoubtable maritime power in Europe'; for though the aggregate of her naval force was less than that of Great Britain, the duties which it had to perform were both less extensive and less vital than those which fell upon the British navy. Not only had France less to defend at and over sea, her life, unlike that of Britain, not being wholly dependent on overseas trade and communications, but the conditions which were essential to Britain's security demanded that she must maintain in constant readiness, and in a position which enabled them to act, a force at least equal to the whole of that of France. For France could select her moment for embarking upon any desired offensive operation—a cruise against an expected British convoy, an invasion of Ireland, an attack in the East or West Indies or in the Mediterranean. Constant readiness to oppose such an attempt implied ability to intercept any movement made by the enemy

as soon as it left port, with at least equal strength, and this condition could only be fulfilled if a considerable margin existed with which to provide reliefs for the squadron of observation, to replace ships injured in the course of service or in need of repair, to refresh the seamen with fresh food, and replenish the victuals and drink. To keep a fleet of twelve sail off Brest to deal with a corresponding number in that port called for a reserve of no less than eight sail at one period of the blockade of that port. Thus the British margin of superiority was wholly inadequate, even if France alone had been the possible prospective enemy. But she was not. During the years immediately preceding the war the possibility of a Franco-Spanish combination was not dead. In the summer of 1790 the strong aristocratic party in France, seeing safety for the French monarchy only in a foreign war, and preferably a war with England, contemplated having recourse to 'the classical remedy for internal trouble'—war; and as the sympathies of Spain lay with the restoration of the French monarchic power, it was not wholly impossible that the French and Spanish interests, at the time of the Nootka Sound dispute, would coincide in opposition to Great Britain. For various reasons, and perhaps in particular the bankrupt condition of France, this did not arise, and Spain, lacking the support she had hoped for from France, gave way over Nootka Sound; and though British ministers appear to have felt confident that the decadence of France owing to the Revolution was such that nothing was to be feared from her,[1] the fact remains that, in abandoning the traditional standard, they exposed the country to danger. But though that danger did not then materialize, it was a postponement only. Six years later the Franco-Spanish combination was renewed. Naval policy needs to be based on a long view at all times.

At the time of the outbreak of the war in 1793 the inadequacy of the British superiority over France was offset by the grouping of the two other maritime Powers, Spain and Holland, who allied themselves with Britain. Spain brought her fleet, of a nominal strength of seventy-six capital ships, and Holland hers of forty-nine, into the alliance against the Republic. But Britain did not enjoy that aid for long. Both of these allies, after

[1] J. H. Clapham, *The Causes of the War of 1792*, pp. 39–40, and Appendix vi; cf. also *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. i, p. 223 et seq.

rendering very slight and even ambiguous services, went over to the enemy; and Britain, not for the first or the last time in her history, found herself left in the lurch with the reminder that, in the vital matter of her sea power, she could never afford to run the risk of placing her dependence elsewhere than on her own efforts and not upon the constancy of those governments whose interests might, for the moment, coincide with her own.

One further, and more valuable, offset to the slightness of Britain's material superiority at sea lay in the professional skill of her sea officers. The Revolution in France had deprived the French navy of the experienced body of able officers which she had possessed in the last war; and at the same time her internal upheaval had destroyed all discipline and withheld opportunities of exercising her fleets in manœuvre. Neither of these mitigating influences could, however, have been foreseen during those years in which the strength of the British navy was allowed to fall below the strength at which it had stood throughout the three great struggles in which the country had been engaged.

In the second element of sea power, bases, Britain was well provided in many of the oversea theatres. She had ports in Canada, Newfoundland, the two basins of the Caribbean, on the west coast of Africa, at Bombay, in Sumatra, and at Pulo Penang. But there was a weak spot in the Bay of Bengal where she had no port that could be used during the north-east monsoon. Port Cornwallis in the Andamans, though in British occupation, had not been developed. Pitt's orders in 1787 to capture Trincomali immediately if the war which then was threatening were to break out show his appreciation of the needs of that station. In the Mediterranean Britain had no base east of Gibraltar, having lost Minorca during the last war, and her power of masking the French fleet at Toulon would mainly depend on the attitude of the rulers of Piedmont, Tuscany, and the Two Sicilies and whether they would allow her the use of their harbours and provide the supplies the fleet would require.

In the third element of shipping Britain was well supplied. Her mercantile tonnage had steadily increased since the peace in 1783, and was manned by some 118,000 seamen. But that number, adequate though it was to the services of trade, was insufficient to meet at the same time the demands for manning the

fighting navy when the 20,900 seamen of the Royal Navy of 1793 had to be expanded into the 73,000 of 1794.[1] The demand upon the merchant seamen was so great that the Navigation Act, by whose terms British ships must be manned by British seamen, was temporarily suspended. One of the weakest spots in the naval cosmos still lay where it had so long lain—in the absence of any regular and organized system for the supply of its seamen and of a reserve with which to increase the numbers of both officers and men. Though every war had most clearly demonstrated this need, often in a most costly fashion, the statesmen of the country had consistently evaded taking any steps to remedy this weakness. The recommendations of writers like Defoe and of commissions appointed to examine the problem had all been shelved, and every possible course, every form of improvisation, had to be employed or exploited to man the fleet, including the embarkation of some battalions of the already small and overtaxed army. But with all these efforts it was not until mid-July, nearly six months after the war had begun, that the fleet in home waters could be fully manned, and before then French squadrons had already been able to sail, unopposed, from Brest. At a later stage of the war Collingwood said that his ships' companies contained 'a motley crew' of Germans, Austrians, Poles, Croats, and Hungarians.

On 1 February 1793 France declared war on Great Britain and Holland. A fortnight later a French army invaded Holland and the help of Britain was called for under the terms of the Treaty of 1788. A small force was therefore dispatched to reinforce the Dutch and Austrian armies. Within two months the invaders were thrown back within their own frontiers.

Apart from fulfilling the obligation to defend Holland, the main problem which ministers had now to decide was that of how they would conduct their higher strategy and make the most effective use of their national strength: a strength residing in sea power. Several possible courses suggested themselves, though not all of them simultaneously. First, the old question arose of whether to devote the national effort to oversea

[1] Further increases necessarily followed. The votes for the next three years were successively 85,000, 92,000, and 100,000. The maximum figure was in 1810 when it reached 113,000. The Royal Marines, who numbered 5,000 in 1793, had increased to 30,000 in 1802 and 31,000 in 1810.

operations against the enemy's trade, colonies, and the external resources of France's financial strength and naval power, or to undertake military operations on the Continent in direct support of the allied forces; and together with that main question there was the secondary one of whether, if continental military operations were to be undertaken, they should be in the form of reinforcing the armies of her allies, Austria and Prussia, in the main theatre of Flanders, or of eccentric attacks from other directions either in the form of pure diversions or of blows aimed directly at the enemy's sea power—his fleet in its several bases.

The predominant political opinion favoured the oversea or 'maritime' form of warfare. Pitt's interpretation of the situation at this time was that France, with her army disorganized by the Revolution and lacking the experienced leadership of which it had been deprived, could neither long resist the trained and disciplined armies of the continental allies, nor, with her finances in chaos and the State almost bankrupt, sustain the financial burden of a war. The greatest service which, in his eyes, Britain could render to the common cause would be that of using her sea power to weaken France's resistance by depriving her of those sources of her wealth which lay in her ocean trade and colonies. Pitt expected a short war, a war which would be ended in one or two campaigns: so little did a long war appear to him possible that he made no special provision for war taxation. His Secretary for War, Henry Dundas, likewise supported the 'colonial' form of war, not, however, as it has often been represented, for the purpose of mercantile or 'imperial' expansion by the capture of 'sugar islands', but for the essentially military purpose of cutting the enemy's exterior communications and weakening his naval power. A financial element also entered into his considerations—that of strengthening the resources upon which the efforts of the country depended by obtaining new markets to replace those closed to Britain by the facts of the war.[1] France's power of making war on land, and her sea power, were, in Dundas's view, dependent upon her colonial trade and possessions, as those of

[1] An extract from Dundas's speech in which he outlined what he conceived to be the principles of 'British war' is given in Appendix I. The speech is in *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxxvi, p. 1071. The importance attached by the Government to the opening of new markets after 1805 is described by Sir Julian Corbett in his Creighton Lecture, published in the *Quarterly Review*, Apr. 1922.

Spain and Holland had been in their days. It was an assumption that was not borne out by economic facts. To those Powers their overseas trade and colonies were vital. To France, important though they were, they were not vital since she was more self-contained and self-supporting.

The 'continental' school took the view that the national effort should be made as strongly as possible in direct and close military association with the allies, Austria and Prussia, in Flanders, where their armies were already fighting. At the bottom of this lay the traditional British policy of preventing a powerful maritime State from establishing itself in the Low Countries, with the Scheldt and the great port of Antwerp in its hands. In the hands of non-maritime Austria the harbours of the Netherlands constituted no danger to England, but Austria had recently shown an inclination to rid herself of the burden of defence of the Netherlands and to exchange them for Bavaria. One reason, therefore, for giving direct military assistance to the Austrian armies was that the Emperor might thereby be rendered less inclined to rid himself of his Belgian provinces. Antwerp, already threatened by the French, would thus be kept from France, and, in compensation for such territorial acquisitions as the allies might make, Britain would receive Dunkirk, that nest of privateers which, from Cromwell's time onwards, had been such a thorn in the side of British trade in the North and Narrow Seas. But though naval, and therefore vital, interests thus entered prominently into the formulation of the 'continental' strategy, there was also the firm conviction that the quickest way to end the war was to invade France, reach Paris, and overthrow the Jacobin Government, and that this could best be brought about by assisting the allied armies in Flanders with all the land forces that were available in what was called the 'disposal force'.

A third course, suggested during the course of the autumn of 1793 and while preparations for the intended West Indies expedition were still in the making, a course which found its principal advocate in Edmund Burke, was to take advantage of the powerful, and still successful, rising in the Vendée. Operations in Flanders, Burke argued, would not only be costly, they would be ineffective. Dunkirk was of no real importance to the war; its capture would not alter the course of

events. Success in Flanders would depend on the constancy and efficiency of the allies, and of this he had strong, and as events were to prove, well-founded, doubts. Operations in the West Indies could never be decisive, and all experience had shown that they were attended with a most grievous loss of life from disease. Here he was speaking from unquestioned facts: the losses from tropical diseases at Cartagena, Santiago, Panama, and Havana in the two wars of 1739–40 and 1756–63 had vastly exceeded all those suffered in battle—out of 185,000 raised for the sea service in the latter of those wars 130,000 had died from sickness, the great majority of them in the Indies.[1] But there was, in Burke's mind, a still more fundamental reason for rejecting both Flanders and the West Indies as the principal theatres of the British effort. The strategy of which they were the proposed courses of action assumed that it was France, as a whole, that was the enemy. This, he urged, was an error. It was *Jacobitism* that was the enemy. To destroy Jacobitism it must be struck at its heart: Paris. The best road to Paris was through the Vendée, for it was in the Vendée that the British arms would obtain the most certain help with a constancy that was not to be expected from the self-seeking allies in Flanders. It was in the Vendée, where resistance was strong and enthusiastic, that the military help which Britain's sea power enabled her to give was capable of making the greatest impression—where else, he asked, could 40,000 men produce so great an effect?[2] There is, in this reasoning, a marked resemblance to that of the Duke of Wellington who, in December 1813, when the Czar desired that the British army, then in the Pyrenees, should be transferred to the main theatre in the Netherlands, replied that his 30,000 men in Spain together with the 40,000 Spaniards whom they kept in the field, had absorbed the attention of 200,000 of Napoleon's best troops; and asked whether any men would suppose 'that Napoleon would not feel an army in such a position more than he would feel 30,000 or 40,000 British troops

[1] Admiral Vernon, in 1740, had pointed out the climatic dangers of prolonged operations in the West Indies: 'In my opinion, I should limit all expeditions to this country (i.e. the West Indian islands) to be entered upon immediately on arrival and to be executed withing the first six weeks, before the men would begin to fall sick' (Vernon to the Duke of Newcastle, 23 Jan. 1740).

[2] Burke to Windham, 15 Aug. 1793; to Sir Gilbert Elliot, 12 Sept.; to Dundas, 7 Oct. His *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796–7) follow up the same train of thought.

laying siege to one of his fortresses in Holland'.[1] It was not as a diversion only that Burke advocated operations in the Vendée; it was also that the Vendéan rising would spread and that the shortest road to Paris lay through Poitou.[2]

Yet another possible course of action presented itself when, in August 1793, the anti-Jacobin parties in the south of France, revolting against the barbarities of the terrorists, invited the allies to occupy Toulon and handed over to their keeping the French fleet in that base. This fleet numbered some thirty-one sail of the line, of which nineteen were ready for the sea, and twenty-nine frigates and corvettes: it constituted about half the capital ship strength of the French navy. This event naturally revived in Pitt's mind the idea of a combined invasion of southern France by an allied force, such as Marlborough had planned in 1706, and the allies had attempted in 1746. He contemplated the formation of a combined Austrian, Spanish, Sardinian, and Neapolitan army, and calculated that while this was being formed Toulon could be held by a small British force together with such allied reinforcements as could be brought thither. But while he greatly underestimated the numbers needed, he overestimated both the strength of the prospective allied contingents and the readiness of the allies to co-operate in the design; and though his military adviser warned him that at least 50,000 men would be needed merely to hold Toulon, and though, too, the several allies, for all the subsidies they were receiving, did nothing, he persisted in his belief that the port could be held and that there was a prospect of an invasion by the combined armies. He therefore sent further reinforcements from the already exiguous disposal force. The conduct of Austria in this matter was particularly flagrant. Busily engaged, together with Prussia, in the dismemberment of Poland, she held back even the modest detachment she had offered, while at the same time she was pressing Great Britain hard for more naval support to her own separate operations in the Mediterranean. She was either blind to, or she ignored, the patent fact that if Britain were to be able to extend her support in the Mediterranean she must consolidate her command of the sea, and that the destruction of the French naval strength then at

[1] Wellington to Lord Bathurst, 26 Oct. 1813.

[2] For some extracts from Burke's letters see Appendix.

Toulon was the essential and the most rapid means of attaining that end. At a later date she assigned the misfortunes which led to her surrender in the Treaty of Campo Formio to the lack of British support at sea. That support she would have had if her purblind statesmen had been willing or able to act upon this simple principle.

There was still one further course open for the consideration of the British statesmen. The Duke of Richmond advocated striking directly at French sea power in its bases in western France—Brest, Cherbourg, l'Orient, Rochefort, Nantes, or Bordeaux. This was in the old tradition established by Drake at Cadiz and Lisbon, the tradition that, since the first object of Britain in any war must be to obtain command of the sea, the combined land and sea forces should make the destruction of the enemy's naval strength the primary object of their strategy. With excellent wisdom, too, he pointed out the need for ministers to make a plain and clear decision between the different strategical policies and not to attempt to pursue both a maritime and a continental strategy, 'for to attempt both is to do neither well': the eternal maxim, in fact, of singleness of purpose. Admiral Middleton was saying the same thing when he criticized the West Indian expeditions in June in 1795 as 'a system of unlimited conquest that cripples us everywhere and diverts the fleet from its natural course'.[1]

The wise advice to undertake one thing at a time was disregarded, as it has so often been disregarded. During the first years of the war the small disposal forces of the British army, numbering barely 20,000 men, were dissipated in many theatres and enterprises in Flanders, in the West Indies, at Toulon, and, finally, both too late and too little, on the coast of France.

Apart from the use of sea power to confer mobility upon the army and enable it to conduct attacks where interest or opportunity appeared to invite, it had also its individual function to perform of giving direct protection to shipping and attacking the shipping of the enemy. Orders were at once given to capture

[1] The Duke of Wellington at a later date rejected a proposal of Sir Sidney Smith to make a small diversionary landing in the south of France, reminding him that 'the only mode in which we can be successful is by the application of our means to one object'.

all French vessels wherever they were to be found, and, as there had been a bad harvest in France, to stop all neutral vessels laden with grain bound to French ports or to ports in French occupation—a repetition, it will be observed, of what had been done in similar circumstances in 1709. The neutral was not to be made to suffer, for the cargoes were to be purchased for British use. That the interpretation of international law is not infrequently governed by expediency rather than by principle is illustrated by the attitude towards the interdict on neutral trading adopted by Russia. In spite of her protest in 1780 against action of this nature, which she then characterized as an offence against the Law of Nations, she now approved it, finding her justification for doing that which she had previously condemned on the grounds that, as the corn trade of France had been taken over by the French Government, it was no longer a private trade. A similar swing of the legal pendulum from one doctrine to its opposite was at the same time made by France. In 1780, when the services of the neutral carrier had been of particular value to her and when political considerations favoured a different policy from that to which she had previously adhered, she had adopted the principle initiated by the northern Powers of 'Free ships, free goods'. But when war broke out in 1793 and it suited her that neutrals should be prevented from delivering goods, the Jacobin Government ordered its vessels to fall upon enemy and neutral alike, asserting that it possessed the right to interpret international law according to circumstances and proclaiming barefacedly that it was not the Law of Nations which should govern her procedure but the decrees promulgated by the executive of the moment. The 'exalted sentiments of the motives of humanity' had been appealed to by Russia when forming her League of Neutrals in 1780. These exalted sentiments carried little weight when expediency was cast into the opposite scale.[1]

To return to the use made by the British statesmen of their weapon of sea power. The reason for the order to seize all grain-loaded ships was, as said before, the temporary dependence of France on imported corn. It was the need for this corn that forced the Brest fleet to sea in 1794 in order to protect a great

[1] Cf. Sir Francis Pigott, *The Armed Neutralities . . .*, p. 316; also Richmond, *Imperial Defence and Capture at Sea*, chap. x, *passim*.

homeward-bound convoy of corn ships from America and so brought about the battle of the 1st of June. It is to be noted that, with this single exception arising out of the special situation of France's grain shortage, no attempt was made in this war to reduce France by cutting off food-supplies. For she was capable of producing her own food, or of getting what she needed by land. Such blockades as were declared in later stages of the war were confined to specified limited stretches of coast in French occupation and imposed for the purpose of stopping trade, or were blockades of fighting fleets in their harbours with the definitely military object of keeping them in harbour or giving them battle if they came to sea.

There is no record of the discussion, if discussion there was, of the Duke of Richmond's proposal to attack the French naval bases. It is possible to surmise that, with such a superiority as Britain possessed at sea, in conjunction with her two maritime allies, at the time of the outbreak of the war—a superiority increased in the autumn of 1793 by the losses of the French navy at Toulon—it was considered that what remained of the French navy could be effectively dominated by the combined sea forces alone, and that therefore there was no need to call upon the army to take a part in establishing the command of the sea or to prevent the revival of the French navy: more especially as Pitt was convinced that the war would be ended in one or two campaigns. If that were the assumption, it was to prove unfortunate and to err on the side of optimism. It was economic optimism to assume that France was so dependent on her colonial trade and the shipping engaged in it that she would be financially crippled, and her navy ruined, by the loss of the colonies and their produce. It was no less optimistic to assume that Britain's two maritime allies, both of whom had so recently been her enemies and had suffered at her hands, and were bound to her by very slight threads of temporary interests, would either prove effective in action or steadfast in conduct. Neither of these assumptions was fulfilled. In the winter of 1794 Holland went over to the enemy. In the spring of 1795 Spain made peace with France. A little more than a year later she declared war on Britain.

The defection of Holland had certain immediate results. It added the Dutch navy of forty-nine capital ships to the

diminished navy of France, and though the ships were mostly of the smaller types of capital ship, they were a far from negligible reinforcement of fighting strength. It resulted, too, in the enemy acquiring bases on the flanks of the routes through the North Sea leading north-about round Scotland and into the Baltic, and gave France, in addition, the prospective use of naval bases on the route to India, at the Cape of Good Hope and in Ceylon. The danger of a French occupation of the Cape had always been present in the minds of the British statesmen and of those engaged in the Eastern trade. It had led to the attempts and proposals in the last war to capture the Cape. Already in 1793 the East India Company had urged that the position should be secured in English hands, for they placed little reliance on any resistance that might be offered by the weak and inefficient garrison of the Dutch Company if an attempt should be made by the French to seize the place. At the same time the company recommended the capture of the two French island bases in the Indian Ocean, Mauritius and Bourbon. Nothing was then done, for there were already too many demands on the land and sea forces. But when in 1795 the republican party in Holland carried her into the arms of France, and the danger from the Cape ceased to be problematical and assumed a more definite character, an expedition was quickly dispatched to occupy the Cape in the name of the Stadtholder, as we in our day have seen Madagascar and Iceland occupied in order to prevent their use by the enemy. Ceylon was also dealt with. An expedition was sent from Madras which seized that important island in July. The object, it will be seen, of both of these captures was strategical: expansion of the colonial empire formed no part of the British aim. The Cape indeed, both then and at a later time, was looked on as a burden, useless as a colony, costly to hold, and a place whose possession was justified only, though fully justified, by the needs of sea power and security. 'I think it is physically impossible', wrote the Admiral at the Cape, 'it (the Cape) can ever be fruitful or produce articles of any consideration, the expectation of which would render it a prosperous or rich colony. . . . To me . . . it appears clearly that the colony, merely as a colony, can never be of any advantage to Great Britain. What advantage the Cape may be to us as a post, or what mischief it may be to Great Britain if in the hands

of another nation, are questions of a nature very distinct from colonial considerations.'[1]

We must now return to the events in the Mediterranean between 1794 and 1796. Though Spain had nominally been an ally during 1794, the bulk of the responsibilities for establishing the command of the Mediterranean had fallen upon the British fleet alone: for the Spanish fleet, after acting in a highly ambiguous manner at Toulon, had been occupied during 1794 and the spring of 1795 on the Spanish coast, in support of the army which was resisting a French invasion across the Pyrenees —a service which, since the Toulon fleet was held in port by the British fleet, could have been performed by a frigate force. As a consequence of the Spanish lack of co-operation when Toulon had been evacuated, seventeen French capital ships were not destroyed,[2] and these, though damaged, were restored into condition, with admirable skill and efficiency, by the French. The watching of this fleet could not be maintained without a base close at hand, and the obvious position was Corsica. Ministers therefore ordered its capture and sent an expeditionary force from England which, acting in conjunction with the anti-French Corsican parties, landed in the island in January. The conquest was not completed till the following August. A double purpose was served by its possession. The fleet obtained the base it needed, and the dockyard of Toulon was deprived of the timber and naval stores which were drawn from the island's forests. 'The loss to the French', wrote Nelson in 1795, 'has been great indeed: all the ships built in Toulon have their sides, beams, decks, and straight timber from that island . . . the tar, pitch and hemp were very much used in the yard at Toulon.' The French loss was also the British gain. 'Our naval yards will be supplied with excellent wood'—no small advantage when, as Nelson said in May 1795, 'another mast could not be got east of Gibraltar'. As the war progressed, and as further territories from the Baltic to the Ionian Sea which were sources of timber, spars, and stores came under the domination of France, the

[1] Admiral Curtis to Lord Spencer, 12 Oct. 1800 (*Spencer Papers*).

[2] 'Had the Spanish Admiral fulfilled what he engaged to do the whole [of the French fleet] would have been burned; but I am not now surprised at Don Langara's conduct as he told a very responsible person . . . that it might be for the interest of England to burn the French fleet but it was by no means the interest of Spain . . .' (Lord Hood to H. Dundas, Jan. 1794).

problem of providing the navy with these vital raw materials became as pressing as that of ensuring the supply of oil to-day. New Zealand, Australia, India, and Canada contributed their products of timber.

'The forests of the Empire saved England from disastrous consequences to her navy when the English woodlands and the regular foreign supply proved insufficient during the struggle with Napoleon. The experience of that decade reflects the wisdom of the men a century earlier who attempted to make the Empire self-sufficient in the matter of naval necessities, even if the cost might be greater.'[1]

The seriousness of the loss of Corsica was fully recognized in Paris, and steps were at once taken to attempt the recapture of the island; for with the Channel and North Sea routes closed by the British fleet, the French were deprived of the supplies of naval stores from the Baltic. The Brest fleet, thirty-four sail strong, was therefore ordered to the Mediterranean; an army of 18,000 men was assembled at Toulon. The fleet was shattered by a gale which drove it back to port, badly disabled, though not without having made a great number of prizes of British merchantmen. The immediate recapture of the island was regarded as so essential that so soon as some of the ships had been refitted a squadron of six sail was ordered to sail for a second attempt. Without waiting for the arrival of this reinforcement the Toulon fleet of fifteen sail put to sea to cover the passage of the army. The attempt failed. The fleet was intercepted by the British fleet, and a partial action was fought in which four of the French ships were lost: the remainder regained their base. Another defeat, again not decisive, in the Bay of Biscay in June—a combat arising from an attempt to pass a convoy through to Brest—convinced the French that it was useless to try to contest the command of the sea, and, as they had done in similar circumstances in the wars of Louis XIV and his successor, they once again adopted the strategy of direct attack on trade by strong squadrons of capital ships and scattered forces of numerous lesser vessels, both frigates and privateers. Though this form of war inflicted some heavy losses on British shipping, it did not prove crippling: its major effect was diversionary. It forced upon Britain a great dispersal of strength

[1] Albion, *Forests and Sea Power*, p. 368.

in convoys and cruisers, and made a demand upon both capital ships and cruisers which hampered the offensive action of the main body of the fleet.

The situation at sea deteriorated during the latter part of 1795. Spain made peace with France, obtaining from her an offer of a free hand to annex Portugal. As no British ministry could allow Portugal to be seized, a military reinforcement was at once sent to defend Lisbon. In the Mediterranean French squadrons cut up some British convoys badly, for it was not possible either to afford adequate escorting forces or to confine the French to port, owing, as Admiral Jervis wrote, to 'the impracticability of blocking a port at this season of the year, the coast of which is extremely dangerous with the wind on the shore'.

The effects of not having made the destruction of French sea power a primary object of British strategy, and of substituting for direct combined effort against the enemy fleets in their harbours the indirect and long-term action of attack upon what were assumed to be vital French resources in the colonies, can now be seen. The colonial campaigns lasted from 1793 to 1796. Though they deprived France of a proportion of her revenues and of some oversea bases, they did not result in crippling either the French State or the French navy. Bonaparte and his generals replenished the national coffers with the spoils and requisitions they extorted from the neighbours of France. The British army was crippled by disease, as Burke had foretold it would be. France was still able to fit out fleets and squadrons whose sallies from Brest, Rochefort, and Toulon to prey upon British shipping could not be prevented by blockade, though their efforts could be mitigated by the defensive systems of convoy and cruising. But defence, in its several forms, made very heavy demands upon the navy at a time when calls upon it were continually growing, as they invariably do grow in every great war. Austria and Sardinia were crying out for more naval support to their armies in the Adriatic and the Gulf of Lions, a squadron was needed in the North Sea to protect the Baltic convoys against the Dutch fleet, the supply route of the fleet in the Mediterranean was exposed to attack throughout its length from the Soundings to mid-Mediterranean. The fact that the navy was strained to the utmost in fulfilling these and other

needs was in no small measure due to the initial dissipations of effort and to the defensive strategy which was thereby forced upon the country.

In the spring of 1796, after the captures of the Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon, and some further positions in the West Indies—Grenada, St. Lucia, Demerara, and Essequibo—had given added strength to British sea power by depriving the enemy of bases and acquiring them for its own purposes, the traditional arguments once more came to life: should the country confine its efforts to the sea and to the furtherance of its own commercial interests or embark upon military operations on the Continent? Again there was a strictly 'maritime' school of thought which argued that Britain should think primarily in terms of commerce. Thus one writer argued that, with her command of the sea, she was in a position to direct the trade of the world into her own channels, to hold her own against all comers, and to reduce the powers of France and Spain by depriving them of the resources of oversea commerce. Secure at sea, directing her attention 'to navigation and trade, to manufactures, to agriculture which is the basis of all, and to the state of the labouring poor . . .', she could leave the military reduction of France to the continental Powers.[1] But a policy of semi-isolation in this form, or in any other, found no more favour with the Government than it had in earlier times. France, it was answered, with the friendships of Spain and Holland and with the Italian States under her thumb, would make herself mistress of the whole coast of Europe from the Sea of Marmora to the Texel. She would thus possess immense internal resources. The coastal routes would continue to be available to her shipping and, with the Scheldt, the Rhine, and other rivers as well as her canals at its disposal, her commerce would circulate freely throughout Europe. With all these advantages she would soon overtop Britain and give the law to the rest of the Continent.

'Her inventive genius would enable her to replace the tropical products denied her by the British command of the sea. She could find means to sap the foundations of British naval powers. A combination, perhaps an armed neutrality, would be formed in Europe

[1] *Annual Register*, 1796, pp. 194–7.

against her. To recover her eastern trade, means would be taken to divert it back from the Cape route to its old route through Persia and the Red Sea, and to exclude British merchandise from the ports of Europe. Of what use would it be to rule the waves in the face of such a confederacy directed by France and brought into existence by the monopoly of the ocean trade?'

Thus Napoleon's internal developments of industry and agriculture and his Continental System were foreshadowed ten years before they came into being. The policy of isolation was rejected.

The importance of the Mediterranean command increased in the spring of 1796 when Bonaparte, leaving Nice in March, swiftly carried his army to Savona with the object of invading Piedmont by way of the route leading inland across the Alpine passes at the point at which the Alps and the Apennines meet at their lowest altitudes. The function of the British fleet was then to co-operate with the Austrian army in the defence of Italy, and with that object the main body of the fleet watched an equal French fleet in Toulon while a detached squadron under Nelson threatened the coastal route of the French army's communications. The pressure of this squadron, in the words of a French historian, was 'très pernicieuse pour les Français, dont elle interceptait la marche par la route de la Corniche'.[1] The objects and intentions of the British command were made clear to the Austrian general by Nelson who informed him categorically that 'my squadron had no object whatever in view but the co-operation with his army' furnishing, *inter alia*, convoys for the army's provisions moving along the coast by sea; and that, if some of his ships should be lost in this work 'my admiral [Jervis] would find others and we should risk the squadron at all times to assist the general'.[2]

But while this service would be undertaken, and the march of the French along the coastal road could be impeded, it was not possible for the squadron, composed as it was of capital ships only and lacking a flotilla force, wholly to stop the flow of small craft of the enemy, which, creeping along in shore from port to port, carried supplies to the army under the protection of gunboats and coastal batteries. In their lack of knowledge of the incapabilities of the great ships to work close in shore the

[1] Bouvier, *Bonaparte en Italie.* [2] Nelson to Jervis, 13 Apr. 1796.

Austrians complained that the squadron was not doing its utmost, and failed to understand that the capture of a few, or even several, of the small enemy craft would be no compensation for the loss or disablement of two or three of the British squadron. 'The enemy would then be as much masters of the sea as it appears they are of the land, and Italy would be lost without a blow.'[1]

At the very moment when Nelson was thus writing, Italy was already being lost through the failure of the allies on land. Bonaparte's army had captured Savona and thereby deprived the fleet of a valuable base and of much of the supply of provisions from Tuscany on which it largely depended.

The steadily growing signs of Spanish hostility during the summer of 1796 caused ministers to consider whether, if she should declare war upon Britain, it would be possible to continue to maintain a fleet in the Mediterranean. The original purposes of that fleet had been to support, in conjunction with the Spanish fleet, the action of the allied armies, Austrian and Sardinian, and to protect British trade. In spite of the questionable conduct already referred to of the Spanish commander, during the operations at Toulon in 1793, Pitt had continued to assume that Spain was an ally on whose co-operation he could count. Thus, as late as March 1794, his conception of the sea strategy was that Spain would be responsible for the major efforts in the Mediterranean and off the Spanish Atlantic coast and Britain for the operations in the northern part of the Bay and the Channel.[2] The division of responsibility was wholly logical, if considered only from the points of view of naval strength and conveniently placed bases; for the Spanish fleet, greatly superior to the French in Toulon and with its bases at Cartagena and in Minorca, was fully capable of watching Toulon and the other French Mediterranean ports, and of providing cruising squadrons, bases on Ferrol or Corunna, to operate in the traditional cruising ground for the interception of French trade off Finisterre. In such an arrangement the British fleet in the Mediterranean would be responsible for the direct defence of British trade in that sea and for the other detached services in the Adriatic and off the coast of Naples,

[1] Nelson to Francis Drake, 19 Apr. 1796.

[2] Pitt to Grenville, 19 Mar. 1794 (*Dropmore Papers*, vol. ii, p. 533).

co-operating with the Spanish blockade when possible. The main British effort would be directed against the fleet in Brest and in exercising command in the Channel and North Sea. But the proposal ignored the Spanish temperament. Apart from Spanish lukewarmness nothing could have been more remote from Spanish naval practice than the maintenance of a vigorous blockade at sea and of continuous cruising in the Atlantic. Hence it came to nothing and, during 1794 and 1795, the Spanish fleet was diverted from its true strategical objective, the French fleet, and frittered away upon operations of a minor character off the Spanish coast.

In July 1796 Spain concluded a treaty of mutual support with France, the Treaty of San Ildefonso. By the terms of that treaty each Power engaged to assist the other, if called upon, with a squadron of fifteen ships of the line and a body of 24,000 troops. The British Cabinet, having no wish to add to its enemies, chose to ignore this plain departure from neutrality, but, in view of the probability that it would be followed by war, decided to withdraw the fleet from within the Mediterranean, basing it at Gibraltar, and evacuating Corsica. This decision was received with alarm by the Secretary of State for War, Dundas: 'It amounts to a distinct confession that whenever France and Spain are at war (which will always be the case when one is) we must abandon all connection with the Mediterranean and in truth with the whole south of Europe.' This, he went on to say,[1] would infallibly mean that the several Italian States, lacking the support of a British fleet, would be driven into the arms, and under the protection, of France: and that Portugal, taking alarm, would follow the same course, with grievous effects upon the British position at sea. 'The measure of not abandoning the Mediterranean is in my opinion so essentially connected with the present and future naval strength and glory of the country, that it ought to be preferred to every other service whatever which does not necessarily involve the security of our distant possessions.' He contended that it was possible to provide the force adequate for the purpose, which he put at thirty sail of the line. The First Lord dissented. In his opinion not only would that force be insufficient, but the necessary facilities would be wanting. The surrender of Naples

[1] Dundas to Spencer, 28 Oct. 1796 (*Spencer Papers*, vol. i, p. 320).

had deprived the fleet of the use of essential harbours in which to refit. Corsica, although still occupied, furnished no supplies of food, and the mere task of maintaining its garrison, in the face of a Spanish fleet at Cartagena, would demand the continuous service of nearly all the fleet to protect the convoys of supplies. Thus, Lord Spencer argued, the navy could not provide at the same time a fleet in the Mediterranean of the strength necessary to meet the combined Franco-Spanish fleets, calculated at some forty sail, maintain the superiority at home needed for the defence of the kingdom and its trade, protect Portugal, and sustain those operations in the colonial seas which were still in progress or in course of preparation. The Mediterranean must therefore be abandoned. Two fleets must be formed, one of thirty sail in the Channel to deal with the Brest fleet, the other, of the same size, at Lisbon, to deal with the fleet at Cadiz and protect Portugal and the convoys going to the garrison at Gibraltar.[1]

While ministers were still discussing whether the reinforcements necessary to meet the prospective appearance of a combined enemy fleet could be sent to the Mediterranean, the question of evacuation had already been solved by the facts of the situation. Spain had declared war, and a Spanish fleet of twenty-six of the line had entered the inland sea from Cadiz and joined the French fleet at Toulon. The British admiral, with a total force of fourteen ships only,[2] found himself confronted with a combined fleet of thirty-eight sail. The odds were too great, even making allowance for the known lack of training of the Spanish fleet and the want of cohesion that was to be expected from the fleets of the two nations. Corsica was therefore quickly evacuated and the fleet withdrawn to Gibraltar, though a garrison remained in the island of Elba till the following April: it, too, was then removed, since the need for that base ceased when the fleet was no longer in those seas. The Mediterranean was now a French lake and Bonaparte could justifiably rejoice. 'The expulsion of the English has a great effect upon the success of our military operations in Italy. We

[1] The important discussions between Pitt, Spencer, Dundas, and Grenville which took place in October and November 1796 will be found in *Spencer Papers*, vol. i, pp. 322–38. Cf. also *Dropmore Papers*, *passim*.

[2] Owing to a grave error of judgement on the part of an admiral commanding a detached force, the fleet was six sail short of what it should have been.

must exact more severe conditions from Naples. It has the greatest moral influence on the minds of the Italians. It assures our communications and will make Naples tremble, even in Sicily.' His expansive vision was not, however, confined to Italy. He saw clearly that it was Britain that constituted the principal obstacle to the completeness of the victory he sought and that it was she that must therefore be eliminated. While the Government in Paris was planning her overthrow by an invasion of Ireland from Brest, and of England from Dunkirk, he sought her reduction by throwing her out of India and depriving her of the Eastern trade. Already in the winter of 1796 his eyes were on Egypt.

The disposition of the fleet outlined by Lord Spencer was made in the winter. A strong fleet at home was to guard the country against such attacks as those made by Hoche and Humbert on Ireland and to cover the trade in the Atlantic approaches and in the Channel; another, with Lisbon as its base, had the duty as defined by Nelson, of 'the defence of Portugal and keeping in the Mediterranean the combined fleets'. This 'keeping in of the combined fleets' was also an intrinsic part of the defence of the kingdom, for the British fleet in the Straits' mouth lay in the way of a junction of the Cadiz, Toulon, and Brest fleets. Plainly, however, the dispositions were defensive: they gave no assistance to the Austrian ally in the Mediterranean; they threatened the enemy nowhere except in his Atlantic trade.

As the year 1796 drew towards its close the situation at sea became increasingly sombre. With the Mediterranean abandoned all British trade there had ceased. 'There is no security for British navigation', wrote Jervis, 'in any part of the Mediterranean, the Adriatic, the Morea, or the Archipelago, where everything is at the mercy of France.' There was a mutiny in the fleet due, mainly, to Parliament's persistent disregard of the grievances of the seamen in respect of recruitment, discipline, pay, and leave. At home the country was threatened with an invasion from Brittany by an army of 100,000 men, set free by the final crushing of the Vendéan revolt and whose passage was to be covered by the joint Cadiz and Brest fleets. That threat was disposed of on 14 February 1797 by Jervis's victory over the Cadiz fleet off Cape St.

Vincent, but a new trouble followed closely in its wake. In April Austria ceased her resistance. Without consulting her ally, to whose evacuation of the Mediterranean, indeed, she imputed the blame for her inability to continue the struggle, she, as Sardinia had already done, signed the preliminaries of peace with France. Belgium, upon whose independence from France Pitt had set so great and so traditional a store, passed into the hands of France; the great naval port at Antwerp became definitely a French base, and, in the Mediterranean, French sea power was strengthened. By the Treaty of Campo Formio, in which the peace was confirmed, France acquired the Ionian islands and the small Venetian navy. Napoleon now saw himself in a position to devote all his strength by both land and sea against Britain. With those island bases in his hands he could, he said, support the crumbling Turkish Empire so long as support was possible and, when the hour of dismemberment came, share in the spoils. Malta must next be taken. It was priceless. With Malta and Corfu he would be the master of the Mediterranean. At a later date, when Malta had been captured, a French writer described it as 'the Cape of Good Hope of the Mediterranean'. Then came Egypt. Egypt was 'the vulnerable point in England's armour'. Writing to the Directory he said: 'Now we must at once direct all our efforts to the Navy in order to destroy England. That done, Europe is at our feet.' The vital spot, whose loss would bring England to her knees was India. Egypt was the stepping-stone to India.

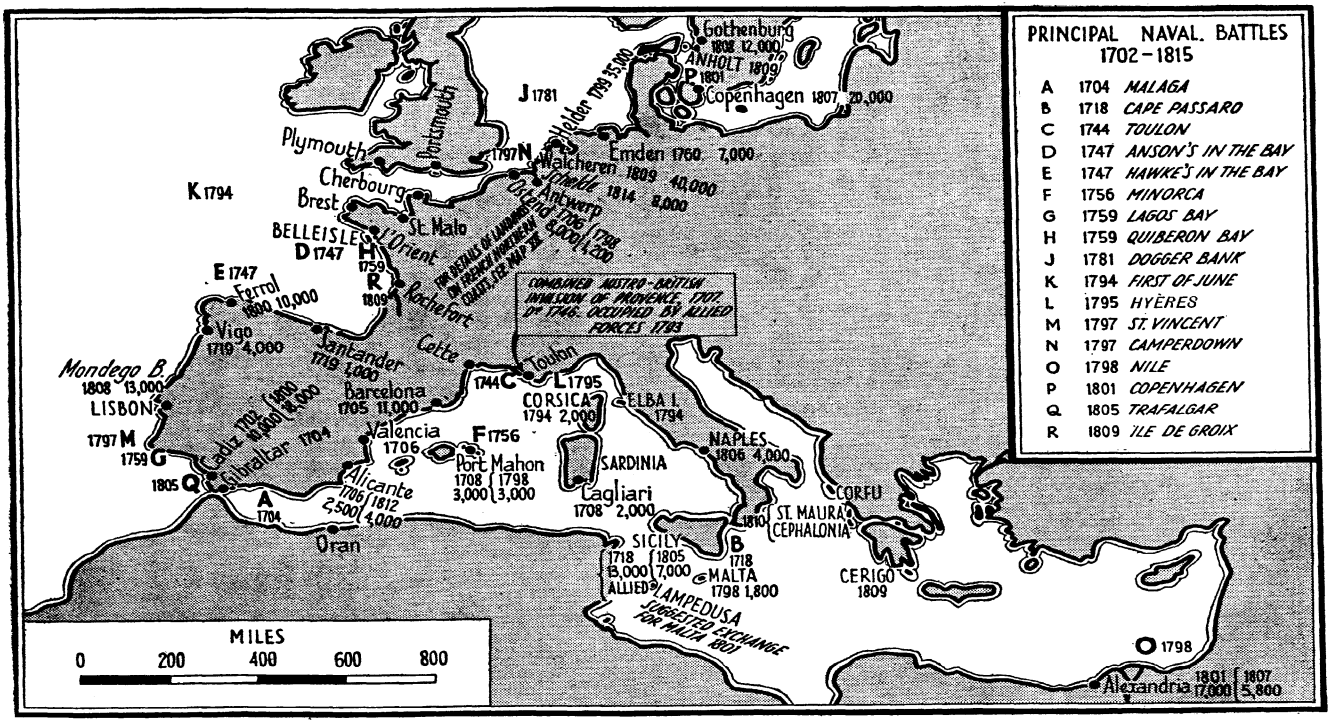
Though ministers in London were confident of the country's ability to resist invasion and any other forms of attack, they feared that the strain of the war might prove beyond the power of endurance of the people. In July 1797 therefore they sent Lord Malmesbury to Paris to investigate the possibility of bringing the war to an end. They were prepared, in order to bring about peace, to accept the situation in the Low Countries and to restore, with four exceptions, the several enemy colonies which Britain had conquered. These exceptions were those which were considered to be essential elements of British sea power—Trinidad, the Cape, Cochin, and Ceylon. But the Directory, flushed with victory and confident of continued success, would have none of this. It demanded the return of all the captured colonies without exception and, in addition, pay-

ment of compensation for the French vessels taken or destroyed at Toulon. British ministers regarded these demands as unacceptable. They refused them, and the war therefore continued.

How Britain should now fight with no ally other than Portugal, whose assistance was confined to giving Britain the use of her ports, was the problem; a problem rendered the more acute as Bonaparte was bringing all the pressure at his command to force Portugal to cease affording her that facility. It was plain to Lord Spencer that it was necessary 'to maintain our situation on the coast of Portugal and in the neighbourhood of the Cadiz fleet as long as we are able, and continue to seize any opportunity of disabling the force of Spain', but whether this would be possible if the Tagus were no longer available for the use of the fleet was gravely doubted by Lord St. Vincent; for he could see no other port where the stores of the fleet could be kept in security. 'My mind', he wrote, 'has been constantly occupied since the month of June, at which period this court [Lisbon] determined to make peace, in looking for means to provide for the fleet . . . and to employ it after the Tagus ceases to be a depot for the stores and provisions necessary for its support.' The storehouses at Gibraltar were exposed to bombardment, the Zaffarine islands—a possible base—furnished neither water, food, nor any kind of refreshment and were, moreover, too far from the scene of action, Cadiz—an objection which applied also to Gibraltar owing to the difficulty of getting out of the Straits on an emergency except in an easterly wind. St. Vincent even went so far as to say that if the Tagus must be abandoned, the fleet could not remain in those seas.[1] The importance attached to Portugal, both by British ministers and by Bonaparte, is expressed in a nutshell in this series of manœuvres. Fortunately Portugal held firm. The fleet continued its use of the Tagus.

In the eyes of one military thinker, Colonel John Bruce, the course which Britain should now pursue was to direct her efforts against the enemy fleet within its own ports. In a memorandum which he submitted, dated 25 December 1797, he said: 'Practice and experience seem to unite with the actual circumstances of Britain and its enemy in pointing out that, as we can no longer divide the armies of France by continental wars we ought

[1] St. Vincent to Spencer, 10 Jan. 1798 (*Spencer Papers*, vol. ii, p. 429).



MAP VI. PRINCIPAL CONJUNCT EXPEDITIONS EUROPEAN THEATRE, 1702–1815

The figures after the dates record approximately the number of troops landed. Where no figures are shown, numbers are small.

to attempt the destruction of the armaments in the havens where they are preparing for invasion.'[1] Though the proposal came to nothing it is interesting as an indication of the continuance of the traditional doctrine that Britain, when acting with allies, should use her sea power to weaken the continental enemy by diversions or eccentric attacks and, when acting alone, aim the blows of her combined arms against the enemy's naval power.

But a new situation was arising. There were hopeful prospects that the British isolation might be coming to an end. Austria, in the spring of 1798, was showing signs of returning to the struggle. She had been chafing for some time under the conditions imposed at Campo Formio, to which she now felt she had submitted with undue haste; conditions which were leading almost infallibly to the complete subversion of the whole of Europe. In March she inquired whether, if she re-entered the war, Britain would furnish her with subsidies, send a fleet into the Mediterranean, and be prepared to undertake to continue to fight for at least another year. Particular insistence was laid on the dispatch of a fleet as soon as possible: unless this were done, she urged, the French would immediately become masters not only of all Italy but also of the Levant.[2] Pitt and Grenville at once took the matter up and called on the First Lord for his opinion as to whether a Mediterranean squadron could be furnished. The First Lord considered it impossible. Though bases would be found in Sicily and the needs of provisions could be met, to do so would require the commissioning of at least seventy ships of the line; but the most that could be fitted was sixty-two, and there were not the men to man them.[3] For the moment, therefore, there seemed to be a deadlock, but within three weeks another factor entered into the situation. A formidable armament was reported in preparation at Toulon consisting of both ships and troops whose objective might be the Two Sicilies, Portugal, or Ireland—one of the two latter was thought the more probable. The fleet lying off Cadiz could neither prevent an expedition from Toulon from attacking

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, vol. vi, pp. 245–6.

[2] Prince Starhemberg to Grenville, 1 and 15 Apr. 1798 (*Dropmore Papers*, vol. iv, pp. 153, 168).

[3] Spencer to Grenville, 6 Apr. 1798 (*Spencer Papers*, vol. ii, p. 436).

Naples, nor from landing an army on the Mediterranean coast of Spain to march on Portugal, nor from slipping through the Straits and coming into home waters to attack Ireland. In one place, and one only, could all these widely separated objectives be covered—the point of departure of the enemy: Toulon. Considerable as the risks were of weakening either the fleet at home or that off Cadiz, the Cabinet decided they must be taken in order to counter the Toulon expedition. So the admiral commanding off Cadiz was ordered to detach a part of his fleet, or if he should think proper, take the whole, into the Mediterranean, to deal with the Toulon armament. The appearance of this force, so his instructions informed him, would at the same time check the expedition and encourage Austria to act. 'The appearance of a British squadron in the Mediterranean', wrote Lord Spencer, 'is a condition on which the fate of Europe may at this moment be stated to depend.' It was the indispensable means of bringing Austria back into the war and of protecting both Naples and Portugal.

'It is impossible not to perceive how much depends on the exertions of the great continental Powers. . . . If by our appearance in the Mediterranean we can encourage Austria to come forward again it is in the highest degree probable that the other Powers will seize the opportunity of acting at the same time and by such a general concert bring the war to an end less unfavourably than had seemed probable hitherto.'[1]

As fleets cannot operate without bases, the British minister at Naples was told that he should impress upon the King of the Two Sicilies and upon the Austrian representative that, unless they should afford the full use of their ports to the fleet, its indefinite continuation in the Mediterranean could not be guaranteed; and St. Vincent was authorized by the Cabinet to treat as hostile all ports and countries in Italy by whom these demands should be refused.[2]

The statesmen showed great courage in making this detachment. It involved withdrawing ships from home waters at a moment when the country lay under a threat of invasion and strong enemy fleets still lay in Brest and Cadiz, in spite of the

[1] Spencer to St. Vincent, 29 Apr. 1798.
[2] Grenville to Eden, 20 and 28 Apr. 1798.

victories off St. Vincent and Camperdown.[1] A eulogy sent by Lord Mornington from India was not excessive, 'I admire', he wrote after hearing of the Battle of the Nile, 'beyond all Greek, Roman, British or any fame, the provident, bold and (as it deserved) gloriously prosperous measure of reinforcing Lord Vincent in the face of a menaced invasion and of an existing rebellion at home. Never was a public measure taken with more wisdom and spirit.' It was brave also on the part of St. Vincent, who accepted the great responsibility of dividing his fleet. It has had a modern parallel in our own day in the decision to denude the country of its guns, armour, and men to defend Egypt in 1941. But if another coalition were to be brought into being, if Naples, Portugal, and, to a lesser degree, Ireland, were to be protected, the risk of invasion of England had to be taken. One thing was particularly impressed on the admiral—that, if he had to choose between keeping a watch on Cadiz and dealing decisively with the Toulon squadron, he was to give his preference to 'the defeat of the purpose of the Toulon armament'.

What was that purpose? Ministers could see three possible destinations—Naples, Portugal, and Ireland. Moltke's familiar saying that his experience was that when three courses appeared open to an enemy, a fourth course was usually taken by him, had its application to the Toulon armament. For there was a fourth course—Egypt. Egypt was not mentioned in the Instructions of 29 April, but evidence of an intention to send an army to India by way of the Red Sea reached London towards the end of May from several sources—the Cape, Mauritius, and India, and in intercepted letters from France—and on 10 June the much abused Dundas expressed what he called his 'perhaps whimsical' belief that Egypt and India were Bonaparte's successive objectives. Though it was then too late to alter the dispositions—the Toulon armament had already

[1] The state of the French invasionary forces on 21 March was as follows, distributed between the Dutch ports, Antwerp, Ostend, Dunkirk, and Havre:

Fighting ships		*Transports*		*Troops*	*Horses*
Frigates and corvettes	18	Cavalry	319	70,034	5,394
Gunboats	276	Infantry	718		

Desbrière, *Projets et tentatives de débarquement aux Îles Britanniques*, vol. i, p. 333.

sailed—they did already meet the situation, provided the detachment should reach the Gulf of Lions in time; for a fleet off Toulon would cover Egypt also. But in order to meet the threat to India, a second precaution was at once taken by sending a squadron round the Cape to intercept the French expedition in the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb.[1]

Time, as it always does in war, played its part in the course of these events. Owing first to the delay of three weeks in making the decision to send a squadron into the Mediterranean, and to the time necessary for ships from the Channel to reach Cadiz and take the place of those to be detached, Bonaparte had left Toulon before Nelson, with his detached squadron, had reached the Gulf of Lions.[2] Here is another of the 'ifs' of history. If the decision could have been made three weeks earlier, when the proposal to re-establish a Mediterranean fleet was first discussed, it is within the bounds of possibility that the battle fought at Aboukir would have taken place at sea somewhere south of Toulon. The fate of the unwieldy transport fleet would hardly be in doubt—with what eventual repercussions upon Anglo-French relations arising out of the Egyptian Question in later years it is easy to imagine.

Among the results of the destruction of the French fleet at Aboukir on 1 August 1798 and the restoration of the British command of the Mediterranean were that the Porte, who had remained neutral even when its province of Egypt had been invaded, declared war on France; that Naples and Russia joined the coalition; that a Russo-Turkish fleet entered the Mediterranean and proceeded to eject the French from Corfu and from the Venetian territory on the coast of Dalmatia. Malta was then closely watched, the valuable base of Port Mahon was captured by an expedition, ordered by Dundas, and executed by a force from Gibraltar. Of no small importance, in view of the financial situation, was the revival that began in the trade with Turkey. Even before the withdrawal of the fleet in 1796 the French privateers had inflicted severe losses on the trade, owing to the want of frigates: in May of that

[1] For the events concerning this expedition cf. *Spencer Papers*, vol. iii.

[2] The Toulon armament sailed on 19 May. The reinforcement from England reached Cadiz on 24 May and joined Nelson, who had been sent in advance with three ships to watch Toulon, on 4 June.

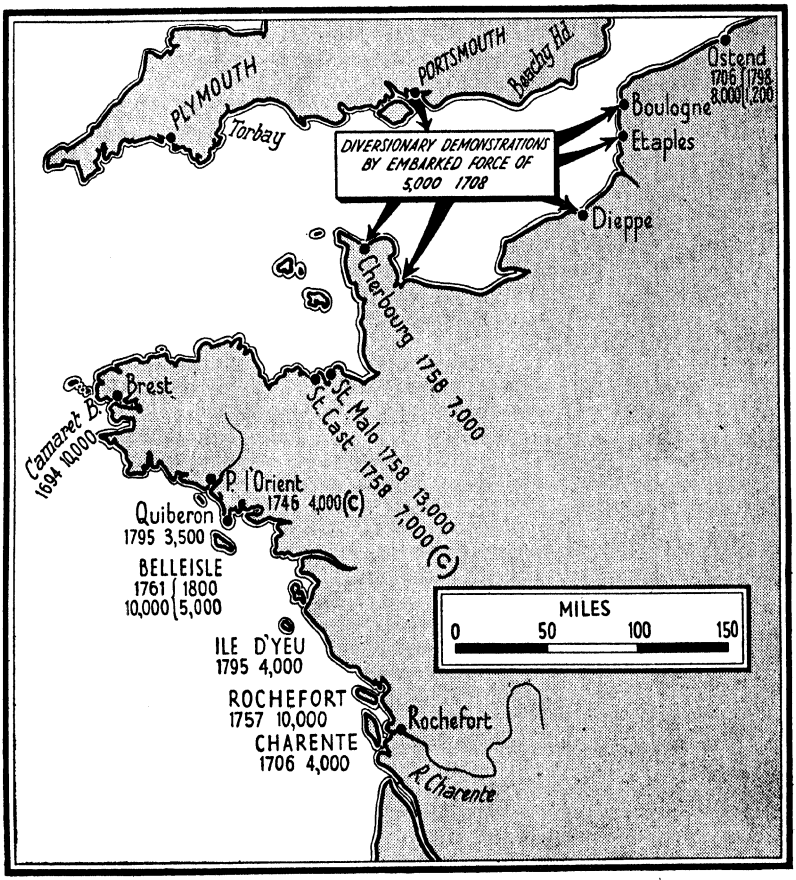
year Jervis had written that 'the numerous convoys I am obliged to furnish to every part of the Mediterranean and Levant require a greater number of cruisers than I fear I can be supplied with'. After Spain entered the war on the side of France in 1796 insurance rates had mounted steeply, and in 1797 the Navigation Acts were again suspended in order to enable British goods to reach Turkey in neutral bottoms. This attempt to obtain security by methods other than armed strength proved illusory, for the French, for all their earlier attitude towards 'Free ships, free goods', paid no more heed to the neutral flag as a protection than the British themselves had done. Safety only returned to the trade when the Battle of the Nile restored the command of the sea.[1]

The recovery of the command of the Mediterranean coincided with the conclusion of the costly and ineffective West Indian strategy. The defence of the West Indian islands was thenceforward to rest upon the cover afforded by the strong fleet in the western approaches from which detachments could be thrown off if an enemy threatened them. With the entry into the war of the new recruits, Russia, Turkey, and Naples, the Cabinet had to decide the form of its strategy for the coming year, 1799. Though the threat to India was removed by the appearance of a Russo-Turkish fleet in the Levant and the isolation of the French army, cut off in Egypt and without shipping to carry it elsewhere, there were many claims upon British sea power in the Mediterranean. Four main objects were indicated to the Naval Commander-in-Chief: the protection of the coasts of the Two Sicilies in active co-operation with the Austrian and Neapolitan armies; the cutting off of all supplies and means of escape of the French army in Egypt, which, it was thought, would be starved into surrender—for it was not foreseen that the resources of that country would be

[1] British trade with Turkey:

Year	*Exports to Turkey*	*Imports from Turkey*
1796	£132,796	£150,184
1797	23,532	104,835
1798	58,583	42,285
1799	200,509*	33,091
1800	157,456	199,773

* The increase in exports mainly due to supplies of warlike stores, sent after Turkey declared war (Wood, *A History of the Levant Company*, p. 179).



MAP VII. PRINCIPAL CONJUNCT EXPEDITIONS, CHANNEL AND ATLANTIC COASTS, 1702–1815

capable, as they were made capable by the able and energetic Kléber, of supporting the army; the blockade of Malta; and co-operation with the Russian and Turkish forces in the Archipelago. Of these, the most important was clearly defined. The admiral was told that 'the protection of the coasts of Sicily and Naples, and an active co-operation with the Austrian armies, are the principal objects to which a principal part of the squadron should be most particularly directed', and he was strictly enjoined 'in every possible situation, to give the most cordial and unlimited protection and support to his Majesty's allies, to exert himself to the utmost to preserve a good intelligence between them, and most carefully to avoid giving to any of them the smallest cause for suspicion, jealousy or offence'. The doctrine of international co-operation could not have been more categorically or correctly expressed.

While these were the principal objects assigned to the Mediterranean fleet, ideas were moving, during the winter of 1798, towards an active policy of attack on the fleets of the enemy in their naval bases in the North Sea and Atlantic. A French military writer has interpreted the British strategy in these terms: 'From the month of December 1798 until the autumn of 1800 a period stretches which might be called that of British supremacy, as the British land and sea forces acted in a generally offensive manner; and the policy of the Cabinet of St. James's is more arrogant than ever.'[1] A contemporary draft of instructions indicates the broad intentions of the strategy: 'Under the present circumstances of the war in Europe it has been judged advisable that the efforts of this country should be directed as much as possible to the destruction of the enemy's naval forces.' The first objective selected was the Dutch fleet in the naval base in the Helder. Russian co-operation for a vigorous attack upon Holland in 1799 was agreed upon. The objects of the expedition were defined to be the destruction of the Dutch fleet, the ejection of the French from Holland, thus *inter alia* depriving them of their naval bases, and, as one of the consequences of this eccentric attack, the diversion of enemy troops from Swabia, Switzerland, and Italy to the benefit of the allied armies in those theatres.

Such then was the broad outline of the intended naval

[1] Desbrière, *Projets et tentatives . . .*, vol. ii, p. 229.

strategy for the coming year. But there was one gap in the international front. Though the return of the British fleet to the Mediterranean had been so strongly urged by Austria, its reappearance, followed though it was by the great victory of the Nile, did not move her to come promptly into the war. She had already made a defensive treaty with Naples in May, but even by the end of the year 1798 she had not definitely joined the coalition, and was engaged together with Russia in hard bargaining for increased subsidies: a demand in which Prussia, with sublime impudence, joined on the score of having exercised a 'benevolent neutrality'. A tendency on the part of Britain's continental allies to fail to recognize the magnitude of the contribution which her command of the sea makes to the common cause is no rarity, even in modern times. Dundas most strongly resented these proposals and expressed his objection to the payment of vast subsidies to allies who, only too often, had applied them not to the common cause but to the furtherance of their own particular interests: in 1794 Malmesbury had similarly observed that such semblance of activity on the part of Mollendorff's army as took place when the British subsidies fell due was followed by a rapid relapse after their payment.[1] Dundas now called attention to the fact that, though Britain had given help in various forms to her allies, it was by her own unaided efforts, at sea and by land, that she had achieved her own security, and that the cost of the fleet which she had recently sent to the Mediterranean was 'in truth, as much for the other Powers of Europe in general as for the separate interest of this country. . . . It may fairly be stated to Russia and Austria that this country will, in the expense of that fleet, feel that it is already contributing its full quota as a subsidy for the carrying on the war on the continent.' Still, he was not averse from furnishing a moderate, but smaller, subsidy than that asked for, provided those Powers would undertake to co-operate with Britain in such a way as would serve the common object of bringing an end to the war. As examples he suggested the use of Russian troops to throw the French out of Holland, participation in the capture of Malta, the defence of Switzerland, the capture of Brest, and even the opening of new markets in South America in order to strengthen the financial system by

[1] *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. i, p. 250.

means of which alone the payment of subsidies was rendered possible.[1]

Russian co-operation in the proposed attack in Holland was arranged, as we have seen, but Austrian hesitations and bargaining continued until the choice was taken out of her own hands in March 1799 by the French Directory which, seeing how events were tending, declared war upon her. So, though the re-establishment of British sea power in the Mediterranean did not directly, or immediately, bring Austria into the coalition, its effect was eventually to bring about that desired result. The year 1799 therefore witnessed the opening of the new phase of offensive warfare. A combined Anglo-Russian naval and military force was sent to the Texel. It achieved that part of its purposes which related to the Dutch fleet, capturing nearly all of it that had survived the battle of Camperdown, but it failed in its other objects of ejecting the French from Holland and of creating an effective diversion. While the reason for the failure lay in part in the conduct in the field, in the disagreements and want of co-operation between the British and Russian generals and the inefficiency of troops, it was due also, and in a large degree, to the delays which preceded the dispatch of the expedition; and these in turn arose to a great extent from the shortage of shipping. Shipping was, as it has been on other occasions, the bottleneck, and the demands upon it were great. British tonnage was called on to provide the transport of the Russian troops from the Baltic to Holland, and because enough was not available to bring them all at the same time, they arrived slowly and in driblets. At the end of June, when the campaigning year was already well advanced, Grenville was writing to his brother in Germany urging him to do all that lay in his power to procure ships in the Baltic 'for here it is but too evident that we shall be miserably deficient. The difficulty that is stated on this head of transports exceeds all imagination . . .'[2] One effect of the delay in launching the expedition was that it started too late to create the desired diversion for the Austrians. The troops did not land till 27 August. By then the Austrians had already been beaten at

[1] *Dropmore Papers*, vol. , p. 434.

[2] Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 26 June 1799 (ibid. vol. iv, p. 204). Cf. also *Spencer Papers*, vol. iii, part IV, *passim*.

Novi. Few French troops appeared in Holland until 10 September.

Pitt, with his characteristic optimism, had expected that the campaign in Holland would be finished in time to follow it up with an attack by the combined forces on the fleet in Brest. There were excellent reasons for such an attack at that moment. A French fleet which, having slipped out of Brest in March, had made an extensive raid into the Mediterranean and fluttered every naval dovecot from the Soundings to Gibraltar, Malta, Sicily, and the Levant, had just returned to Brest, bringing with it a Spanish squadron.[1] The opportunity of destroying the whole of this combined fleet now appeared open. The elimination of this perpetual threat was greatly desired and Pitt expressed the hope that, in order that the projected attack on Brest should not be interfered with, the allies would hold the French armies firmly in Switzerland. If Brest were taken and the fleets there destroyed, 'we may afterwards look with security to a limited and defensive war till some new order of things works itself out in the interior of France'. Some diversionary blows in the Mediterranean in conjunction with Russian forces might be attempted. Dundas inclined to the same view. He hoped that a combined Anglo-Russian force of 8,000 men would be available in the late spring of 1800, but what he particularly wanted now was 'one splendid attempt, at one stroke to annihilate the naval force of France and Spain'.[2] If that should be successfully accomplished 'it will do more than anything else to shake the power of France to the foundation'. But as this could not be done before the winter, or until Russia was ready, and as she needed time to put her army in order, the French should in the meantime be kept occupied with a series of threats. 'The Walcheren, Belleisle, Cadiz, Tenerife [expeditions] and a moving army of 10,000 men in the Mediterranean should effectively answer that object.'

Thus, in the eyes of three of the British ministers—Pitt, Grenville, and Dundas—who bore the most responsibility for the strategy to be employed, the destruction of the Brest fleet

[1] For a full and well-analysed account of this raid cf. G. Douin, *La Campagne de Bruix en Méditerranée, Mars–Août 1799* (1923). For British information and movements, *Spencer Papers*, vol. iii, pp. 43–103.

[2] Dundas to Grenville, 20 Sept. and 20 Oct. 1799 (*Dropmore Papers*, vol. v).

figured as the most important object. Its purpose was not diversionary but primary—Pitt, indeed, we saw estimating the campaign in Switzerland in a diversionary sense in order to favour the capture of Brest. But the execution of the attempt depended largely upon Russian co-operation: and that was refused. The Russian army which had taken part in the campaign in Holland, after wintering in the Channel Islands, had been withdrawn in a huff to their own country and the scheme upon Brest had to be dropped. Then there was indecision. Proposals now included an expedition to the coast of Brittany, an attack at the mouth of the Seine, the capture of Belleisle, and the dispatch of a force to the Mediterranean to co-operate with Austria. When the spring of 1800 arrived, the Second Coalition was already a bruised reed. A total lack of understanding and confidence existed between Austria and Russia, Russian co-operation with Britain in the North Sea had ceased, and, in the Mediterranean, the Russian fleet was busy with the seizure of the Ionian islands, to the disgust of Nelson who wished to have its help in the blockade of either Malta or Egypt. The Austrian minister, Thugut, would give no indication or information of the Austrian intentions, but kept the secrets of his country's intended strategy locked within his own breast. In the absence of any attempt at co-operation on the part of Britain's two principal continental allies and the studied neutrality of Prussia, ministers had to decide what they could best do with their own forces alone. The decision which was eventually made in the beginning of 1800 was to capture the island of Belleisle. Besides acting as a diversion in favour of Austria, the intention was to secure a base from which the Chouans, who were once more active, could be furnished with supplies of arms and ammunition. That operation was begun in June. Before it had been completed it was countermanded by Dundas, who ordered the forces to be transferred to the Mediterranean, where they arrived too late to avert the Austrian defeat at Marengo. The strategy of attack on the bases of the enemy was then resumed. Another expedition was sent from England in August to capture the Spanish base at Ferrol. It was landed without opposition but re-embarked without fighting, the operation appearing too formidable. In September yet another expedition was sent from the Mediterranean to take Cadiz, but

there reports of a plague in the city deterred the commander from landing.

This succession of unhappy failures to make use of the country's amphibious strength, whereby a disposable force amounting to some 80,000 men effected nothing, was a severe disappointment. Though the purposes the ministers had in view were of the traditional type and, in the absence of any allied co-operation, were sound in principle, they were rendered futile by lack of decision and constancy, dissemination of force, long delays, and insufficient preparation. Moreover, the particular form of warfare, the amphibian, did not commend itself to contemporary military opinion. These alone, however, were not the whole reason why sea power, at this stage of the great struggle, was unable more effectively to influence events. Austria's cold and studied distrust and jealousy prevented the making of any plans or preparations for giving her some direct form of support from the sea. The battle of Marengo was a close-run affair in which the presence of even a small British force might have tipped the scales in favour of the Austrian army. Such a force could have been in those parts, but, in the absence of any intimation of the intended Austrian campaign, it was spending its energies elsewhere. 'If Mr. Thugut', wrote Grenville, 'could have brought his mind to act with us as allies, and to say distinctly that he might want assistance in Italy, Sir Ralph Abercrombie and his army might have arrived before Genoa as soon as the Austrian operations began there, and would unquestionably have saved Italy.'[1] The only support which sea power was therefore able to give in this campaign was to blockade Genoa and compel the surrender of the French garrison: it was deprived of the power to use its most formidable means of exerting influence, the movement by sea of a military force to any selected spot, through the prejudiced or confused outlook of Britain's ally. The fall of the Second Coalition was in no small degree due to this cause. Beaten at Hohenlinden on 3 December 1800, Austria made peace on 9 February 1801.

Though the attacks designed against the naval ports of Brest, Ferrol, and Cadiz had failed, the enemy fleets and squadrons in those ports and at Dunkirk were greatly crippled through want of supplies, owing to the harassing action of British light

[1] *Dropmore Papers*, vol. vi, p. 300.

forces in the Bay and the Channel. The effective British command of the Channel deprived Brest of the naval stores normally obtained from the Baltic and the fleet there had to depend on what could reach it the from ports in the south of the Bay—Nantes, Rochefort, and Bordeaux—brought thither by coastal convoys hugging the coast and protected by some heavy ships and frigates; and these were harried by the British light squadrons. But these ports alone could not furnish many of the needs of the fleet, particularly the spars and timber of which the Baltic was the source; and as that supply was cut off, it had already become necessary in 1799 to lay up the frigate squadron in Dunkirk and send its rigging, spars, and such stores as could be carried by road to Brest. 'Great convoys of waggons, loaded with cordage and stores of all sorts, arrived every day by land', wrote a French observer, and though by these efforts it proved possible to equip the ships at Brest, it was at the cost of long delays, great expenditure of effort, the practical immobilization of the frigate squadrons at Dunkirk and Havre, and the almost complete denudation of the storehouses at Brest. In February 1800 Captain Keats, who commanded the light inshore squadrons, was informed of the Admiralty's 'great satisfaction that by the exertions of the squadron you have been enabled to intercept so successfully the supplies sent from the southern ports for the supply of the fleet at Brest'. Among the reasons for which Napoleon desired to postpone a resumption of the war after the Peace of Amiens was his pressing need to refill his naval storehouses. The important part which the lesser classes of vessel, the cruisers and flotilla, play in exercising control is well illustrated in this coastal campaign, together with the truth of the remark of the naval historian James, quoted earlier, that sea power is not correctly measured solely in terms of numbers of capital ships.[1]

At the end of the year 1800 the Cabinet found itself again threatened with an attempt on the part of the northern Powers to deprive the country's sea power of those rights by the exercise of which it had been able to weaken the enemy's navy. If the claims put forward by the Empress Catherine in 1780 which, *inter alia*, had excluded naval stores from the goods defined as

[1] Cf. G. Douin, *La Campagne de Bruix en Méditerranée*, pp. 36–9; J. Tramond, *Revue Maritime*, June 1922, p. 759; *Spencer Papers*, vol. iii, p. 358.

contraband had been admitted, and if neutral vessels had been at liberty to supply the fleets in the French harbours with the materials of which they were in need, that crippling of the enemy fleet would not have been possible. These claims and others, including the right of neutrals to immunize their ships from search by putting them in convoy under naval protection, were now reasserted by the northern Powers, Russia, Sweden, Prussia, and Denmark, whose fleets numbered in all some 123 capital ships and 89 frigates besides nearly 180 smaller armed vessels. This force, formidable though it appears on paper, was by no means so formidable in fact. The several fleets were both unready and scattered, and even if all the ships which were in a condition for sea could have been assembled in one body, its strength as a fighting force, composed as it would be of ships of so many nationalities and unaccustomed to working in company, was far less. The British Cabinet estimated a force of fifteen ships of the line sufficient enough to meet the combination.[1] It was thus no act of hardihood on the part of ministers to accept the challenge of this so-called 'League of Armed Neutrals' whose object it was to close the Baltic to British trade, cut off the supply of corn—a matter of no small importance as there was then a great scarcity in England—and establish the right to supply the enemy with the naval stores he needed. The share which Prussia took in this scheme was to close the port of Hamburg to British shipping, and thither the King marched an army.

Pitt was not dismayed by this display of force. He met the League's attempt to draw the teeth of British sea power with an uncompromising rejection of its demands. He refused, as his predecessors from Elizabeth onwards had refused, to accept the doctrine of 'Free ships, free goods'. He stood firmly on the common-sense principle that contraband of war was not confined to military equipments but included also naval equipments. He maintained that a port was under legitimate blockade when the presence of enemy force at sea made entry to it dangerous.[2] He denied that a neutral might immunize his

[1] James estimated that not more than forty-one ships in all were fit for the sea in the Baltic, and that 'only a very happy combination of circumstances' could have assembled as many as twenty-five in one spot (*Naval History*, vol. iii, p. 43).

[2] As Lord Lyons, during the Civil War in America, mentioned that the Northern blockade of the Southern ports was a legitimate blockade, for precisely the same reason.

shipping from visit and search by the mere act of accompanying it with an armed vessel of the State, the word of whose commander would establish the licit character of its cargoes. Though Fox, in 1782, had made some concessions to Russia, in the particular circumstances of the then situation, the country being then at war under disadvantageous conditions with three powerful maritime States, this, he maintained was far from constituting a precedent for all time: it was a temporary expedient, not a surrender of principle. Now was no time to sacrifice the interests of Britain at the shrine of Russian merchants.

'Shall we allow entire freedom to the trade of France? Shall we suffer that country to send out her £12,000,000 of exports and receive her imports in return to enlarge private capital and increase the public stock? Shall we allow her to receive naval stores undisturbed and to rebuild and refit that navy which the valour of our seamen has destroyed? . . . Four nations have leagued to produce a new code of maritime laws, and in defiance of the most solemn treaties and engagements, which they have endeavoured to force arbitrarily upon Europe. . . . The question is whether we are to permit the navy of our enemy to be recruited and supplied, whether we are to suffer blockaded fleets to be furnished with warlike stores and provisions, whether we are to suffer neutral nations, by hoisting a flag upon a sloop or fishing boat, to convey the treasures of South America to the harbours of Spain or the naval stores of the Baltic to Brest and Toulon.'[1]

Pitt was supported by his great opponent, Fox: 'I have no hesitation in saying that, as a general proposition, free bottoms do not make free goods, and that, as an axiom, it is to be supported neither by the Law of Nations nor by common sense.' Lord Grenville was equally plain. The League of Armed Neutrality, he said, assumed the right to establish a new code of maritime rights, and to support by force a system of innovations prejudicial to the most cherished interests of the British Empire. If Britain were to give way, 'we may as well disarm our navy at once and determine to cede without further conquest all that we have taken as a counter-balance to the continental acquisitions of France'.[2]

[1] *Parliamentary History*, 1801, pp. 1126 et seq.
[2] *Dropmore Papers*, vol. vi, p. 400.

The Cabinet therefore stood firm. They did not confine their action to a passive refusal of the League's claims but took prompt steps to break up the northern coalition itself. Preparations were made for the capture of the Danish settlements in India and the Danish and Swedish islands in the West Indies where St. Bartholomew, St. Thomas, St. Martin, St. John's, and Santa Cruz were taken by a force sent in March from Antigua. A fleet of fifteen sail was sent to the Baltic.

Whether a fleet alone would be able to bring about the desired result in the Baltic was doubted by St. Vincent, who said that unless it carried 20,000 of the country's best troops under an able commander it would do nothing. He placed no reliance on bombardment alone. 'Shells thrown from ships are impotent weapons and will be laughed at when the first consternation is over'—a forecast that came very near fulfilment on 2 April. Thanks, however, to the combination of Nelson's skill and courage, together with a considerable measure of bluff in the course of the negotiations after the battle of Copenhagen, Denmark was induced to sign an armistice. The fleet, with its rear thus secured, could then proceed up the Baltic to deal with the Russian fleet at Reval, but by the time it reached that port the Russians had withdrawn into the strongly defended fastness of Cronstadt. Action, however, was now no longer needed, for assassination had removed the hostile Czar and the new ruler was well disposed to Britain and ready to recognize her rights at sea. Sweden also agreed to negotiate; Prussia withdrew her troops from Hamburg. Britain, while she made some concessions, maintained her rights; but among the concessions privileges were extended to Russia in the carriage of naval stores. This was strongly denounced by Grenville as a departure from principle and as a measure which, by specially favouring one Power, would give rise to great difficulties in the future with both Holland and America.[1] But the Armed Neutrality was dissolved.

While ministers were thus upholding the country's maritime rights in the north of Europe another problem affecting them was arising in the Mediterranean. In September 1800 the French garrison of Malta, which had been closely blockaded for two years, was starved into surrender. As yet, as late at least

[1] Grenville to Hawkesbury 15 July 1801 (*Dropmore Papers*, vol. vii, p. 30).

as October 1800, Britain had expressed no desire to retain the island: she was prepared to return it to the Knights of St. John or to transfer its possession to the Czar; but for the present a British garrison was established there. Russia, though she had played no part in the siege, having employed the fleet and army she had in the Mediterranean to purposes of her own interests in the Ionian islands, now set out her claim to Malta. For the time nothing came of the claim, but the question was to embitter Anglo-Russian relations at a later date and seriously to affect the formation of the Third Coalition in 1804.

The set-back which Napoleon's schemes had received since the British had recovered the command of the Mediterranean induced him to turn his attention to Britain's position in Portugal. Spain was persuaded to invade Portugal; the province of Alemtejo was occupied, and British shipping was expelled from the Portuguese ports. To compensate in some degree for the loss of the use of the Tagus a British expedition was sent to occupy Madeira, on the understanding that the occupation was for the period of the war only; and British garrisons were placed in the Portuguese ports in the East Indies.

With Malta thus firmly held and with forces released from its siege, the Government decided to undertake the expulsion of the French army from Egypt. They were not deterred by the massing of French troops on the coast of the Channel, threatening invasion, but trusting to the protection of the fleet and flotilla they stripped the country of troops to form an army for Egypt. The expedition assembled at Gibraltar after some tedious delays due, in part, to shortage of shipping, and did not leave the Rock until October 1800, or reach Egypt until 2 March 1801, having spent some time in training the combined force at Marmarice. Six days later the landing was made, and on the 19th the British army marched into Alexandria.

In conjunction with this main expedition, a secondary expedition designed to co-operate with it was in progress. The small squadron which had been sent from England[1] to the Red Sea in July 1798 to intercept Bonaparte's army if it should move towards India by that route had been exercising a useful influence, out of proportion to its size, in the Eastern theatre. Its presence had had a steadying effect upon the Arab rulers—'the

[1] *Vide ante*, p. 198.

Sherriff of Mecca, the Imaum of Muscat, the Bashaw of Bagdad and the other smaller princes', as the commodore described them—whose inclinations to seize the opportunity to attack their Turkish overlords were kept in check by the pressure which the squadron could bring to bear through its power of interrupting the food supplies from Upper Egypt, on which the Arab Powers depended. The Arabs also constituted a threat to the French army in Egypt, who feared an irruption of wild desert warriors into Kosseir from across the Red Sea, supported by the British squadron. 'The English in the Red Sea', wrote Desaix in May 1799, 'may cause us much anxiety and we must redouble our efforts against that place. . . . If they are masters at sea, the English can vomit thence thousands of fanatical Moslems whom it will be difficult to subdue. . . . Au nom du ciel, occupez Kosseir.'[1] In India, as soon as the threat to that country was removed by the battle of the Nile and the internal dangers dissipated by the capture of Seringapatam in 1799, proposals, emanating from the Governor-General, had been afoot for the capture of the French and Dutch naval bases in the east, Mauritius and Batavia; but when the news that Austria had made peace reached Calcutta the Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, at once perceived that, since no further military co-operation with her on the coasts of the Mediterranean would now be called for, the troops in the Mediterranean might be required to act elsewhere; and that a probable employment for them would be to expel the French from Egypt. If that should be undertaken, the forces in India might be required to create a diversion from the Red Sea in Upper Egypt—the thing which, as we have seen, Desaix had feared when he cried for the occupation of Kosseir. The projected expedition to Batavia was not yet ready—there had been difficulties in finding sufficient tonnage to carry the 3,000 men though the ports of India were ransacked for ships—but it was assembling at Trincomali, where it was equally well placed to move either to Java or the Red Sea, as circumstances might dictate. In the second week of February 1801, when the expedition had just been made ready to depart, the expected orders from London, dated 10 October, arrived, and the expeditionary

[1] For the operations and influence of this squadron on the situation in Egypt, Turkey, and Arabia cf. *Spencer Papers*, vol. iv, part iii.

force sailed almost at once for the Red Sea, proceeding by way of Bombay to complete its numbers. Reaching the sea in detachments during May and June, it was joined by a further force from the Cape of Good Hope, bringing the whole body up to about 6,000 men, and these eventually reached the Nile at Kena in July; but by then Cairo had already fallen. Though the diversionary object aimed at was thus not achieved, the campaign has certain points of particular interest in the example of the initiative and foresight of the Governor-General, the flexibility which sea command confers, the importance of time, and of the need for a sufficiency of shipping if the benefits of command at sea are to be reaped.

The Egyptian campaign was the last major operation in which British sea power was engaged up to the Peace of Amiens. The news of the British victory did not reach London till 2 October. The Addington ministry, eager for peace, had not waited to be informed of how matters were progressing in Egypt and had already signed the preliminaries of the peace. This peace, thus hastily arranged, surrendered all the British conquests except Trinidad and Ceylon, gave the Cape back to the Dutch and Malta to the Knights of St. John. All it obtained in return for these sacrifices was Bonaparte's assurance that Naples and the Roman States would be evacuated and his recognition of the independence of Portugal, Turkey, and the Ionian islands. Grenville was pessimistic and Pitt mildly optimistic, the former saying that 'at no period of the greatest difficulty did I entertain an idea of agreeing to concessions that can be named with these', the latter seeing nothing very materially to regret but the loss of the Cape of Good Hope. He salved his doubts with the thought that 'the protection given to helpless allies places the character of the country on high ground, and makes our concessions, though great, appear a sacrifice to good faith and generosity rather than the effect of timidity and weakness'.[1]

[1] Pitt to Spencer, 1 Oct. 1801. For comments on the treaty cf. *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. i, pp. 305–7.

VII

THE NAPOLEONIC WAR, 1803–15

THE Treaty of Amiens was assumed to herald a long, and even permanent, peace. 'This is not an ordinary peace', Addington is said to have assured the French representative, General Lauriston: 'it is a reconciliation between the two first nations of the world.'[1] But though the British Prime Minister thus hoped and believed that the country could now look forward to years of peace, he realized that 'vigilance, prudence and caution are still necessary'. Still, in the expectation of its lasting, great reductions were made in the navy by the First Lord, St. Vincent. Shipbuilding yards were closed, the purchase of timber and stores was largely suspended. 'The rigid measures that were passed at this time', wrote that great Comptroller of the Navy, Admiral Middleton, at a later date, 'would have produced much good to the service if they had been delayed till the peace was established: and I am persuaded Lord St. Vincent must have thought it secure when he attempted this measure of reformation. On any other ground it was madness and imbecility in the extreme.'[2]

While the British Government was thus pursuing a policy of reducing its armaments—for the reductions were not confined to the navy but were even more extensively applied to the army—its great rival across the Channel in the person of Napoleon was actively making preparations for a renewal of the war. In June 1802 he sent Decaen to India to make arrangements with the rulers of the principal States hostile to Britain for the reconquest of the lost French settlements and the expulsion of the English from India. Another mission under Cavaignac was sent to Muscat to interest the support of the Imam; General Brune went to Constantinople to enlist the favour and invite support of the Porte. Elba was annexed in August; in September Colonel Sebastiani was sent to Egypt and the Near East to prepare the ground for operations in those parts and troops were assembled in Corsica for a renewal of the attempt

[1] *Moniteur*, 16 Oct. 1801, quoted in N.R.S. *Letters of Lord St. Vincent*, vol. i, p. 283.
[2] *Barham Papers*, vol. iii, p. 69.

of 1798. Piedmont was annexed and Switzerland occupied. Finally, well aware that in the intended aggression sea power would play a part no less important than which it played hitherto, Napoleon was busily engaged in restoring the French navy, building ships, replenishing his depleted storehouses, and recovering his colonial possessions in the West Indies. During the preceding years of the struggle France had made two important acquisitions from Spain. Haiti, in its entirety, had been ceded to France by the Treaty of Basle in 1795, so that the whole of that rich island with the important naval base of Cape St. Nicholas was securely in her hands; and in 1800, by the Treaty of San Ildefonso, Louisiana—originally a French possession—had been retroceded to her, though the agreement was not made public until after the Peace of Amiens. But since 1800 the whole island of Haiti had revolted and in 1801 was in the hands of the negro forces of Toussaint Louverture, and its recovery formed the first of Napoleon's objects so soon as the sea was again open to him for the passage of a fleet and army across the Atlantic. In December 1801 an army of 22,000 men and a fleet of thirty-five of the line, prepared in the harbours of Brest, Rochefort, Havre, Flushing, Toulon, and Cadiz, sailed from Brest to recover the island.

Though initial successes were obtained, the enterprise ended in a failure even more extensive than those of the British in the West Indies, and from the same cause. Fever took a toll of the troops in thousands, and the final blow to the expedition fell when England declared war and her West Indies squadrons blockaded the Haitian ports and gave sea transport to the negro armies. With the declaration of war the prospects of a new French Empire in America, with Louisiana as its starting-point, vanished, for long before it could be set securely upon its feet the British fleet would isolate the colony and America, who had regarded the French occupation with great dislike,[1] would be able, under the cover of that fleet, to reach the Mississippi and expel the unwelcome visitors. Napoleon, who now needed to concentrate all his strength upon his principal object—victory over Britain—made the best of a bad business at once and sold

[1] Jefferson had written: 'There is on the globe one single spot, the possessor of which is a natural and political enemy. It is New Orleans.' *Works of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. ix, p. 364.

the colony to the United States, which thus acquired the richest agricultural region in the world at the price of 4 cents an acre.[1] A writer of the day[2] indicates how the matter was viewed by contemporary English eyes. Had Napoleon been able to hold Louisiana and to recover Haiti 'he might well have hoped, not only to crush the British colonies in the West Indies at his pleasure, but even govern in the future the American States as despotically as those of his European neighbours. The combined fleets and armies of France and Spain, would, unopposed by that of Great Britain, be much too powerful for the Western Union'. With a strong fleet based on Haiti, and a powerful army in Louisiana, assured of its requirements and secure against counter-attack, the Napoleonic dream might well have become the reality of a French American Empire. The Louisiana purchase has been described as the greatest event in American history after the Revolution and the Civil War. That which brought that greatest event into being was the combination of the fever which destroyed the French army, the British blockade which contributed to its destruction, and Britain's declaration of war which brought her sea power into the play and thereby eliminated every possibility of holding Louisiana against American action.

That declaration of war, influenced as it was by the succession of acts already referred to, was due, fundamentally and finally, to the traditional British 'Low Countries policy'. It was Napoleon's refusal to evacuate Holland that brought matters to a head, for the Britain of Addington could no more tolerate the presence of a powerful naval and military Power at Antwerp and in the Schelde than the England of Elizabeth. Moreover, while the original reason for that policy lay in the need for security against a sudden invasion of the United Kingdom across the Narrow Seas, the development of the British Empire and of Britain's interests in India had introduced a second, and pressing, reason. The ruler of Holland would also be the possessor of the Cape of Good Hope. To acquiesce in such a situation, and at the same time to abandon Malta, the one position in the Mediterranean which would enable the British fleet to control the route to the East by way of Egypt, would

[1] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article 'Louisiana'.
[2] *Annual Register*, 1803, p. 337.

have been suicidal. Hence the Cabinet made it a *sine qua non* of the fulfilment of their engagement to evacuate Malta that Napoleon should relinquish his hold on Holland. It had originally been arranged that the island should be returned to the keeping of the Knights of St. John, but that ancient Order had since been practically destroyed by France and its head, the Pope, was virtually a vassal of Napoleon. The island was, therefore, open to seizure by France at any moment that she might desire. If British sea power were forced to be absent from the central Mediterranean for want of a base, France could have repeated, whenever she should choose, Bonaparte's Egyptian adventure, accompanied by such precautions as the failure of the earlier attempt might suggest.

In their extreme anxiety to avert a renewal of the war the British ministers were nevertheless prepared to give up Malta after a period of ten years, but on the express condition of being given possession of the barren island of Lampedusa as an alternative base and of the evacuation of Holland and Switzerland by France. Bonaparte flatly rejected the proposal.[1] When the matter was debated in both Houses of Parliament the arguments revolved entirely round Malta. Ministers maintained that the refusal to carry out the evacuation of Malta, as agreed to in the Treaty of Amiens, had been fully justified, because the conditions in which the agreement had been made no longer existed. France had not executed the terms of the Treaty of Lunéville: she still occupied Piedmont and Holland. It was impossible to return Malta to the fictitious possession of the Knights. Napoleon's open and unconcealed declaration of his intention sooner or later to take Egypt, coupled with the publication by the French Government of a report by Colonel Sebastiani in which the intentions of France regarding both Egypt and Turkey were plainly set out, furnished, in the eyes of the Government, compelling reasons for not casting away this single safeguard to India. It would, said Pitt, be the height of unwisdom to do so. On the side of the Opposition it was argued that the possession of Malta was not a sufficient ground for war, that Lampedusa was an alternative that would serve British needs, and that a Russian guarantee might have been obtained. What, therefore, were we at war for? To this question one

[1] For a modern French survey cf. P. Coquelle, *Napoleon and England, 1803–13*.

speaker replied: 'We are at war for Malta, but not for Malta only, but for Egypt: not for Egypt only, but for India: not for India only, but for the integrity of the British Empire and the cause of justice, good faith and freedom all over the world.' In the result both Houses expressed their approval of the Government's determination to retain this essential naval base, this element of British sea power, the Lords by 142 votes to 10, the Commons by 398 to 67.

The navy, for all the untimely reductions it had undergone, was in a far more formidable condition when war was declared than it had been ten years earlier. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in defending in December 1802 the vote for 50,000 men, against the criticism of Lord Grenville that the number was excessive for peace but too few for war in view of the extensive steps taken by France and Spain to restore their navies, gave his estimate of the strengths of the three maritime Powers. France, he said, had now only thirty-three capital ships, Spain sixty-three, and Holland sixteen; making in all 112. The British capital ship strength exceeded the total of these by sixty sail[1] and there was a proportionate superiority in frigates and sloops. On land, there were 40,000 foot and 12,000 horse within the kingdom, scattered in garrisons and not disposable for service abroad; an equal number had been called out but still lacked training, while in addition some 342,000 volunteers answered Addington's call; but as a fighting force their value was slight. 'If Napoleon could have crossed the Channel in the winter of 1803–4, as he first designed, our means to meet the veteran troops would have been found utterly unfit for battle.'[2]

[1] This figure was only mathematically correct. The numbers, as recorded by James (*Naval History*, vol. iii, Appendix 12) were:

For sea service:	in Commission	75	The available number is therefore 115
	in Ordinary	40	
For harbour service:	in Commission	9	
	in Ordinary	29	
Building or ordered to be built		19	
		172	
Spain, France, and Holland		112	
		60	

[2] General Sir H. Bunbury, *Narrative of some Passages in the Great War with France 1799–1800*, p. 172.

How ministers should conduct the war at this stage was plain. The country must be defended at sea against invasion and the destruction of its trade. Attacks on the principal French naval bases were out of the question in view of the military disparity. The only objectives open to an offensive were the seaborne trade and colonies of the enemy and of her ally Holland. The objects of blows at the colonies were as before the weakening of French financial strength and protecting trade against sporadic attack by the capture of the enemy's bases overseas, a measure of which one further result was the strengthening of Britain's financial position on which her ability to obtain allies depended. The opening moves, therefore, took the form of blockading or observing the French fleets and squadrons in their ports—a fleet off Brest, squadrons of capital ships in the Downs, off Rochefort, Corunna, and Ferrol (in both of which Spanish ports French vessels were lying), light squadrons off Dunkirk and Ostend, along the coast between Calais and Cherbourg, and off the Channel Islands; and, as Napoleon at once seized Hanover and sought the control of Hamburg, blockades of the Elbe and Weser were ordered in June and July, thus closing the ports of Hamburg and Bremen. A strong squadron went to the Mediterranean to watch the fleet in Toulon, another in the West Indies co-operated with the negro forces in San Domingo. Expeditions were dispatched to capture St. Lucia and Tobago, positions of long established strategical importance, and others to take the Dutch possessions in Demerara, Essequibo, Berbice, and Surinam.

This was the full extent of the possible British offensive effort at the time. Obviously it could not produce a decision. It could defend the country, its external possessions, and its trade, set bounds to Napoleon's oversea ambitions in the Far East and the West, and deprive him of the colonial products and of the naval resources he needed to draw from without; but these were injuries only, not vital blows, to a great continental State which had the resources of Europe to draw upon. Hence, when in May 1804 after a year of purely defensive warfare (apart, that is to say, from the offensive of closing the sea to France) Pitt was returned to power, his first steps were directed towards obtaining a continental ally and increasing the pressure at sea by extending the existing blockades of the German rivers to the whole of the French Channel and North Sea ports. This was

an effective, not a paper, blockade; it was enforced by those squadrons already mentioned.

The obvious ally was Russia. Already the Czar, deeply concerned at Napoleon's unconcealed designs upon Turkey, had begun to make advances to Britain for co-operation in the Levant. But a stumbling-block to an understanding at once arose in the question of the possession of Malta. The Czar insisted that Malta should be transferred to his keeping. To this the British Cabinet was resolutely opposed. The retention of Malta had now assumed a primary character in British policy and Russia was informed that it was impossible, and impolitic, to give up the naval base in view of the requirements of the defence of India and of commerce, and of Britain being in a position to prevent any sudden irruption by France, in times of peace, into Egypt. For a year the discussion proceeded, the British ministers maintaining as unbroken an attitude as that which they had assumed when renewing the war in 1803. 'The importance of Malta to his Majesty's distant possessions is become obvious since the manifestation of the French views on Egypt and the evident danger which may from thence arise to the British possessions in India. The necessity of a secure port in the Mediterranean not liable to capture on a sudden attack at the commencement of a war, and the assuring thereby a ready opposition to the maritime operations of France from her ports and arsenals in that quarter, to whatever object they may be directed' were described as 'considerations of essential importance to the interests of Great Britain'. But the interests of the allies, it was urged, were no less concerned. These, especially in the south of Europe, wrote Lord Mulgrave, 'are intimately connected with the possession of Malta by Great Britain'.[1] Nor was this all.

'There is no quarter in which the naval power of Great Britain is more necessary to check the further progress of French ambition on the Continent during the war, or counteract the sudden revival of its activity during peace, than the Mediterranean. The particular possession in these seas by which the means of naval exertion in the Common Cause can be most securely provided is Malta.'[2]

[1] Lord Mulgrave to Count Worontzow, 7 May 1805 (*Camden Society*, vol. vii, *Third Series*, p. 134. The whole correspondence is in this volume).

[2] The same to the same, 5 June 1805.

In the hands of Britain it covered Egypt, Greece, and Turkey; in the hands of France it would place her in a position to attack any of those countries whenever she should choose. In the hands of Russia, as the Czar was proposing, it could offer no obstacle to French aggression unless Russia's naval power in the Mediterranean could be made equal to that of France, without which the island would merely be neutral, 'incapable of opposing an active check to France unless it be made the station for a powerful fleet of ships and transports'. In other words, a base without a fleet is as useless as a sentry-box without a sentry. The protection, too, which Russia expressed herself desirous of giving to Naples, could not be given without a British fleet and British transport tonnage for troops, protected by British convoys. An uninterrupted Russian intercourse between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean could be assured only by a British establishment constantly present in Malta.

It was not only for the evacuation of the naval base that the Czar was pressing at this time. He insisted also, as a part of the price of his alliance, upon a revision of the British Maritime Code. Here the Cabinet was no less adamant. The code, said the Secretary of State, was recognized and acquiesced in by all Europe; its operations had always been restrained, and its influence had been mitigated in many instances by exceptions in particular areas; exceptions of which Russia had enjoyed benefits. Concessions could only be deeply injurious, if not even absolutely destructive, to the best interests of Britain.

Notwithstanding these categorical refusals the Czar continued to press for the evacuation of the base and the revision of the code, making the absolute and unconditional consent of Britain to his demand a *sine qua non* of the ratification of a treaty of alliance. The Cabinet remained unyielding. If the Czar should continue to insist, 'the King would continue to trust in the resources of his dominions for the protection of the interests and safety of his people against the attempts of the arrogant and rapacious enemy of Europe'. One concession, however, ministers expressed themselves willing to make. They would accept a Russian garrison for Malta provided Minorca were substituted as a naval base, 'though the relative security of that island against invasion or capture can bear no comparison with that of Malta'; but lest this concession should be thought to imply

any weakening in relation to the Maritime Code, 'his Majesty has expressly commanded me to repeat . . . his firm determination not to concur in any proposal that can countenance the slightest expectation of a revision of the Maritime Code'.

The plain speaking, and the explicit statements on these two highly important matters affecting British sea power, had their effect. The Czar dropped his demands, Malta and the Maritime Code were retained, and military co-operation between Britain and Russia was arranged whereby, in order to secure the Middle East against Napoleon's designs, a British expeditionary force should be sent to the Mediterranean to hold Sicily and operate in conjunction with a Russian force from the Black Sea acting in the Ionian islands and Calabria. The instructions to the British military commander emphasized the principal object of his force: 'it being of the utmost importance that Sicily should not fall into the hands of the French, the protection of that island is to be considered the principal object of the expedition.'

The whole train of reasoning which dictated this policy and its operative strategy is thus clear. The combination of British sea power and Russian land power in the Mediterranean was essential to both countries and to the continued independence of southern Italy. Russian land power was needed to hold Calabria and the Ionian islands, but Russian forces could neither reach those territories, nor be maintained in them, without the support of British sea power in its three forms of fighting ships, a base, and shipping. The British fleet needed a base, Malta, but it needed also assured supplies, and these could be furnished only from Sicily and Naples. 'The loss of all the supplies derived both from Naples and Sicily, will add so materially to the difficulty of keeping our fleet in the Mediterranean, that it would be doubtful if the blockade of Toulon could be maintained as effectively as it has been hitherto.'[1]

While these negotiations were still in progress a new situation arose with Spain. It was a repetition of the old problem of the wars of Queen Anne and Chatham of whether Spanish seaborne wealth should be allowed to nourish France. Under severe

[1] Lord Harrowby to Lord G. Leveson-Gower, 10 October 1804. Pitt's instructions of 10 June which give a comprehensive survey of the British view and policy will be found in Corbett, *Campaign of Trafalgar*, Appendix A.

pressure from France following the Treaty of San Ildefonso in 1795 Spain had recently been drawn, or forced, into the commitment of what were regarded as unneutral acts in the forms of paying a heavy subsidy to France, of permitting French naval squadrons to shelter in Spanish ports, of allowing French troops and seamen to march across Spain to join the ships and reinforce their crews, and of submitting to what amounted to a virtual French control of the Spanish dockyards: and at the same time a marked increase of activity was taking place in the Spanish arsenals. All of these had been tolerated by Addington's government without protest. Pitt decided they must cease. He called on Spain to suspend her warlike preparations. She refused, and in July 1804 this culmination of the series of acts was interpreted in London to indicate that Spain intended once more to join France, and that she was only waiting to act until a supply of treasure, valued at 6½ million dollars, then on its way from Monte Video, was safely within her ports. A small British frigate squadron was therefore dispatched to intercept and detain the treasure, a force too little superior to the escorting squadron to enable the Spanish commander honourably to comply with the summons to surrender. He resisted, with the result of a tragic loss of life and of the whole convoy.

The situation was, in fact, one that, in one or another form, arises in war and to which the conditions of sea warfare are particularly, though not exclusively, susceptible. The question which statesmen have to answer is no easy one. It is whether, and if so at what precise moment and in what manner, forcible action shall be taken against a Power which, while still neutral, is taking, or being forced to take, steps, and to make dispositions of its forces, the result of which will place it in a favourable position to open hostilities. It was an almost exact parallel to that with which Pitt's father had attempted to deal in 1761—a precedent with which the younger Pitt must certainly have been familiar—when he wished to forestall a Spanish declaration of war by disabling Spain through the seizure of the treasure for the arrival of which she was believed to be waiting before throwing in her lot with France.[1] Other instances, different in detail but of a similar basic character, had occurred

[1] Cf. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*, vol. ii, pp. 183–4, and his comments on that action.

both in 1740 and 1741 during the War of the Austrian Succession.[1] The preventive seizure of the Danish fleet in 1807 is of the same order, and we in our own day have witnessed situations which have been interpreted as calling for forcible action against a neutral—at Oran, against the reinforcement of the garrison at Dakar, against the battleship *Richelieu* in that harbour and, on land, in Syria and Iraq.

The seizure of the Spanish treasure ships came under some measure of criticism in Parliament from that section which made a point of opposing Pitt, on the ground that the action, taken against a neutral and without a declaration of war, was contrary to public morals and that, having for so long condoned the Spanish behaviour, it was improper to seize this particular occasion to exercise pressure. A more practical and apt criticism was that the force used was unduly weak. The Government defended its action with vigour, pointing out the dangers to which the country was exposed and the plain inferences that were to be drawn from the Spanish policy over a long period. How, it asked, could the ministers have justified inaction and a failure to take steps which might prevent or deter Spain from coming into war, if the Spanish squadron at Ferrol should have put to sea in company with the French, attacked and driven off the blockading squadron, and escorted an invading army to Ireland? The Commons approved the ministry's conduct by 313 votes to 106.

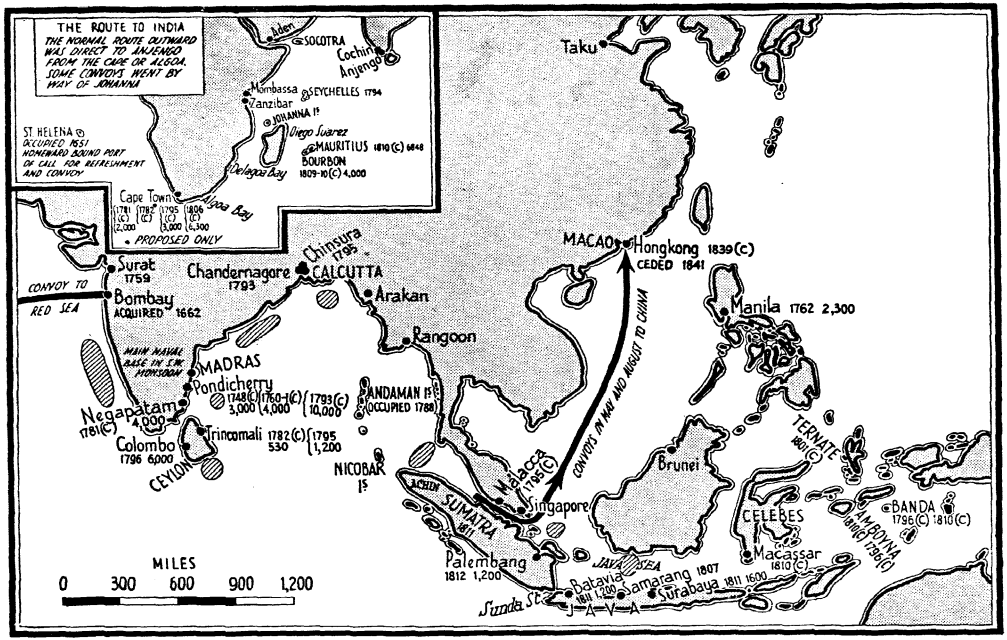
Spain thereupon declared war, as, according to opinions in Madrid, she would have done in any case; and with this new ally Napoleon expanded his designs for the invasion of England. The 'Campaign of Trafalgar' which followed consisted in a series of great combinations of the several separated French and Spanish squadrons with the object of achieving such a superiority in the Channel that Britain's sea defences—the Grand Fleet and the flotillas—would be overwhelmed, and the hundreds of barges massed in the 'invasion ports' free to make their crossing in security and effect their landing. How those combinations were defeated by the British dispositions in the Bay and Nelson's pursuit of Villeneuve across the Atlantic is a familiar story of naval strategy. The fact that the invasion had become impossible was recognized by Napoleon when, on

[1] Cf. Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739–48*, vol. i, pp. 89 and 105.

9 August, he learned that the combined fleet instead of making for the Channel had entered Ferrol. He at once turned his eyes to the Continent where the Third Coalition had been slowly coming into life. Six days later he struck the camp at Boulogne and marched into the Empire to strike down Austria before she could become effective. 'I intend to attack the Austrians before November in order to have a free hand to deal with the Russians.' A new purpose now informed the use of the great Franco-Spanish fleet which had reached Cadiz: this was to enter the Mediterranean and, in co-operation with the French armies in southern Italy, recover Sicily and re-establish French power in the Mediterranean. Sailing from Cadiz with that object it was brought to action on 21 October and defeated off Cape Trafalgar.

Thus the governing and controlling factor in this chain of events had been sea power. It was sea power which had shielded the country while it built up its strength and enabled it to obtain an ally; it was the conditions imposed by the Russian alliance which took a British army into the Mediterranean; it was the need for ejecting that army and establishing a French domination of southern Italy that sent Villeneuve to sea to meet his fate. By that victory the Mediterranean was rendered secure in British hands and Napoleon was forced to turn to other means to remove the obstacle that stood in the way of his lordship of Europe. Invasion had failed, the sporadic attacks on commerce by squadrons of heavy ships and scattered lighter vessels had not inflicted vital injury, the plans for action in India which he had set on foot between 1801 and 1803 had proved impossible to carry into execution. India, however, had been a continued anxiety to the British ministers. While the fleets and squadrons of the enemy were still at large and unlocated in the Atlantic in July 1805, and before even their intentions were known, the Cabinet, in its concern for the safety of India and its confidence in its ability to defeat whatever purpose those fleets might have elsewhere, decided to recapture the Cape of Good Hope, whose retrocession to the Dutch at Amiens had come under severe censure. Hence in August 1805 an expedition was prepared for the fourth time to seize the Cape,[1] thus to secure this vital spot on the line of communications with

[1] The preceding three being in 1781, 1783, and 1795.



MAP VIII. CONJUNCT EXPEDITIONS AND TRADE DEFENCE IN THE INDIAN SEAS

The dates of expeditions are marked 'c' where object was the capture of an enemy base. Elsewhere the objects were capture of territory in order to weaken enemy or strengthen commerce. Where no figures for troops are shown, the force was small.

The areas marked ◍ are the cruising positions for protection of trade in 1810. The strength recommended in 1810 was 4 capital ships, 16 frigates, and 9 lesser craft for the cruisers and convoys.

the East. It carried out its purpose, and Britain now possessed a secure alternative route to India in the event of the loss of command of the Mediterranean: a fact for which later generations of all the British peoples have good reason to be supremely thankful.

But on land Napoleon's success was complete. Four days before Trafalgar was fought an Austrian army was defeated at Ulm; on 2 December another was crushed at Austerlitz; on the 26th Austria made peace at Pressburg. The Third Coalition was broken. Within the next month such hopes as had been entertained of Prussia's co-operation with Britain and Russia were extinguished, for, accepting Napoleon's bribe of Hanover, she cut herself off from the other Powers. Feeling himself now secure in northern Europe, Napoleon could once more turn his attention to the Mediterranean and take steps to eject the Bourbon dynasty from the Two Sicilies and replace it with his brother Joseph. A French army, no longer needed in northern Italy, now marched on Naples, recently occupied by a combined Russo-British force. Thereupon Naples was evacuated, the Russian contingent hastily withdrawing to Corfu and the British to Messina, where its purpose was the primary one for which it had been sent to the Mediterranean—that of holding Sicily in order to enable the command of the sea in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean to be exercised by the Allies.

The question of the control of Sicily was indeed now to form the principal element affecting the continuation of the war. In February 1806 negotiations were begun between Britain and France covering the whole range of their differences with a view to discovering whether peace was not possible. They included such widely separated matters as Hanover, the French settlements in India, the strategical positions of St. Lucia, Tobago, Surinam and the Cape, and Sicily. For the reasons of naval strategy already referred to, the British ministers, even one so peace-loving and friendly to France as Fox had always shown himself, insisted on retaining the control of the last-named island. Napoleon, on the other hand, for precisely the reason that Britain's control of Sicily and her possession of Malta constituted an impassable barrier to French communications to the Adriatic and the Levant, insisted no less strongly on Britain's evacuation of Sicily at least and its incorporation with

the Kingdom of Naples which he had assigned to his brother Joseph, to whom he wrote in July, 'Peace or war, we shall have Sicily'. Though at first he rejected the British claim for the possession of the other oversea bases, he eventually gave way, but in the matter of Sicily he was unbending. Hence the negotiations, pursued from February until October, came to nothing.

'Thus', says Dr. Holland Rose, 'Sicily was the chief cause of the prolongation of the war, as Malta had been of its inception. At this point, as at all important crises since November 1792, the Franco-British dispute turned eventually on questions of naval strategy. On the surface, there appear in 1793, 1797, 1803, 1806 altercations respecting the Scheldt, Gibraltar, Malta, Sicily. What was really at stake was the French control of the Dutch Netherlands and mastery of the Mediterranean. A sure instinct impelled even peace-loving Ministers to hold out firmly on matters that concerned, first, the safety of the East Coast and, finally, the communications with India. For the present, Great Britain had to acquiesce in French control of Dutch territory, but she reduced the danger by occupying the Cape, and Napoleon's Levantine scheme now warned her to hold on both to Malta and Sicily.'[1]

The defence of Sicily was accompanied by a minor conjunct campaign in southern Italy during the summer of 1806, indecisive and of little influence on the course of the war; for the military forces available were not of a strength capable of creating an effective diversion of French power from the greater theatre of war in the north of Europe. There, Prussia at last rose against Napoleon, only to have one of her armies crushed at Jena on 14 October, whereby Napoleon gained control of the Weser, Elbe, Trave, and Oder and the whole Baltic coastline as far east as the Vistula. Entering Berlin, he issued the 'Berlin Decree' on 21 November, proclaiming Britain in a state of blockade, forbidding all commerce with her, declaring all British commerce good prize and ordering British subjects to be imprisoned.[2] His allies were directed to put all these measures into execution. Having failed to overcome the sea power by invasion, by attack on her seaborne commerce, and by destruction of her Eastern Empire and its trade, he now turned his efforts towards destroying her by cutting off her export markets.

[1] *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. i, p. 355.

[2] The full text of the decree will be found in *Annual Register*, 1806, p. 201.

At the same time he took steps to increase his own maritime strength, steps he was to follow later in a more extensive form whereby he hoped to become able, in due course, to challenge her at sea.

The Berlin Decree pretended to be an act of retaliation for the British blockade ordered on 16 May 1806, which had declared the French coast from the Seine to Ostend under blockade. Napoleon had contended that this blockade was illegal, asserting that the act of blockade was permissible only to fortified places and only when supported by a sufficient force, which, he said, this blockade was not. The asserted restriction of blockade to fortified places had no foundation in International Law; and although it was true that sufficient force was necessary to constitute a legal blockade, the criticism on this score was unjustified, for the blockade of May 1806 was supported by force in plenty. It was instituted by Fox who, according to Castlereagh[1] did not do so until he had assured himself, in communication with the Admiralty, that adequate naval force was available. It was no 'paper blockade'. Moreover, so far from the decree having its origin as an answer to the blockade, it had actually been under consideration for three months, and even then the measure was one which had been proposed in the very beginning of the war. In September 1793 the Jacobin Government had passed a Navigation Act which purported to forbid any foreign vessels to import goods other than the products of their own countries, a measure aimed directly at the British export trade. This attempt to keep British goods out of the Continent had been continued throughout 1794 and 1795, and it was Portugal's disregard of the order that had motivated the French attempt in 1796 to destroy her independence and annex her to Spain. A French speaker in 1794 had proclaimed that 'from the Tagus to the Elbe there is no point on the mainland where the British should be allowed to set foot'.[2] In 1806 the aim was the same as that in 1793—to suffocate Britain by preventing her from disposing of her exports of merchandise and colonial goods, the source of the wealth which enabled her to furnish the subsidies which brought allies to her side and kept them in partnership. The decree was in fact a

[1] In the debate of 18 Feb. 1813; *Parliamentary History*, 1813, p. 599.

[2] Quoted in E. F. Hecksher, *The Continental System*, p. 57.

definite and premeditated act of policy, not a retaliatory act; and the measures against which it purported to retaliate were measures within the accepted principles of maritime war. That such an attempt would be made if a single great Power were to succeed in an endeavour to establish a military domination of Europe had been foretold by some British statesmen over half a century earlier, and it was a possibility that had constituted one of the fundamental reasons for considering it essential that Britain should intervene in the continental struggles against a would-be dominator: for her own existence was at stake.

The reply of the British Cabinet to the decree was an Order in Council, dated 7 January 1807, of which the object was announced to be 'to restrain the violence of the enemy and to retort upon him the evils of his own injustice'. It forbade vessels to trade between ports belonging to, or in the occupation of, France or her allies. In its initial stages it was an act of retaliation only, not an attempt to starve France into submission; nor was that attempt made throughout the twenty years of the war,[1] though the purpose of the Orders in Council underwent some modifications in the course of time. A protest was at once made by Denmark, who had built up a most prosperous carrying trade between the ports of France and those of her allies in northern Europe and the Mediterranean, favoured by the conditions created by the war. The Order in Council killed that trade. The British Cabinet refused to listen to the Danish remonstrance, pointing out with truth that the French decree to which the order was a reply was a manifest act of hostile aggression against all nations not engaged in the war which, if not resisted by them, deprived them of the character of neutrals.

'Neutrality, properly considered', wrote Lord Howick, 'does not consist in taking advantage of every situation between belligerent States by which emolument may accrue to the neutral, whatever may be the consequences to either belligerent party, but in a strict and honest impartiality, so as not to afford an advantage in the war to either; and particularly in so far restraining its trade to the accustomed course which it held in time of peace so as not to render assistance to one belligerent in escaping the effects of the other's hostilities.'

This was a view that did not commend itself to the neutral of

[1] Hecksher, op. cit., p. 44.

the time, nor, as we have seen in our own day, to the neutral of more recent times.

As a strategical measure the Order in Council could have little direct effect upon the existing military situation. The greatest strategical need was to assist Russia if, as it appeared probable after Jena, Napoleon should next attack her. That he would do so was insisted on by General Dumouriez in December 1806, who foresaw a general collapse in the north unless Britain undertook some more active measures than she was employing and abandoned what he called her 'torpor'. The Baltic, he pointed out, was swarming with French privateers; Denmark was inclining towards France and its navy would soon join Napoleon; Poland would then be lost to Russia, and this would be followed by Russia making peace. All the northern Powers, including Sweden, would then be forced into an anti-British alliance, and, by 1808, a powerful naval coalition would exist which would be capable of making a concerted attack on Britain. It would not be enough to send a British fleet to the Baltic: what, in Dumouriez's opinion, was needed was an extensive policy of powerful diversionary operations conducted against the French in Italy. This, he insisted, was the great effort which British sea power was capable of making in the common cause.

This was not the only measure open to the choice of the British ministers. The Porte, under the influence of Napoleon, had declared war on Russia in December 1806, thereby locking up Russian forces and calling for any help Britain could render. Alternatively, a combined force might be sent to the Baltic, or again, taking advantage of the absence of so large a portion of the French military forces in north Germany and Poland, diversionary attacks might be developed against the French coast. All these steps came under review, but as there were at that moment no more than some 11,000 or 12,000 troops in England available for oversea operations, and transports were not ready to move them, none of them was practicable.[1] A fleet was sent in the spring of 1807 to the Dardanelles to compel the Porte to make peace, but as it was not accompanied by any land

[1] Thus Fortescue: 'As had been the case in almost every year since 1793, whenever a really favourable opportunity occurred for striking a heavy blow against France, there had been no British troops at hand to take advantage of it.' *History of the Army*, vol. vi, p. 35; also p. 54.

forces the Turks could defy it, and it was forced to make a humiliating withdrawal. In June a small military force of some 7,000 troops was sent to the Baltic to assist the Swedes in the defence of Stralsund. But none of these trivial and long-delayed measures of Fox's Cabinet were either of any help to Russia or hindrance to Napoleon who, having set in motion the decrees against Britain, proceeded against Russia. Checked at Eylau in February 1807, he inflicted a crushing defeat on her at Friedland in June. The Czar, though he had engaged not to make a separate peace, at once sued for an armistice and came to an agreement with Napoleon at Tilsit in which the French Emperor's desire to obtain the command of the sea figured prominently. He obtained bases for his navy in the eastern Mediterranean at Cattaro and in the Ionian islands and, in a set of secret articles, the Czar's agreement to combine his naval and military forces with Napoleon's against Britain. Sweden, Denmark, Portugal, and Austria were to be compelled to close their ports to Britain and to declare war if she should not accept the settlement. With the navies thus at his disposal he would possess a force of well over a hundred capital ships with which to resume the war at sea.

The news that Russia had made peace reached London quickly, but the terms contained in the secret articles were not known. It was, however, plain to Canning's ministry that the formation of a northern league was an immediate possibility. The attitude of Denmark had been consistently unfriendly for over a year and a French army was known to be assembled close to the frontier of Holstein, from whence a rapid invasion of Denmark could be made. The Danish fleet of eighteen sail would be at its mercy, the Sound would be closed. Acting entirely upon deduction, Canning at once organized a powerful expedition of 19,000 troops, to reinforce the 7,000–8,000 already in the Baltic and to be escorted and supported by a fleet of twenty-five sail of the line with a strong force of lesser vessels to take possession of the Danish fleet at Copenhagen. The reproach to which so many similar operations have been open, lack of secrecy, could not be applied to this expedition: not even the Board of Admiralty was informed of its real purpose. The admiral received his orders to attack Copenhagen from the Secretary of State. His instructions from the Admiralty directed

him to co-operate with the King of Sweden, protect any reinforcements going to Pomerania, and secure British trade and supplies of naval stores in the Baltic. Only the First Lord, Mulgrave, knew its actual destination. The object was to ensure secrecy. 'No secret is well kept which is confided to more than one.'[1] On the arrival of this combined force at Copenhagen the Danish fleet was summoned to deliver itself up, with the assurance that it would be returned undamaged at the end of the war; compliance, in view of the great superiority of the British force, was expected. But as the summons was rejected, the city was bombarded and the troops were landed, and the greater part of the fleet—fourteen of the line and nine frigates—was carried to England.

This action, like that of the seizure of the Spanish treasure ships, came under a fire of criticism in both Houses of Parliament. Ministers defended their conduct on the scores of the vital need of preventing Napoleon from seizing the Danish fleet, and of there being every reason to foresee that this was his intention. On that strategical ground they had an undoubtedly strong case. Whether on the ground of political expediency the action proved advantageous is more open to question; for though it deprived Napoleon of eighteen sail of great ships which he greatly desired to obtain, it resulted in a more bitter hostility from Denmark; and it injured British reputation. Mahan's comment on the matter was that the condemnation so widely expressed is 'uncalled for'. The British ministry knew that the fleet would pass into Napoleon's hands; they avoided the mistake made by Pitt in 1804 of sending too weak a force and sent one sufficient to make opposition hopeless and to justify submission. 'To have receded before the obstinacy of the Danish Government would have been utter weakness.'[2]

At the other end of Europe Napoleon was preparing to strike at Britain through Portugal. In August 1807 he had presented her with an ultimatum ordering her to close her ports to Britain, confiscate British ships and property, and declare war. In October an allied Franco-Spanish army marched into the country and an agreement was concluded for the dismember-

[1] Sir James Graham, *Report of the Select Committee on the Board of Admiralty 1861*, pp. 123, 157.

[2] Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire*, vol. iii, p. 277.

ment of Portugal. High importance was attached to the seizure of the Portuguese navy. Junot, who commanded the French army, had orders to spare no efforts and lose not a single day's time in reaching Lisbon. 'You must be in Lisbon by the first of December', he was told; and the need for speed was repeated a fortnight later. 'Lisbon is everything. . . . You must march straight to Lisbon and when you arrive there seize the fleet and arsenals. . . . Your advance has been far too slow: ten days are precious.' But for all the haste with which Junot moved Napoleon's design was forestalled, as it had been at Copenhagen, by Britain's sea power, and when his tired troops reached the heights above the Tagus in the end of November it was only to see the Portuguese fleet of eight of the line and a number of other vessels sailing out of the river in company with a British squadron, on its way to Brazil, whither it was taking the King, his court, and a considerable treasure. Shortly afterwards, by agreement with Portugal, the island of Madeira was occupied by British troops, thus assuring the use of a base in an important position on the route to the Cape.

By these two actions at Copenhagen and Lisbon the Cabinet deprived Napoleon of the service of no less than twenty-five capital ships. Even if some of them were old, this was no inconsiderable force; it was a force which Napoleon greatly desired to acquire. The measure of his disappointment is to be found in his anger at being baulked.

On the basis of that disappointment the Emperor extended the measures adopted in the Berlin Decree by another, issued from Milan, which drew from the British Cabinet new countermeasures in the form of further Orders in Council. The struggle had now become an economic contest in which French land power attempted to close the ports of all Europe to British commerce, and British sea power prevented neutrals from trading with France except on terms dictated by Britain, a struggle described picturesquely by Mahan as one in which 'the imperial soldiers were turned into coastguardsmen to shut out Great Britain from her markets, the British ships became revenue cutters to prohibit the trade of France. The neutral carrier, pocketing his pride, offered his services to either for pay, and the other then regarded him as taking part in hostilities'.[1]

[1] Mahan, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 288.

The issue of this struggle depended upon whether the Continent was more dependent on Britain and oversea supplies or Britain on the Continent as a market for her exports. Each combatant was attempting to cut the other off from something regarded as vital, and the question was, Which country had the greater staying power? Inasmuch, however, as the actions of both the land and the sea Power affected the neutral, it was also one of which of the two inflicted greater injury upon, or was the more resented by, the neutral Powers. In this latter aspect the scales were weighted against France by the resentment in the continental nations at the overbearing nature of her conduct towards them. Though the high-handed character of the British methods at sea was intensely disliked they were submitted to as the lesser of two evils. 'The arbitrary behaviour of the English at sea', wrote the Prussian minister, Haugwitz, 'is very inconvenient, to be sure, but the continental despotism is infinitely more dangerous.' 'The contest in staying-power', says a recent French writer,[1] 'was begun by France without a single reliable ally in a Europe that had been terrified and disgusted by our extortions and encroachments which had left no interest unchallenged.' Neutral opposition there certainly was to the British action at sea, as there had been earlier at the times of the two Armed Neutralities and in the Russian attempts to force upon Britain an abandonment of the Maritime Code; but that there was not a greater opposition to some of the measures employed may also have been due in some degree to a tacit recognition of the fact that Britain was in reality fighting a battle for the freedom of all nations: the neutral States themselves, said that great jurist Sir William Scott, had a direct and substantial interest in the defeat of the public enemy.

In the beginning of 1808 Britain was practically single-handed in the great struggle. Sicily and Sardinia, protected by the British arms by land and sea, retained their independence but made no active contribution to the cause against Napoleon, and Sweden, though she had so far held out against threats and blandishments, was now exposed to the danger of an invasion by Russia. She appealed to Britain for help, and her appeal was answered by the dispatch of a squadron of sixteen of the

[1] Émile Dard, *Napoleon and Talleyrand*, translation by C. Turner, p. 60.

line and attendant frigates and lesser craft, together with transports carrying 10,000 troops, to the Baltic: the entire fleet of men of war and transports numbered sixty-two sail. Military co-operation with the Swedish King proved, however, impossible owing to the impracticability of his proposals, and the troops were shortly withdrawn. But the squadron remained in the Baltic for the next five years. Initially it co-operated with the Swedish navy with the object of guarding the country against the threatened invasion, blockading the Russian fleet in its bases, and covering the sea approaches to Sweden—as the squadrons under Norris and Byng had done in the years between 1715 and 1726. By so doing it saved Sweden, who without this aid would have been wholly unable to defend herself. But naval force alone could not protect Finland, open as it was to the land, and that province fell into the hands of Russia; nor could it prevent an exhausted and internally divided Sweden from making peace with Russia in August 1809 on terms which obliged her to conform to the Continental System and close her ports to British shipping. Though she remained juridically neutral Sweden might have been considered to be acting in support of the enemy, but as it was well understood in London that she was acting under pressure, and that she would certainly take no active part in hostilities, no action was undertaken against her. Moreover, the closing of the Swedish ports proved to be little more than an empty gesture, for she had neither the desire nor the forces needed to enforce the exclusion except from a few of her major ports. As this fell far short of Napoleon's intention completely to close the whole of Europe to British trade, and as he required the active assistance of the Swedish navy in the building up of the great fleet of his desires, he forced Sweden to declare war in 1810. But the exclusion order was largely circumvented. Convoys of neutral bottoms, sailing under the protection of the British squadron, carried British merchandise into the ports of the Baltic, including those of Russia who, suffering considerable loss through the stoppage imposed by the French decrees upon her trade, herself refused to obey Napoleon's demand to seize a large fleet of neutral traders in the Baltic. How effectively the export trade to the north of Europe met the attack of the Berlin and Milan decrees is illustrated by the facts that its value in 1806 was £7,570,000;

it fell, under the closure, to £2,000,000 in 1808, but had recovered to £7,700,000 in 1810. Owing to further measures of Napoleon, mainly the Trianon and Fontainebleau orders, it fell again severely in 1811.[1] Even when Sweden declared war, a wise moderation was observed by the admiral commanding in the Baltic, Sir James Saumarez, with the full approval of the ministry: Swedish shipping which lay open to attack was untouched and no attempts were made upon the Swedish fleet.

During five successive years from the beginning of 1808 the British squadron controlled the Baltic. Unspectacular as its operations were—there was a number of comparatively small engagements with Danish and Russian vessels—and overshadowed as they are by the great military campaigns in the Peninsula and Europe, this silent and unobtrusive control of the Baltic was far-reaching in its influence on the European situation. Napoleon's attempt to strangle Britain was countered, and the shipping which carried British goods into the Baltic ports returned home with cargoes of naval stores—timber, spars, and other materials urgently needed for equipping the continually growing navy. Last and not least, Russia was finally encouraged to resist Napoleon's pressure. A Swedish statesman, writing to Saumarez, congratulating him when Russia declared war on the manner in which he had used the British squadron, observed: 'You are the first cause that Russia has dared to make war against France. Had you fired a shot when we declared war on England, all had been ended and Europe had been enslaved.'[2]

During the same spring of 1808 in which the squadron went to the Baltic, Spain rose against Napoleon, followed a little later by Portugal. Britain's help was sought and, owing to reforms made by Castlereagh in her military establishment, she was able to meet the request better than she had been at an earlier period. The effects of the Spanish rising were not confined to creating the great military diversion familiarly known as 'the Spanish ulcer', which occupied, according to Wellington, 240,000 of Napoleon's best troops and cost him the loss of 40,000 of them. It affected also the Baltic, forcing the Emperor to withdraw some of the garrisons of 'Custom House Officers' to

[1] E. F. Hecksher, *Continental System*, chap. v.

[2] Ross, *Life of Admiral Lord de Saumarez*, vol. ii, p. 293.

Spain and thereby making the control of the ports in the Baltic less effective. It deprived Napoleon of the use of many Spanish colonial ports from whence French privateers had injured British shipping, and it contributed towards stamping out some of the remaining sources from which France hoped to obtain the colonial goods of which she was in need.

The Peninsular War furnishes the classical example of one of the great strategical advantages conferred by sea power. Having firmly established the command of the sea, Great Britain was able to embark upon, and maintain continuously for over four years, a campaign on a major scale in a theatre where it caused the maximum embarrassment to the enemy.

While the Peninsular War was still in its beginnings in 1809 another expedition, on the formidable scale of 40,000 men, was launched against Holland. For what reason did ministers depart from the fundamental principle of concentration of effort upon a single object? To us to-day it seems plain that Spain was now the theatre in which the peculiar form of British strength, based upon sea power, could most effectively be employed; and that a war in Spain would call for all the military force which Britain could raise.

The origin of the Walcheren Expedition was the need that was felt to induce the wavering and contemptible King of Prussia to throw in his lot with the allies. Austria had once more entered the war and, when she had given Napoleon a drubbing at Aspern, the Prussian King began to think it might be safe for him to come in on what appeared to be the winning side. But he could not decide. Prussian envoys who came to London had assured ministers that Prussia would rise directly war began between Austria and France, and begged therefore that British help might be sent to Hanover to create a diversion and strengthen the resolve of the King of Prussia; and that a British fleet should close the mouths of the German rivers and throw military supplies into Germany. This was one form which British assistance might take; but there was another. Napoleon had long been engaged in developing the naval resources of the Scheldt, and a strong French squadron of eight capital ships together with many frigates lay at Flushing, the dockyards of Antwerp were stocked with vast quantities of stores, and twenty ships lay building on the slips. The destruc-

tion of that force and those resources would represent a definite increase of British sea power; it would set free a number of ships for the protection of trade, which was under severe attack, and would help to meet the demands thrown upon the navy by the new campaign opening in the Peninsula for protecting the sea line of communications. An attack in Holland would do this as well as creating a diversion, for the importance attached by Napoleon to Antwerp was so great that he could not afford not to take measures for its security. These were considerations which lent weight to the decision to prefer Holland to Hanover as the objective of a diversionary operation. And there was yet another element affecting the decision. Though the object first in view had been to induce the King of Prussia to join the allies, a long experience of that shifty individual had shown that he was not to be depended upon, and, even though the expedition might go to Hanover, he still might evade taking part in the war, and the army might expend its thunder in the air as far as he was concerned.

Even assuming, however, that a diversion was to be desired, that it might have the result of bringing Prussia into the war, relieve pressure on Austria, and weaken the sea power of the enemy, there is still the question of whether the comparatively small force—if indeed 40,000 men can so be described—would not have been more profitably employed in strengthening the army in Spain; for was it not in Spain that the most decisive results were to be expected? Had not the navy, by this stage of the war, established such a superiority over the enemy, in spite of the efforts of the Emperor and in consequence of the disappointments he had suffered at Copenhagen and the Tagus, that it could assert its command without calling on the army for help? Events were to prove that it could, but there was then no such certainty. France alone was calculated to possess nearly sixty ships of the line, scattered between her own ports and those in her occupation abroad, and to have nearly thirty building, and in addition to these another 104 were at her disposal—to wit, 17 Dutch, 11 Swedes, 16 Danes, and 60 Russian; a total of over 160 capital ships apart from those under construction. The number of British ships in commission and available for commissioning in the beginning of 1809 was 127. Making all allowances for the advantages of a single command,

for the known inefficiency of the Russians, for the difficulties of assembling the divided forces of the several enemy and vassal fleets, the British superiority at sea was not so decisive that risks could be taken or any measure tending to reduce the maritime strength at Napoleon's disposal neglected. British powers of further expansion were approaching their limit, for, though there were still ships in the home ports, their manning was becoming a grave problem, one indeed which was already leading to friction with the United States and was to form one of the major causes of the unfortunate war of 1812.

Finally, there was one other consideration. The operations in the Peninsula were as yet of a defensive character only, and the force sent was considered sufficient for the immediate purposes; but besides this there was the question of paying them, and one of the reasons given for not increasing the army in Spain at that time was that specie was not available.

So it was the sum total of these several considerations that decided ministers to prefer Holland to Hanover as the theatre in which to attempt a diversion; and a diversion in Holland, combined as it was with an attack on the French naval power in the Scheldt, to a reinforcement of the army in Spain. The objects were thus twofold, political and military. On the political side there was the encouragement of the continental Powers opposed to Napoleon, in particular Prussia. On the military, the diversion in favour of Austria and the destruction of the ships of war in the Scheldt, of the dockyards and ports of Flushing and Antwerp, and of the land defences in their approaches. The conditions essential to success in all these aims were rapid action, surprise, and efficient leadership. Unfortunately all these were lacking. Loss of time prevented rapid action. Time was lost, first by ministers in the long delay in making their decision. Castlereagh, to be sure, denied there had been any unavoidable delay in the actual preparation, saying that 'neither the army itself nor the means of transporting it could possibly have been ready earlier'; but the collecting and assembly of the transport vessels was extremely slow, and though in the circumstances the delay may truly have been unavoidable, the reason lay in the fact that there was no settled policy of keeping in constant readiness a body of transports for whatever sudden service the changing conditions of war might

demand—a policy to which Barham had attached great importance at an earlier stage of the war. Because of this initial delay the expedition started late, and by then the opportunity for creating a diversion in favour of Austria and drawing in Prussia had been missed, for Austria had then been defeated at Wagram and Prussia was shy of coming into the war. The loss of time frustrated the attainment of the other military objects. 'If the expedition could have arrived at Sandfliet in August it had fair prospects of success', wrote an able general, Brownrigg. But handicapped by the lateness of its arrival, it was still further handicapped by the dilatory methods of its commander after the landing, which deprived it of what chances of success still remained. The importance of time in war is a platitude. 'Ask me for anything except Time', said Napoleon. 'Forbear waste of Time, precious Time', said Cromwell. 'The advantage of Time and Place in all martial actions is half of victory, which being lost is irrecoverable', said Drake. We in our own time, too, have had experience of what Time means and have seen it lost irrecoverably in spite of these and many other homilies. It is hardly too much to say that the primary cause of the failure at Walcheren lay in the obliviousness of all concerned, from minister to military commander, to the importance of Time. It was lost in preparation and squandered in execution.

Yet for all this the expedition caused Napoleon an uneasiness as great as any he experienced in his meteoric career, and it is wrong to condemn it on the bare doctrinaire statement that it offended against the principle of concentration of effort. The judgement of Colonel Henderson is not lightly to be put aside, expressing as it does a fundamental principle of British strategy: 'The expedition failed, and failed disastrously. But for all that, fulfilling as it did the great maxim that the naval strength of the enemy should be the first objective of the forces of the maritime Power both on land and sea, it was a strategical stroke of the first order.' As a diversion it extorted the admiration of the French general, Dumouriez, who called it 'the most brilliant and natural diversion you can make'. If the ministerial decision had been made promptly, if policy had ensured that a body of transport was in constant readiness, if the planning had been made with the meticulous attention to detail of Chatham, and the execution had been in the hands of a Wolfe or of many

another British commander, including those of our own day, there is every reason to assume that it would have succeeded, and that its success would have had far-reaching results. It would have set free many ships for the protection of trade and of the sea communications of the army in Spain which enjoyed an immunity upon which they had no right to count[1]—even as it was there were complaints from Wellington of lack of protection, though they proved ill founded—and those results might have had some influence in relation to the problems of providing seamen for the navy which was one of the predominating causes of the war of 1812.

Improvements in the defence of trade were necessary, for shipping was suffering, and because of this, ministers, though they had heavy commitments on hand at sea in the Baltic, the Mediterranean, and on the coasts of Spain and Portugal, were forced to turn their attention once more to the West Indies. There, two things were being called for—more protection to the shipping and more markets for British goods on the export of which Britain's ability to maintain her fighting forces, sustain her civil population, and attract and retain allies depended.[2] The Spanish war had opened up some new markets, but their benefits could only be enjoyed if the sea routes to them were secure. The West Indies contributed about one-fourth of the maritime commerce, and in the West Indies French privateers were still inflicting serious injuries. So a new series of colonial expeditions was a feature of the operations of the years from 1808 to 1811. The object was different from that of the original West Indian campaigns of 1793–6 whose strategical aim had been definitely offensive—the crushing of French maritime and economic strength. Now the aim was primarily defensive, though the actual measures were offensive in character. At the Peace of Amiens all the captured French bases oversea had been returned to France, and Martinique and Guadeloupe were once again the headquarters of a destructive war on shipping, whose

[1] There were squadrons at Rochefort, l'Orient, and Brest and the 'invisible squadron' of Allemand, whose inactivity is difficult to understand, for the Peninsular convoys were lightly protected. For a criticism of the inactivity of the French navy at this time cf. Admiral Degouy, *Revue Maritime*, February 1932.

[2] For a general outline of the post-Trafalgar war at sea, and the influence of the need of new markets, cf. Corbett, 'Napoleon and the British Navy' (Creighton Lecture, *Quarterly Review*, April 1922).

defence demanded a vast number of small cruising vessels, manned by crews which had constantly to be replenished owing to the ravages of the climate and disease. To bring this costly and embarrassing situation to a definite end was deemed to be of the first importance, and hence between 1808 and 1810 a number of expeditions were sent which captured French Guiana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and San Domingo in the west, Senegal in Africa. Others were sent from India to capture Mauritius and Réunion in the Indian Ocean, for French frigates and privateers operating from Mauritius, had inflicted heavy losses on the Calcutta trade. The capture of that island in 1810 effectively stopped those depredations. So it was that, when her other colonies were restored to France at the peace, on the grounds as expressed by Castlereagh, that it was 'expedient to do so in order to wean France from militancy into the peaceful course of commerce', Mauritius was retained, 'not on account of any commercial advantages resulting from its possession but because in time of war it was a great maritime nuisance, highly detrimental to our commerce. In the last two wars the injury to our commerce by the occupation of the Mauritius was incalculable'. The taking of Mauritius was followed by the taking of Java, the Dutch base from which the China trade was threatened.

These many operations at sea, in the Baltic and the Mediterranean, in the East and the West Indies, and those in support of the army in the Peninsula and in the general defence of trade by cruisers and convoy on all the trade routes, imposed a heavy demand upon the British navy both in capital ships and cruisers between 1809 and 1812. The strain began to be eased in 1812. In March of that year Russia declared war on France; in July peace was signed by Britain with her and with Sweden. The need for a strong squadron in the Baltic thus ended, but the ships set free were not available for service elsewhere until the following year, owing to the need for refitting before being sent on further service elsewhere. The relief was appreciable, but there still remained a powerful French fighting force in the European seas numbering between sixty and seventy capital ships and a great number of cruisers distributed in the ports of France, Holland, and Italy. These must be dealt with. The available[1] British fleet of 108 sail of the line was far from

[1] As distinguished from the total number of 243, of which some were harbour

excessive for its duties, for the ships were needed not only in the seas of Europe but also on the distant stations, in order to be in a position to meet any small squadrons that might escape into the open oceans, to strengthen convoys and to furnish reliefs. Broadly speaking, the enemy's main concentrations in the Scheldt, at Toulon, and in the western French ports were watched by no more than equal numbers. Cruisers were in great demand. Though the captures of the French bases at Martinique and Guadeloupe eased the burden of the defence of trade in the western Atlantic, from Halifax to the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, no less than seventy-seven cruising ships[1] were still needed on those stations in the beginning of 1812; a reminder of the fact that the number of cruisers needed is not to be measured by the number of those of an enemy, but by the duties which the vessels will be called on to perform.

It was with matters in this condition that a new war, or an extension of the war, arose in the summer of 1812 with the United States. The immediate causes of that most unhappy and unnecessary war were twofold: the Orders in Council with which the British Government replied to the French decrees of Berlin and Milan, and the acts of the British at sea in removing British seamen, badly needed to man the fleet, from American vessels: acts whose aggravation was increased by the seizure of a number of American subjects and their impressment for service in the British navy.

American seaborne commerce, like that of Denmark, enjoying the advantages and opportunities which a state of war affords to neutrals, had expanded phenomenally during the long-drawn-out European war.[2] Shipping tonnage had doubled,

ships and others unfit for the sea. The number that could be manned was a governing factor in the matter of commissioning.

[1] Viz. 3 capital ships, 17 frigates, 57 sloops, and smaller craft.

[2]

Year	*Exports*	*Imports*
1790	$20,210,000	$23,000,000
1795	49,990,000	69,760,000
1800	70,970,000	91,250,000
1805	95,570,000	120,600,000
1807	105,340,000	138,500,000

(Hecksher, *The Continental System*, p. 103.)

The export figures include domestic goods and foreign goods re-exported, the latter predominating. By 1811 the re-exports, which in 1807 had been $69½ million, had shrunk to $16 million. (Mahan. *War of 1812*, vol. i, p. 221).

from 600,000 to 1,200,000 tons at the rate of some 70,000 tons annually, and this in turn had called for an increase in seamen of 4,200, of whom 2,500 were British;[1] a fact which contributed to the action taken by the British in removing seamen from American ships. This flood of prosperity was first checked by a combination of the French decrees and the British Orders, and finally extinguished by the retaliatory measures imposed by the American Government in December 1807 in the form of an 'Embargo Act' which forbade the sailing of American ships to the ports of both belligerents; of which the object was to bring such economic pressure upon them, by depriving them of the American goods and services, that they would be forced to rescind their measures. At the same time a breach with England was deprecated by one school of American thought: John Randolph of Roanoke expressed the view that 'the only possible barrier between France and a universal dominion before which America as well as Europe must fall, is the British Navy'.[2]

The Embargo Act, embarrassing as it promised to be, was deprived of much, though by no means all, of its effect by the outbreak of the Peninsular War which, by throwing open to British trade the ports of Spain and Portugal and those in the Spanish colonies, provided substitute sources and markets, gave employment to British shipping, and deprived French privateers of the use of Spanish bases in the Caribbean. It met with so much opposition within the States themselves, owing to the distress it caused in the shipping and exporting States that, combined with the fact that it had not produced the desired result, it was repealed in the spring of 1809 and replaced by a 'Non-Intercourse' Act forbidding commerce with the belligerent Powers, but to be withdrawn from operation against whichever Power should rescind its obnoxious policy. Britain, now engaged in the war in the Peninsula and needing American food for the army as well as American transport to deliver it, was prepared to revoke her orders, but only on the condition of an assurance that the Act of Non-Intercourse would be effectively maintained against France; and she modified the extent of her blockade of November 1807, confining it to the

[1] Alison Phillips and Reede, *Neutrality*, vol. ii, p. 116.
[2] Sears, *Jefferson and the Embargo*, p. 267.

coasts of France and Holland and the Italian ports occupied by Napoleon, thus throwing open trading opportunities to American shipping. Unfortunately the negotiations broke down owing to a variety of causes—misunderstandings, mistrust, personal bias, and prejudice. These, however, were not alone in preventing an agreement with the United States in the matter of the Orders in Council. Another reason for the failure to come to terms is also to be seen in the greater importance which the Cabinet of the day assigned to the economic measures embodied in those Orders than to the campaign in the Peninsula which would have benefited from the services and supplies of a friendly America: for the food of the army in Spain could best be procured in the States and carried in American bottoms. Canning and some of his colleagues had, from the first, been convinced that the campaign in Spain would prove to be an effective drain on Napoleon's forces, but that view was not generally accepted either in Parliament or in the country as a whole; and it was for this reason that the sound principle never to adopt measures which tend to stir up fresh enemies was violated. Though the battle of Talavera (28 June 1809) had been hailed as a brilliant victory, its sequel had been the retreat to the lines of Torres Vedras and this was interpreted by those who opposed the strategy of the Spanish war as a proof that the campaign in the Peninsula would produce no decisive result. The old dispute of whether to make war with an army on the Continent or by economic action at sea once more arose. With trade depressed, bankruptcies and unemployment stalking through the land, taxes burdensome and discontent rife, this seemed no moment for a costly land war in Spain in addition to the many other tasks to which the country was committed. The City of London, disliking intensely the campaign, petitioned for the withdrawal of the army from Spain—let Spain, it demanded, fight her own battles. Lord Lansdowne had already (8 June 1809) roundly condemned the Spanish war. Ministers, he said, knew they could expect no aid from Spain and were guilty of 'incurable incapacity, blindness, incorrigible presumption and obstinacy'. Europe could never be saved by such expeditions; a prudent use must be made of Britain's resources. He moved a resolution to the effect that the safety of the army had been improvidently risked without grounds to

expect any good result. Though his motion was defeated by 65 votes to 33[1] his view was widely held in the country. During the last months of 1809, said a writer in the *Annual Register*, 'the war on the Continent had ceased either to feed our hopes, or amuse our leisure'. Only Wellington's optimistic dispatches enabled the Government to continue their effort in Spain and at least a full year was to elapse before the importance and influence of the Peninsular War were to be appreciated. It is therefore possible to understand why the Government was not disposed to abandon what it regarded as its major effort, embodied in the Orders, even though by so doing the effort in Spain would be favoured: for that effort, besides being unpopular, was then regarded as a minor one. Though, too, America had expressed by her several Acts and many protests her hostility, those Acts, injurious as they had been, had not proved fatal; and ministers did not believe that she would proceed to the extremity of war.

In 1810 another factor came into play affecting the continuation of the orders. The French decrees, combined with the Orders, had largely paralysed Russian trade, and the Czar was finding his alliance with France burdensome and costly. This therefore did not appear to be a moment at which to relax the economic grip, but rather to draw the noose tighter and do all that was possible to cause the Czar to break with Napoleon. He made the first open step of defiance in December 1810, admitting the entrance of British colonial goods in neutral bottoms.

Throughout 1811 discussions continued without result. Though tempers were plainly rising in the United States and one party was vociferously advocating war with Britain for the wholly unrelated object of the conquest of Canada,[2] the British ministers persisted in their belief that the Orders would not result in war; even as late as March 1812 the Prime Minister asserted the Government's firm intention of maintaining the Orders, and the American representative in London reported that he could not perceive the smallest indication or apprehension

[1] *Annual Register*, 1810, p. 238.

[2] John Randolph, who had continuously opposed war and the Embargo said, in December 1811, that throughout the discussion he had heard but one monotonous cry, like the whippoorwill, 'Canada, Canada, Canada' (Julius M. Platt, 'Footnote to the War of 1812', *American Mercury*, Oct. 1827.

of a rupture, or any measure of preparation to meet such an event.[1] Nevertheless there was uneasiness in the Cabinet. The feeling against the Orders was increasing in the country owing to the dislocation of the export trade and the resulting unemployment. Two events in the spring of 1812 gave the Government opportunity to withdraw the Orders. In March Russia declared war on France; on 12 May the American Government delivered a statement from Paris, dated 11 April, to the effect that the offending French decrees had actually been rescinded in November 1810. Though the authenticity of the statement, in the words of a declaration of the Prince Regent, was 'open to the strongest suspicions', it suited the Cabinet to affect to believe it, for it provided the necessary reason for cancelling the Orders without loss of dignity; and at the same time the Russian declaration of war removed in a great measure the cause which had brought them into operation. The Orders had contributed to driving Napoleon to invade Spain and to alienate Russia. Their work was done. Now an added importance was attached to the maintenance of peace with the United States, for the Peninsular War had definitely become the principal British effort and must be pursued to the utmost of Britain's capacity and strength, in order to act as the strongest possible diversion of Napoleon's forces from Russia; and to do this the aid of American food-supplies to the army in Spain and of American shipping to carry it, were needed. The decision was therefore made to withdraw the Orders, conditionally on the repeal by the United States of the restrictive Acts against British commerce. On 23 June—the delay of about a month was in part due to the assassination of the Prime Minister—the Orders were repealed.

The repeal came too late. A week earlier, on 17 June, the United States had declared war, the House of Representatives voting for war by 79 to 39, and the Senate by 19 to 13 votes. War had thus formally begun on 19 June and American cruiser squadrons had already put to sea to attack British shipping: the invasion of Canada had begun.[2]

[1] Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, vol. i, p. 271.

[2] For detailed studies of the preliminaries of the war, cf. Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812*; Sears, *Jefferson and the Embargo*; Philips and Reede, *Neutrality*, vol. ii; *Edinburgh Review*, 1808–13; *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. i, pp. 397, 523; *Parliamentary History*, 1808–13, *passim*; T. Roosevelt,

While the British squadrons in the western Atlantic numbered some seventy pendants at the time of the outbreak of war, they were then widely scattered on their many duties of trade protection against the French privateers, stretching from the Bahamas to Newfoundland, and the force actually available on the American coast, with Halifax as its base, consisted of only one capital ship, eight frigates, and sixteen smaller vessels. Opposed to this was the small American navy of six frigates, three of them of a more powerful type than any of the British and corresponding to the modern heavy armoured cruiser, three sloops, and seven smaller craft; but behind this there was the shipping and seamen of the country which in the course of the war provided no less than 515 privateers.[1] Of these nearly two-thirds were fitted out by the six States, Massachusetts (150), New York (102), Pennsylvania (31), New Hampshire (16), Maine (15), and Connecticut (11), many of them specially built for good sailing qualities. The British land forces in Canada numbered about 4,500 men, of whom only 3,000 were effective for duty; the American recruited army numbered about 6,000 and, in addition, there was a militia of perhaps 50,000, but untrained and unwilling to act other than defensively in their own States.

The news of the American declaration of war reached London at the end of July. The Cabinet, in the belief that the repeal of the Orders would have removed the causes of the dispute and that therefore a settlement would prove possible as soon as the information reached Washington, refrained from ordering hostilities to begin, but sent instructions to the admiral in command in the West to open negotiations for an immediate cessation of the war. But there was still one obstacle to peace: the question of impressment. To the American demand that it must cease, combined with the proposal that safeguards against improper enlistment and naturalization should be instituted, the Cabinet would not agree. 'The Government', said Castlereagh, 'could not consent to suspend the exercise of a right on which the naval strength of the Empire mainly depends' unless it were assured that the end—the loss of seamen by desertion and false

Naval Operations of the War . . . of 1812–15; Julius W. Platt, 'Footnote to the War of 1812', *American Mercury*, October 1827; A. L. Burt, *The United States, Great Britain and North America*; Adams, *History of the United States*; Lucas, *The Canadian War o 1812*; Stephens, *War in Disguise or the Fraud of the Neutral Flags*.

[1] MacLay, *History of American Privateers*, p. 506.

naturalization—would be attained; and they felt no confidence in the means proposed. A further demand was made that Britain would engage to abstain in the future from her forms of blockade, a demand whose acceptance would have constituted an admission that the blockade of 1806 was illegal; which it was not. On these differences the negotiations, which lasted till the end of October, broke down.

During the period of waiting for the American reply the action of the British land and sea forces was confined to the defensive, the land forces decisively repelling an attempt at an invasion of Canada and the squadrons at sea taking steps to guard the trade by convoy and pursuit of the American frigate forces which had assumed the offensive immediately on the declaration of war. As no blockades had been ordered or attempted, the American preparations were uninterrupted and their vessels of war, both naval and private, sailed without hindrance from their ports. In December, when it became clear that no composition of the disputes was possible, orders were issued for the blockade of the Delaware and Chesapeake. It was thus not until then that operations of war were actually set afoot by the British.

The major operations of the war that followed were in two theatres, the ocean and the coasts of America, and the great lakes forming the frontier with Canada. The proceedings of the war were in three phases, the British strategy in each being dictated by the forces available at each stage.

In the first period of active war, beginning in December 1812, the British action was primarily defensive. On the ocean front the principal purpose was the protection of shipping, the two measures employed being convoy and the blockades of the Chesapeake and Delaware. Those blockades were military, not commercial. They aimed at preventing the enemy ships of war from getting to sea to attack commerce. Neutral ships were left free to sail, partly because they, in collusion with some American merchants, were carrying needed supplies to Canada and to Allied countries, partly because the ships of the squadron were too few to establish a rigorous closure of the ports and control of the coastal routes. Some measure of economic pressure resulted, however, for the sailing of American foreign and coastal shipping was impeded; but the demand for frigates and sloops

to provide convoy absorbed the available strength. Considerable losses of British shipping were suffered during these early months owing to the inadequacy of the protection which could be given, particularly in the West Indies.

On the Canadian front the situation depended mainly on the naval strength on the waters of the three great lakes. Since the invasion of Canada could only be made by water, across those lakes, the primary factor in the problem of invasion and defence against invasion was sea command. 'Neither I, nor any one else', declared the Duke of Wellington at a later date, 'can achieve success in the way of conquests unless you have a naval superiority on the Lakes.' This was recognized from the beginning on both sides, and each belligerent set about creating a fighting navy, composed of small vessels which they built on their respective shores. Shipbuilding was thus a governing element in sea power on the lakes, and in this respect the advantage lay with the Americans whose resources were both greater and closer at hand. They developed those resources with characteristic energy: they employed them with skill and courage. By 1814 the building competition was intense; even large frigates and a battleship were built, and 'the contest became almost farcical, for it was one of shipbuilding merely, and the minute one party completed a new ship, the other promptly retired into harbour until able in turn to complete a larger one'.[1] But many severe battles were fought for the command throughout 1813 and 1814, of which the result was that in the spring of 1814 the American flotillas had established a definite superiority and exercised the control of Lakes Erie, Huron, and Superior. They were, however, rendered unable to exploit that command owing to the turn of events in Europe following the fall of Napoleon in April which enabled the British to detach military reinforcements from France, some of which went to the Canadian frontier for its direct defence, others to the ocean coast for the indirect defence by diversionary operations.

The naval forces present in the western ocean at the outset quickly proved inadequate to meet the many needs of blockade, convoy, and cruising, and the numbers that were eventually found necessary furnish an eloquent reminder of the necessity for great cruiser forces. The original force of some seventy

[1] T. Roosevelt, *Naval Operations of the War of 1812–15*, p. 189.

vessels[1] was increased to eighty-five in November;[2] but this still proving insufficient it was expanded in February 1813 to ninety-eight.[3] Over and above these there were also another forty vessels[4] allocated to duties of cruising in the Eastern Atlantic, in the regions of the Azores, and elsewhere, to deal with raiding squadrons and single ships. Thus there were no fewer than some 140 pendants employed, or double the number that had been needed to meet the French attacks in the Caribbean and western Atlantic, and calling for the services of many more seamen than had been lost through desertion. Though the British blockade, once it was adequately constituted, confined the larger vessels of the enemy to their ports—the three principal captures made by them took place before January 1813—it could not keep the swarms of privateers in harbour. In the French war the only radical cure for this form of sporadic warfare had been the capture of the enemy's bases, but with the limited military forces that Britain could spare from Europe at this time, this was not possible in the American war, desirable as it was recognized to be.

The second phase of the war was began in the spring of 1813 after the increase in the squadron had been made. The blockade then became more rigorous. In March it was extended to further parts of the coast. The ports of New York, Charlestown, Savannah, and the approaches to the Mississippi were now included; and estuaries and ports along the sea coast were raided by combined bodies of vessels and marine detachments. The strategy was now definitely offensive in character, striking at the coastal trade and communications which, like those of France, performed the services of supply to the coastal regions. As a consequence the distribution of goods by sea was crippled and had to be effected by wagon transport, costly, slow and inadequate, and bringing great hardship and distress upon the community. Though privateers continued to exact losses, the convoys gave an effective general security to the British shipping.

The third phase of the war began when the ending of the war in France set free both ships and troops. Within three weeks of

[1] *Vide ante*, p. 244.
[2] Viz. 6 of the line, 64 frigates and sloops, 15 smaller vessels.
[3] Viz. 11 of the line, 75 frigates and sloops, 12 smaller vessels.
[4] Viz. 10 of the line, 10 frigates and sloops, 20 smaller vessels.

Napoleon's exile to Elba 3,000 troops were ordered to sail from the Gironde to relieve the pressure on the Canadian frontier in the area of Niagara. Others, to the number of from 15,000 to 20,000, sailing later went to the ocean coast. The opening sentence of the first set of instructions issued by the Secretary of State, Lord Bathurst, expresses plainly the purpose the Cabinet had in view: 'It having been judged expedient to effect a diversion on the coasts of the United States of America in favour of the army employed in the defence of Upper and Lower Canada. . . .' The extended raiding policy kept the whole coast in alarm. 'From Maryland to Georgia the militia were under arms literally to the hundred thousand.'[1] Unfortunately it was accompanied by a spirit of retaliation, particularly for the burning by the American forces of the town of York, and among its unmilitary acts was the burning of the city of Washington. The scope then widened. The object of the combined operations ceased to be merely diversionary in aid of the defence of Canada. It became offensive. In September 1813 a second set of instructions indicates its purpose. The leading objects were therein stated to be twofold:

'The first of these is to obtain a command of the embouchure of the Mississippi so as to deprive the back settlements of America of their communications with the sea. The second is to occupy some important and valuable possession by the restoration of which we may improve the conditions of peace, or which may entitle us to exact its cession as the price of peace.'[2]

The attack on New Orleans, which was actually delivered in February 1815 after the signing of the peace, the news of which had not yet reached America, was bloodily repulsed.

Peace negotiations had been opened in the spring of 1814. A Russian offer of mediation which had been made was accepted by the United States but was refused by Britain for the reason that the question would involve discussion of the principles of maritime rights which, in the view of the British Government, were not open to discussion on general grounds, still less to the arbitrament of Russia, whose attitude towards those rights had been so signally displayed both in 1780 and

[1] T. Roosevelt, op. cit., p. 230.

[2] Instructions for the Expedition to New Orleans, 8 Sept. 1814. For the importance attached by Jefferson to New Orleans, see *ante*, p. 215, *n.*

1801. For many months no advance could be made, principally owing to the standpoint adopted by both Powers to the matter of impressment. For long, too, the British commissioners insisted on the cession of that part of the province of Maine in the occupation of the British, not, it was emphasized, for reasons of accession of territory but on what were regarded as the needs of defence. Britain, being the weaker Power in North America, considered that she was entitled to claim this territory and the undisputed superiority on the lakes as a military barrier. Fortunately the threatening outlook in Europe at this time prevented her from persisting in a claim which would have prolonged the war and probably have served to unite the States, who themselves were so tired of the war and desirous of peace that they finally abandoned their demand concerning impressment in a common determination to discontinue hostilities. Peace was signed at Ghent on 24 December 1814 and ratified at Washington on 17 February 1815.

Thus a war ended in which neither Power attained the object for which it had gone to war. Britain had based her policy on the maintenance of those of her maritime rights deemed essential for the successful prosecution of the war against Napoleon. After she had rescinded the Orders in Council the one stumbling-block was impressment, the need for which lay in the necessity she felt for manning the navy. By her refusal to suspend this measure she became engaged in a war which added to her needs for seamen and lost her a quantity of shipping and of the seamen which manned it. Though in return she made captures, they were considerably less than her losses. America went to war in order to improve her trade, to protect her seamen's rights, and to conquer Canada. The measures which had obstructed her trade had been removed before the war began in earnest; she lost almost the whole of the trade she had possessed; she did not obtain her wishes regarding impressment, but withdrew her demand in the course of the negotiations; and she failed in her attempt to conquer Canada. Whether an earlier withdrawal of the Orders in Council would have injured British interests in the European war, and whether to have done so would have averted the war with the United States, are, even now, subjects of discussion. But the net result, on the British side, of a rigid insistence on the two matters affecting her sea power was that in the

endeavour to add strength to her maritime warfare she added another to her enemies and increased the demand for seamen which was already causing her grave anxiety. Theodore Roosevelt saw the difficulty that presented itself to both Governments. 'It is often difficult to realise that, in a clash between two peoples, not only may each side deem itself right, but each side may really be right from its own standpoint.' Each was, in fact, contending for a principle. The practical question calling for decision was how far it was expedient for each to press its cherished principle to the point of war.[1]

The points emphasized by the British statesmen at the European Peace Conferences in 1813 and 1814 indicated how they interpreted their experience of the maritime problems of this long war. On three matters their attitude was marked and unmistakable: insistence on the need for the maintenance of British maritime rights; the importance attached to the traditional necessity of preventing any strong Power from occupying the Low Countries; and the view they took of colonial warfare, which they regarded not as a means of imperial expansion but for the purpose of furnishing the nation's sea power with the bases essential for its operations.

Maritime rights came at once under discussion at the Peace Conference of 1813. The continental Powers, though they had owed their deliverance and independence to Britain's sea power, sought to whittle down the British Maritime Code. On this matter Castlereagh was adamant: 'Great Britain may be driven out of a Congress, but not out of her maritime rights, and if the Continental Powers know their business, they will not hazard this.' Lord Aberdeen was no less explicit. He told the French plenipotentiary, St. Aignan, that while England was ready to make great sacrifices to obtain peace for Europe and 'would not interfere with those maritime rights to which France could with justice pretend, no possible consideration could induce Great Britain to abandon a particle of what she felt to belong to the maritime Code, from which in no case would she ever recede'. Napoleon revived the attempt to reduce Britain's maritime rights at the Congress at Chatillon in 1814, when he was still hoping for a military success. 'There is not one Frenchman',

[1] T. Roosevelt, op. cit.

he said, 'who would not prefer death to conditions which would render us the slaves of England'. He represented himself as the protector of the rights of Europe against British greed, and, in terms of which we have heard some echo in recent years, he declared that it was 'the perpetual war adopted by England that had forced him to fight his defensive war against the aggression of his neighbours'.[1] But his blandishments were without effect upon the plenipotentiaries. The protocol of the conference announced support to the British declaration not to discuss the code, recognizing that Britain demanded nothing that she did not accord to others and that French insistence in raising this question was 'contrary to the object of the conference' since it tended to impede the establishment of peace. Metternich observed that all were well aware that Britain could not give way on this question which, for her, was a matter of her existence.

In regard to the Low Countries and Antwerp, and their relation to British sea power, Castlereagh was equally firm. Napoleon expressed in no uncertain terms the importance which he attached to retaining Antwerp. 'I must keep Antwerp', he exclaimed, 'since without that place France will not be able to possess a fleet. I am ready to give up all the colonies if by their sacrifice I can retain the mouths of the Scheldt for France.' To which Castlereagh replied: 'the destruction of that arsenal is essential to our safety. To leave it in the hands of France is little short of imposing upon Great Britain the charge of a perpetual war establishment. After all we have done for the Continent in this war, they owe it to us and to themselves to extinguish this fruitful source of danger to us both.'

Antwerp was not only a base upon which a constant watch would be necessary in peace and war. It was also a shipbuilding establishment of a particular importance in time of war, for timber from the northern parts of France and from Germany could reach the dockyard by way of the inland waterways of the Rhine and the Meuse when the way to Brest through the North Sea was closed by the British navy; even the spars from the Baltic would find their way to Antwerp unless that sea was also dominated by the British fleet.

In the third matter, of the colonies, the question arose of the

[1] *Memoirs of Caulaincourt*, vol. iii, p. 393.

disposal of those taken from the enemy during the course of the war, with the strategical objects of depriving him of resources and naval bases and of gaining naval bases for operations against him. Castlereagh categorically rejected any intention of retaining any of them for their commercial value. 'They [the British] do not desire to retain any of those colonies for their mere commercial value, too happy if by their restoration they can give other States an additional motive to cultivate the arts of peace. The only objects to which they desire to adhere are those which affect essentially the enjoyment and security of their own possessions.' Here again, in the plainest terms, is the reply to that repeated charge that Britain's political aim has been to embroil the peace-loving nations of Europe in war in order to create the opportunity for expanding her Empire and her trade, deserting her allies and leaving them in the lurch. The possessions she retained were only those whose strategical importance had been so clearly demonstrated during the twenty years of war; and this did not include all of them. So, even Minorca, Martinique, and Guadeloupe were returned to their original owners, and the rich islands of the Dutch in the East Indies. Malta, Tobago, St. Lucia, Mauritius, Demerara, Essequibo, Berbice, and the Cape of Good Hope were kept, a payment of £2 million being made to the Dutch for the last named. It is no exaggeration to say that, but for that decision to hold the Cape, and for the decision of earlier times to retain Gibraltar, the war of 1939 would have taken a very different course.

Finally we have Castlereagh's conclusions, impressed upon him by his experience of the war, on the necessity of maintaining the military (using the word in its broadest sense) establishments in peace and the particular use to which he thought the nation's strength should be applied in war, namely, in attack on the enemy's oversea possessions for the strategical reasons above mentioned. 'The power of our establishments should be so contrived as to admit of a rapid expansion at the outset of a war, so as to place us at once in security at home whilst we are enabled to reap the full fruits of our maritime superiority in striking an early blow against the colonies of the enemy.'[1]

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, vol. v, pp. 29–30.

VIII

SEA POWER IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES, 1815–1914

WHEN peace was finally declared in 1815 Britain's sea power was supreme in all its elements. In ships of war it was superior to the combined fleets of the world, with over 200 ships of the line, nearly 300 frigates and corvettes, and a flotilla of smaller craft numbering over 400. Bases had been acquired in all the principal oceans—in the Mediterranean, the western Atlantic, on the Cape route, and in the Eastern Seas. British mercantile shipping carried the bulk of the world's trade, its crews, now restored under the provisions of the Navigation Acts, were composed of British seamen. Behind the shipping there was a healthy and expanding shipbuilding industry. One weakness remained: the agelong weakness of an absence of any organization to provide for an adequate supply of trained seamen for the navy or for the expansion in war which, as all experience had shown, from the days of King William to those of George III, would be needed. In spite of many recommendations of committees for forming a regular body of seamen, in spite of the writings of men from Defoe in the seventeenth, Tomlinson in the eighteenth, and Marryat in the nineteenth centuries, and of Castlereagh's doctrine that 'the power of your establishments should be so contrived as to admit of a rapid expansion at the outset of a war', the navy still depended upon two almost medieval methods of bringing her peace-time strength up to a war footing—the payment of bounties and impressment: methods whose inadequacy, no less than their injustice, had been repeatedly demonstrated. Parliament, whose inaction in remedying the grievances of the seamen of the navy had been the prime cause of the great mutiny which had endangered the country in 1796, as Admiral Vernon had prophesied it would half a century earlier, and which had been a contributory element in the war with the United States in 1812, still did nothing to remedy this state of affairs, or to make provision for the efficient training of that part of the fleet that was kept in commission. In 1839 the Senior Naval Lord resigned owing to what he

described as 'the rotten system of manning', and the result of this serious neglect was displayed in 1840 when, a critical situation having arisen with France over Syria, it took over four months to raise the 4,000 men needed to man the Mediterranean fleet. Again, when war came with Russia in 1854, the fleet which was sent, after prolonged delay, to the Baltic, was inadequately manned with untrained and undisciplined crews. In the words of its commander-in-chief, it was not fit to go into action. Almost the whole of the crews consisted of no more than 33,000 coastguardsmen and riggers, and the needs of war had been so little considered by the statesmen that a Lord of the Admiralty said: 'If you find 300 able seamen on board each ship, I shall be greatly surprised.' The Admiral in the Baltic was frequently enjoined to have recourse to the disgraceful expedient of entering foreigners from the northern States to complete his ships' companies.

The peace of 1815 was disturbed a bare eight years after its conclusion by events in Spain, events which affected British sea power. The measures taken by the Spanish King for suppressing the liberal and republican movements caused a revolution in 1823 which was regarded as a menace to Europe. After three years Louis XVIII obtained a mandate from the Great Powers, except Britain, to march an army into Spain, crush the revolution, and restore the royal order. Britain alone strongly opposed this intervention in the internal affairs of Spain, and among the reasons for her opposition was the fact that she scented in it an intention to revive that Bourbon domination of the Peninsula which had made the Bourbon alliance a threat to Britain throughout the preceding century. But while she was not prepared to take active steps against France, which would have demanded the use of an army which she did not possess, she made it known that she would not allow the Spanish colonies, then in revolt against Madrid, to be subjugated. In those oversea regions she could use her sea power effectively; in the face of it no armies from Europe could reach the scene of conflict in the colonies. Out of that movement the Monroe Doctrine was born. If France had Spain, said Canning, it should at least be Spain without her colonies. But while Britain thus refrained from intervention within Spain herself she was prepared to go

to greater lengths when there appeared to be a possibility that Portugal would be invaded and annexed by Spain, and Canning, in 1826, sent an army of 4,000 men to defend Lisbon. This exceptional care for Lisbon was due to the high strategical importance attached to the Tagus. Palmerston put the matter in these terms: 'Only fancy Portugal forming part of Spain, and Spain led away by France into a war with England: and what would be our naval condition with all the ports from Calais to Marseilles hostile to us—St. Malo, Cherbourg, Brest, Rochefort, Corunna, Vigo, the Tagus, Cadiz, Cartagena, Port Mahon, Toulon—with nothing between us and Malta but Gibraltar?' In other words, a maritime coalition of France and Spain which had the use of the Tagus would be in a position most seriously to interrupt our sea communications with the Mediterranean and therefore to undermine our power in the Mediterranean and all that that would imply in our foreign policy and the safety of India.

Other events affecting British sea power followed. In 1830 France began her expansion into North Africa. The existence of piracy in Algiers served as reason for picking a quarrel with the Bey. It was said to be 'the sacred duty of France', a duty which she owed to Europe, to rid Africa of these pests; pests which, incidentally, had ceased to exist since they had been crushed effectively in 1816 by the British bombardment of Algiers. In England this movement was regarded with serious misgiving as it was interpreted to indicate an intention on the part of France to establish a naval base on the north coast of Africa, threatening the British sea route through the Mediterranean. That misgiving became more acute when, four years later, Algiers was formally annexed. Anglo-French relations, already cool as the result of the French actions in 1823 and 1830, became markedly cooler.

At the same time a series of other events closely affecting British security at sea were in progress in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean. There, Russian policy appeared to be threatening the integrity of Turkey. Pitt, in his day, had regarded Turkey's integrity as a vital British interest, and so it was still regarded. The principal reason for this doctrine was that a Russian conquest of Turkey, including as it would the seizure of Constantinople and the command of the Sea of Marmora and the Dardanelles, would enable a Russian fleet to enter at its will

the Mediterranean and to operate there from an impregnable base. In that situation a fleet would threaten the route to Egypt and thereby expose India to danger; for a Russian army could be secretly and swiftly embarked and carried into Egypt and, going by way of the Red Sea as Napoleon had intended to do in 1798, reach India long before any British reinforcements, taking the route round the Cape, could possibly arrive there. Sea officers had not considered this an impossible undertaking in Napoleon's day, for shipping capable of carrying a large army could be obtained in the Red Sea.

The integrity of Turkey was definitely threatened in 1831 when Mehemet Ali, the Viceroy of Egypt—then a Turkish province—revolted and invaded Syria, sweeping his victorious way as far as Aleppo and Damascus. In his extreme danger the Sultan called upon Britain for help. Palmerston, who was not yet convinced that British interests were involved, did nothing beyond giving the Sultan expressions of his sympathy and reprobating Mehemet's aggression; a sympathy which, unaccompanied as it was by any action, gave neither satisfaction nor support to the Sultan. While the British minister confined himself to words, Russia acted. The Czar sent a fleet and an army to Turkey and to the Dardanelles to guard them against the Egyptian forces, and, in reward for this service he obtained, by the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi on 18 July 1833, that which Russia had long desired, the exclusive right of sending her ships of war through the Dardanelles. This was the very thing which it had been the object of Britain for the last forty years to prevent. It was a severe diplomatic defeat for Britain and brought about a coldness in Russo-British relations. 'So long as this Treaty remains in force,' the Duke of Wellington told the Russian ambassador in 1834, 'it will be impossible for us not to observe a reticence towards your government, with which we should so much like to have a good understanding on all points.'

There were two alternatives to the unilateral and exclusive use of the Dardanelles by Russia. Either the Straits might be closed, as they had hitherto been closed, to all ships of war, and recognized as internal Turkish waters over which Turkey was entitled to exercise full authority; or they might be thrown open to the ships of all nations without exception. The question which British statesmen had to decide, and have more than

once had to decide since that day, was a practical one of sea power. Would it be more advantageous to Britain that she should be able to send a fleet into the Black Sea, or that Russia should not be able to send a fleet into the Mediterranean? On this British ministers have held different views at different times. In 1835 Wellington had no doubt as to which he preferred. When asked by Palmerston which he would recommend he replied without hesitation: 'To close them. In those waters we are a long way from our resources, Russia is close to hers.' Lord Salisbury, who initially held the same view, altered his opinion in later times and advocated the opening of the Straits. Obviously, the advantages at any time depend largely upon existing conditions. One of the considerations, for instance, which was then held to favour the Turkish control of the Straits was that, in a war with Russia, Turkey would certainly be the ally of Britain and therefore the Straits would be open to her fleet. But in any case the exclusive Russian right was regarded as contrary to British interests and British security at sea. Opposition to the treaty was therefore not relaxed and, though it was never really effective, it remained in force until 1839 when the Czar accepted the situation and announced his readiness to accept the British principle of a Turkish control of the Straits.

Two other situations, each relating to the major British interest of sea power, arose in 1838, one in the western and the other in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean. In the west France made demands upon the Bey of Tunis for the possession of certain territories. With the example of Algiers fresh in their minds British ministers regarded this as a prelude to a further extension of French territory on the African coast leading to the establishment of another naval base in Tunis. A series of French bases would then stretch from Oran to the narrows of the Sicilian Channel. Britain therefore offered strong opposition with the result that France then abstained from seizing Tunis: but the incident left its mark and Anglo-French relations again deteriorated. In Britain the belief was widely held that France was engaged in a definite policy of acquiring naval bases throughout the world with the ultimate object of an attack upon British commerce either when a war, or a favourable opportunity for striking, should arise. Thus *The Times* of 11 September 1838 gave expression to these views. 'Let the merchants of Great

Britain look around them. Let them turn their eyes to Senegal, Oran, Algiers, Constantine, Tunis, Greece, Naples, the Amazon, the Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf of California, and they will perceive in each of those regions France established as the avowed enemy of British commerce.'

In the eastern basin of the Mediterranean the Pasha of Egypt resumed his threat to Turkey. The effect of Russian intervention in the earlier revolt had not been forgotten in London and the possibility that it would be repeated could not be lost sight of. If this should again happen it was not to be expected that Russia would refrain from occupying Constantinople and the Dardanelles, and it was therefore regarded as essential that Mehemet Ali should be stopped. Britain sought the co-operation of some of the other Powers with a view to international action. This was not easy to obtain. French public opinion was strongly in favour of the Egyptian Pasha, owing, according to Sir H. Bulwer, 'to the traditions of the French Foreign Office, which would assign to France the position of patronage over Egypt'. Napoleon's expedition had embedded this policy deep in the French mind. It was a policy natural for France if France was the enemy of England, but it was a policy impossible for France if there was to be a sincere alliance and friendship between the two countries, 'because the mistress of India cannot permit France to be mistress, directly or indirectly, of the road to her Indian dominions'.[1] Matters appeared to have reached a threatening state in the end of 1839 when a strong fleet was being fitted out at Toulon. As the only possible opponent in the Mediterranean was England, since the Russian fleet was shut up in the Black Sea, and as a violent campaign was being conducted in the French press urging that England should be forced to recognize the independence of Mehemet Ali and to surrender Gibraltar to Spain, the preparation of this fleet was interpreted as the prelude to war with Britain. The formation of a quadruple alliance was effected in the face of which France held her hand. Palmerston attached so much importance to the issue that he was fully prepared to go to war if France should prove obdurate. In one of his characteristic dispatches he told the British ambassador in Paris to warn France 'in the most friendly and inoffensive manner' that if she threw down the gauntlet,

[1] Bulwer, *Life of Palmerston*, vol. ii, p. 292.

'we shall not refuse to pick it up, and that if she begins war, she will to a certainty lose her ships and colonies and commerce before she sees the end of it: that her army in Algiers will cease to give her anxiety, and that Mehemet Ali will just be chucked into the Nile'.[1] A British fleet solved the problem. Together with some token contingents of the alliance it went to Syria, defeated the Pasha at Acre and brought his victorious career to an end.

Throughout this period of strained relations between Britain and France the very great increase which was being made in the French navy contributed to the British unease. British apprehensions gathered strength in 1844 when a responsible French admiral, the Prince de Joinville, published an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* pointing out that a war with England was not to be feared if a sudden attack upon her were prepared and launched. As the new steam navy had made much of the sailing navy obsolete, England's naval superiority had been greatly reduced. A superior French fleet was now in the Mediterranean and could fall suddenly on the British squadron and destroy it; a steam fleet in the Channel could throw troops into England in a single night; cruisers on the trade routes could devastate British commerce. This truculent article produced no small concern in England, and it was followed two years later by a great and costly French building programme in which steam vessels figured largely. The whole question of defence against invasion now appeared in a different light from hitherto. The naval defence which had been depended upon until the coming of steam was now believed to be no longer reliable: there was no way of preventing 30,000 men being rushed across the Channel in the dark, said Palmerston. Wellington expressed the opinion that there was not a spot on the coast between Dover and Portsmouth except Dover Castle itself where infantry could not be landed at any time, wind or weather. All eyes turned at once to measures of local defence—to fortresses, garrisons, and a militia—the very measures which had proved so singularly useless when de Ruyter came up the Thames in 1667.

A temporary truce to this anxiety was brought about in 1848 by the fall of Louis Philippe. In 1849 France offered to reduce

[1] Palmerston to Bulwer, 22 Sept 1840. Lord Malmesbury (*Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*) refers to the tension in September 1840 and again from 1844 to 1852.

her naval armaments if Britain would reduce hers to a relative extent. Palmerston rejected this proposal, making the obvious reply that Britain's naval strength was not determined merely by those of any single foreign Power, and it came to nothing. The strained relations which had arisen directly out of the question of sea power were, however, suspended when the two nations found a common cause in opposition to Russia in 1854.

In the Anglo-French war with Russia of 1854–5 the question of the use of British sea power was viewed differently by more than one statesman. What should be Britain's contribution to the common cause? The natural thing would be to send an army to act in co-operation with a French army, but the British army was not only very small but also far from being well equipped; moreover, the difficulties of co-operation between two armies under separate commands were a matter of common knowledge. Whether so great a military Power as Russia could be beaten by military action was gravely doubted by some, among them Lord Clarendon, who preferred the alternative of economic pressure. 'Clarendon thinks we shall get the better of Russia, but that it will be by blockading her ports and ruining her commerce and not by military operations, and that this may take two or three years or more, but is certain in the end.'[1] Lord Malmesbury, on the other hand, considered that both naval and military action were necessary and expressed regret, in the latter part of the war, that the whole of the military operations had not been confided to France and the naval to Britain; an arrangement which could not only have avoided the friction of divided commands but would also have assured the maintenance of British superiority at sea over both France and Russia.[2] Whether this would have made for more intimate co-operation between the land and sea forces is open to doubt.

In the event the principal allied effort was made on land, in the Crimea. Lord Raglan, the British military commander, was told that his first duty was to prevent the advance of the Russian army on Constantinople. 'The most effective means of so doing would be the capture of Sebastopol, which would

[1] *Greville Memoirs*, 20 April 1855.
[2] Malmesbury, *Memoirs*, vol. ii, pp. 34, 36.

deprive the Russian army of the use of the sea', forcing it to move on Turkey by the difficult route on land. So far as the operations at sea alone were concerned ministers showed themselves strangely unaware of the experience of the past, expecting the ships of the navy to attack and destroy the powerful Russian fortresses in the Black Sea and the Baltic; an employment of ships of war that had been condemned by every seaman in the past, and, when employed, had always failed except against weak, or weakly defended, positions such as the pirate stronghold at Algiers. This was not done except at Odessa and there at the cost of a heavy loss. So the principal functions that fell to the allied sea power were those of assuring the safe passage and supply of the army in the Crimea, of preventing the Russian fleet in the Baltic from coming into the North Sea to attack the British coast and coasting trade, and of creating a diversion by a threat of landing in the Baltic which would prevent the despatch of troops from thence to the Crimea. The admiral was enjoined that his first and principal duty was to destroy the Russian fleet. Such economic pressure as automatically resulted from the closing of the sea to Russian shipping played little part in the outcome of the war, for Russia was not dependent on imports for her national life, nor for the munitions of her army, and she could easily survive a short suspension of her export trade. Her sea commerce, moreover, could continue in neutral bottoms without the interference of the allied fleets. Owing to the conflicting views of Britain and France on the question of capture at sea, each country had waived certain of its claims in regard to maritime rights, the British conceding the right they had so strenuously asserted in the past of preventing the carriage of enemy goods by neutral shipping. This arrangement, originally intended as a temporary measure only, adopted to harmonize the action of the allies during the war, was, however, followed by Britain's abandonment of some of her most cherished and traditional maritime rights by the Declaration of Paris in 1856, among them the right to capture enemy property other than contraband in neutral bottoms. This acceptance of the continental view had no ethical basis; it constituted no admission of moral error in her ancient doctrine. The reason for the surrender was that it was assumed that it would not prove possible in the future to exercise the right of capture 'under pain

of having all mankind against us'.[1] It was also believed to be advantageous to Britain, as an adequate *quid pro quo* for the surrendered rights was expected to result from the abolition of privateering, thus removing one of the great dangers to which shipping had been exposed. It was even hoped that it must eventually lead to what Sir Robert Morier called 'the total enfranchisement of private property at sea'. The influence of economic pressure and the part played in it by capture at sea had been forgotten or were lightly contemned. Expediency, in fact, not principle, governed the surrender, a surrender which proved as unfruitful as actions based merely on temporary expediency generally do; for while the privateer disappeared, her place was taken by vessels armed by the State, and by specially built and heavily armed commerce destroyers in the form of armoured cruisers of which the latest examples were the so-called 'pocket battleships' of Germany and, in their due course, by the French torpedo-boat flotillas, by the German submarines and aircraft, and the mine. While nothing was gained in security, shackles were imposed on the action of sea power. Lord Salisbury, speaking in 1871, expressed the view that before the Declaration the British navy had been

> 'a powerful instrument in hampering and ultimately subduing Napoleon. . . . We then had the power to declare a general blockade, and of searching neutral ships for the enemy's goods. In your reckless Utopianism you have flung these two weapons away. . . . I believe that since the Declaration of Paris, the fleet, valuable as it is for preventing an invasion of these shores, is almost valueless for any other purpose'.[2]

The proposal for immunizing 'private property at sea' was strongly opposed in 1859 by Lord John Russell.[3]

Anglo-French co-operation in war was followed by a renewal of antagonism in peace. France and Russia rapidly drew together and the possibility that the two navies might again be combined against Britain had to be faced. A Board of Admiralty minute of 27 March 1858 remarked: 'When determining upon the number of ships, and upon the naval force generally,

[1] Lord Clarendon to Lord Palmerston, 6 Apr. 1856. Quoted by Sir William Malkin in the *British Yearbook of International Law*, 1927, p. 26.

[2] Hansard, 6 Mar. 1871, p. 1364.

[3] Temperley and Penson, *Foundations of British Foreign Policy*, p. 292.

which England should have, it should be borne in mind that the navies of France and Russia may very probably be combined against her.' The situation at sea had been gravely affected by the introduction of the ironclad ship of war. The great mass of wooden ships of which the British navy had consisted was now being rendered obsolete and France was starting the reconstruction of her navy on level terms with Britain. The two countries started from scratch in the race for sea supremacy, and in July 1858 the Surveyor of the Navy was writing that 'unless some extraordinary steps are at once taken to expedite the building of screw ships of the line, the French at the close of next year will be actually superior to us as regards the most powerful class of ships of war'.[1] A severe strain on Anglo-French relations resulted. In 1861 Napoleon III made an attempt to ease the situation, assuring Lord Malmesbury that the new French navy constituted no threat to Britain. 'Let each build what he considers the right numbers: you ought to have twice as many as I, as they are your principal protection.' Earlier in the same year a plan had been put forward by the Secretary of the Admiralty for limiting the two navies in such a way as would assure British superiority over France. It was rejected by Palmerston for the same reason as the earlier attempt had been rejected—that Great Britain's naval forces were not dependent on the strength of those of France alone; those of other Powers had also to be considered. 'Such an agreement', he said, 'with any foreign Power would shackle the free action and discretion of England which we would never submit to' and would lead to 'a perpetual inquisitorial watch kept up by each power over the dockyards and Navy of the other, in order to see that the agreement was not broken into, and this would lead to frequent bickerings, besides being intolerable to national self respect.'[2] The same principle informed the view expressed in 1887 by Sir Charles Dilke. 'It is easy to write off the Italian superiority in monster ships and to declare that Italy is certain to be in alliance with ourselves. There are no certainties when the existence of our country is at stake.'[3]

So the rivalry continued, the strain being particularly acute in the Mediterranean. In the eyes of contemporary British

[1] Quoted in J. P. Baxter, *Introduction to the Ironclad Warship* (1933), p. 120.
[2] Quoted in J. P. Baxter, op. cit., p. 323. [3] *Fortnightly Review*, 1887, p. 789.

statesmen the object of France appeared to be the expulsion of the British from the Mediterranean. Thus, in 1865, Palmerston declared that the standing policy of France was 'to make the Mediterranean a French lake' and that she pursued this policy on every occasion by the occupation of more territory on the African shore. That process should, in his opinion, be opposed, for although with her superiority at sea Britain could 'drive them out of the positions they might acquire, to do so would cost us great efforts, many lives, and much money, and therefore prevention is better than cure'.

The Mediterranean route to India does not end in Egypt: it extends down the Red Sea and had done so even before the opening of the Suez Canal. Hence the capture of Aden in 1839. The importance Palmerston attached to the security of the Red Sea route was shown in his care that the independence of the peoples of the coast should not be sacrificed to either Turkey or France, and naval establishments arise to threaten the route. He opposed the extension of France's interests after her purchase of Obock in 1862. A different view, however, was held by Gladstone, who attached little importance to the route, saying, in 1887, that even if the canal were blocked and the Red Sea closed, the harm done would amount to no more than an average delay of three weeks in the communications with India which 'would hardly make a difference to us between life and death in the maintenance of our Indian Empire'. His Government therefore offered no opposition to the Italian developments in the Red Sea, though the Foreign Office took a different view in 1880 and 1881. Lord Tenterden then (June 1881) expressed the opinion that it would be political blindness not to prevent the establishment of an Italian colony at Assab 'directly menacing the English command of the Red Sea' and saying that, in war, Britain must either at once secure an alliance with Italy or capture Massawa. The extension of French colonial possessions to Indo-China and Madagascar brought French interests forward in the Red Sea and contributed to a British encouragement of Italian settlement in Eritrea, as a counterweight to French sea power in those waters.[1]

[1] For an examination of the Red Sea policy of Italy see Miss Agatha Ramm, 'Great Britain and the Planting of Italian Powers in the Red Sea, 1868–1885', in the *English Historical Review*, May 1944, to whom I am indebted for this information.

The Anglo-French naval rivalry was interrupted in 1870 by the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. The difficulties of foreseeing the course of international events, and therefore of calculating the strength of the navy on an existing political grouping or the expectation of a lasting peace, was illustrated at this time. In June 1870 the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office assured Lord Granville that in his long experience he never had known so great a lull in foreign affairs. Six weeks later France and Germany were at war and British ministers were facing the question of whether, if Belgium were invaded, Britain would be required to intervene in virtue of the Treaty of 1839.

During the war the resources of France were necessarily devoted to her army, but so soon as she had recovered from its effects she set herself to re-establish her naval strength and to embark upon a policy of colonial expansion. In 1883 the First Lord remarked that 'great activity had prevailed in France' for the last six years to make up for lost time, and this, though natural, called for increased programmes in Britain. In that year Britain laid down eight ships to four of France. With the formation of the Triple Alliance France and Russia had again drawn together, and the dangers and difficulties to which that combination gave rise in British eyes reasserted themselves; for there were many points throughout the world in which the interests of the three Powers clashed—Egypt, Morocco, Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf, and, later, Siam and Madagascar. At the same time the rapid developments of the colonies in Australia and South Africa, and the increase of the Empire's shipping, were multiplying the responsibilities that fell to British sea power.

A realization of these responsibilities and of the inadequacy of the navy in its existing strength to meet them form the subject of many writings during the middle eighties. The public pressure had its result. In 1889 a Naval Defence Act was passed which provided an increase in the fleet, and the 'Two-Power Standard' was adopted and announced. This standard had been recommended but rejected after the Russian War of 1855. It was not new—it was, indeed, no more than a return to the policy with which British Governments had replied throughout the eighteenth century to the Bourbon Alliance. Hawke, during his administration of the Admiralty, had acted upon the maxim

that 'our enemies being peculiarly attentive to their Marine, our fleet could only be termed considerable in the proportion it bore to that of the House of Bourbon'.[1] In its expression in 1889 the Two-Power Standard was regarded as a minimum standard; in its interpretation it related only to the battleship units, expressly those of the Continent and specifically excluding the United States. 'It is admitted', said the First Lord in December 1893, 'to be a cardinal part of the policy of this country: the minimum standard of security which this country demands and expects is that our fleet should be equal to the combination of the two next strongest navies in Europe.' No precise quantitative interpretation of 'equality' was made, but the meaning was clear. It was that the navy should be capable of meeting the two next strongest navies in war, and this implied that it was numerically stronger: in other words, that there should be a margin of superiority. That margin was put by some at 10 per cent., but others, taking into consideration the conditions in which the fleet would have to act, the losses for which it must be prepared in having to keep the sea, the proportions which experience had shown were necessary for the maintenance of a blockade, the fact that the enemy could choose his moment and bring his entire force into play, to meet which the British fleet must be ready at all times, considered a margin of 40 per cent. was needed.[2]

The numerical standard did not apply to cruisers or to the lesser craft whose number, as the seamen and statesmen of that day were well aware, was governed by the duties they had to perform and not directly by the number of the possible enemy. Thus in March 1896 the First Lord (Goschen) said that the programme of cruisers was 'based not upon a comparison of cruisers other nations have, because their conditions are entirely different from ours, but upon the question what we have to defend, what services have to be performed, in what direction the food supply will have to be protected, and what resources we have'.[3] And

[1] 'It would have saved England many millions if this maxim had not been constantly set aside when wars were over, and the supposed exigencies of the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought to bear upon First Lords of the Admiralty' (Professor Montagu Burrows, *Life of Hawke*, p. 455).

[2] For an account of the various ways in which the policy of battleships' strength was understood cf. E. L. Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy*, Appendix XII.

[3] Hansard, vol. xxxvii, p. 1520 (2 Mar. 1896).

a later First Lord (Pretyman) in 1903 similarly said that the standard applied to battleships only, 'because in the matter of cruisers there can be no question of equality'. The standard of strength, he went on to say, was not a comparative one: it was 'a proportion to be considered in relation to the magnitude of the interests to be protected'. But though there was more than one interpretation of the exact meaning of the expression 'Two-Power Standard', its general intention was clear.[1]

While the needs of fighting ships were thus being reviewed and adjusted, those of the second element of sea power, bases, began also to receive a much overdue attention; for a long period of apathy in this matter had resulted in the oversea bases being inadequately garrisoned and defended and the coaling stations left without fortifications.[2] A moving spirit in this matter was Lord Brassey. In the third element, shipping, the Royal Commission on Food Supplies in War in 1904 reminded the country that while the navy was relied upon to provide security, 'we rely only in a less degree upon the widespread resources of our mercantile fleet and its powers to carry on our trade and reach all possible sources of supply wherever they exist'. The possibility that the Mediterranean route might have to be abandoned in war was referred to by the Carnarvon Commission of 1881, and also the further possibility that the Suez Canal might be blocked by an enemy; and though for some years naval opinion held that the route could be kept open, and the canal guarded, the precaution of building docks at the Cape and Mauritius was considered in 1896.

The great imperial problem of how this increasing burden of defence should be borne and distributed arose naturally out of the expansion of the navy. The subject cannot be discussed closely in the present work, but the prominent place which it has held among the British problems of defence for the last eighty years makes a brief mention necessary.

The question of the part which the colonies should play in their own defence had arisen even before this time. A Colonial Naval Defence Act had been passed in 1865 which provided for

[1] The manner in which sea officers calculated the needs of the country in cruisers was set out in a speech by Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby to the Chamber of Commerce in May 1888 (*The Times*, 28 May 1888). The Admiral estimated the needs at 186 cruisers.

[2] Cf. *Naval Annual*, 1887, chap. vi.

some small naval forces in the colonies at colonial expense, and responsibility for internal security on land had been transferred to most of the colonies by 1873. It was then beginning to be felt that the share of the burden of defence was insufficiently borne by the colonies. Thus Gladstone had observed in his day that as practical freedom had been conferred upon them, they should take their share in the general defence of the Empire. 'There is no grosser mistake in politics', he said, 'than to suppose you can separate the blessings and benefits of freedom from its burdens. . . . In other words, the colonies should pay their own way. . . .'[1]

In the early eighties of the century a school of writers began to draw attention to the inadequacy of the navy for performing the duties of protecting the Empire's interests oversea, both territorial and commercial, and to the fact that the burden that was being borne by the British taxpayer of the United Kingdom was becoming greater than he could bear; and urging that this burden ought to be shared by the whole of the British communities throughout the world. A proposal to this effect was made at the Colonial Conference in 1887 by the representatives of Cape Colony[2] which suggested the imposition in all the colonies of an import tax of 2 per cent. on foreign goods, the revenue thus raised beingd evoted to defence. Though the proposal received support from some of the colonies it was not discussed. Two years later Lord Dunraven raised the same point once more, saying that 'the defence of the Empire, the safeguarding of the trade and of the national and imperial commerce, are really the foreign politics of this country'. We must, he went on to say, 'live in unnecessary peril until a fund is formed for imperial defence . . . a fund lifted above the sphere of party politics, created within the Empire and administered by the Empire, and raised in fair proportion by the mother country and self-governing colonies; spent by the naval and military authorities at home in conjunction with representatives of the colonies'.[3]

The continually rising costs and needs of defence, to which

[1] Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. i, p. 132; cf. also Knaplund, *Gladstone and Britain's Imperial Policy, passim.*

[2] *Parliamentary Papers*, 1887, vol. lxi, discussion of 3 May 1887.

[3] *Nineteenth Century*, Feb. 1889.

attention had been drawn at the Colonial Conference of 1887, was again discussed in the Conference of 1902. The Secretary of State for the Colonies called attention to the disparity in the distribution of the cost of naval defence per head of population, which he gave as follows: United Kingdom 15*s.*, Cape Colony 1*s.* 10½*d.*, Commonwealth of Australia 1*s.* 0½*d.*, Dominion of Canada nil, Natal 10*s.* 9½*d.*, Newfoundland 3½*d.*, New Zealand 1*s.* 0¼*d.* He went on to say that the value of the sea-borne trade which the navy had to protect was between 11 and 12 million sterling in the year 1900.

'Of this vast sum a proportion of certainly not less than one-fourth was trade in which the taxpayer of the United Kingdom had no interest, either as buyer or seller of the particular goods represented by these values. It was either inter-colonial trade or trade between the British Dominions beyond the sea and foreign countries. The taxpayer of the United Kingdom has therefore the privilege of taking upon himself the lion's share of the burden, the interest in which is shared between himself and his fellow-subjects beyond the seas, but also a not less share of the burden in respect of interests which are not his own but exclusively those of his fellow-subjects beyond the seas.'[1]

The need for a common effort on the part of the whole Empire was plain, but though there were some advances in subsequent years the burden was still very unequally distributed. Even shortly before the war of 1914 the following figures were given by the late Lord Lothian in the *Round Table* of November 1910 of the cost per head of defence in the Estimates for 1909–10 as follows:

	Naval Defence	*Total Naval and Military*
Great Britain . .	£0 15 6	£1 8 0
Canada . .	Nil	3 1[2]
Australia . .	1 6	7 0
South Africa . .	1 6	Not settled[2]
New Zealand . .	2 2½	6 2

Though at this time there was this renaissance in the navy, the period was marked by a general assumption that the function of the navy was confined to defence: defence of the country against invasion, of the colonies against attack or annexation, of the trade. Since the objects of a war are never attainable by defence alone, as all experience of war by land and sea had

[1] Cmd. 1299 of 1902, p. 19.

[2] The Union Government had not yet met to consider question of defence.

abundantly shown, the functions of a fighting force cannot be restricted to the necessary, but negative, processes of defence, even if it were possible to attain security merely by beating off an attack. That offensive function of sea power, to which the British statesmen of two and a half centuries of strife had attached so great an importance—the exercise of economic pressure upon the enemy by the stoppage of his external communications—dropped out of sight. In the intensity of the desire for economy arguments were adduced to prove that it was advantageous to Great Britain and the Empire that capture at sea should be abolished, and that every means should be adopted to reduce the power of injuring commerce in war. The pleasing prospect was held out that a reduction in the cost of the navy would result from commerce being immune from capture, in the optimistic assumption that an enemy would observe such a rule if an advantage were to be derived from its breach. So a campaign in favour of 'the Freedom of the Seas' was pursued, a campaign in which all past experience was cast aside concerning the influence of capture at sea and the powers of the navy in protecting it. When this agitation was extreme in 1898 a note of realism was sounded by the First Lord:

'I know that it is said that we could secure ourselves from this particular danger [i.e. the interruption of our commerce] by accepting an alteration in the rules of International Law which would exempt merchant ships from capture in war; but the life of a people must rest on something stronger than the adhesion of a belligerent to a technical rule made in peace. We know too well that if the decisive issue of victory depended upon their breach, plausible reasons would be found, probably on the pretext of reprisals, for breaking a law which had no other sanction than the authority of a paper agreement.'

Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge was no less prophetic both as regards the ability to protect shipping and the fallacy of immunity by paper rules. Practical immunity could, he asserted, be given to commerce if adequate naval defence were provided and properly arranged. There was no sort of proof in existence that rules drawn up in peace would give it, and the belief that they would was contrary to all that is recorded of human action in war:

'To expect nations so engaged to regulate their action by rules drawn up in circumstances as different as can be would be as futile as trying to stop a dog fight by singing a hymn. . . . International

agreements and rules for the conduct of belligerents will be respected when a power has been invented to enforce compliance with them by physical means.'[1]

Our experience of the two German wars confirm that opinion.

Thus the problems of British sea power in all its aspects which confronted British statesmen during the closing years of the nineteenth and the opening years of the twentieth century were many and various. Intrinsically, however, many of them did not differ from those with which earlier generations had had to deal—the strength of the battle fleet, the needs of cruisers and flotilla craft, the importance of bases, shipping and of shipbuilding, the questions of belligerent rights. But some were new, and of these possibly the greatest was that relating to imperial co-operation in the maintenance of the sea power on which imperial security depends. Though much remained to be done, a new interest had been stimulated in this vital matter. Burdens were heavy, but there was a promise that they might in time become more evenly distributed. A note of optimism is to be observed in the writings of a naval historian in 1902. After remarking that 'no great commerce can be protected by a navy which is only equal in strength to its possible opponents' he went on:

'Whether the resources of the United Kingdom alone are equal to such a strain is a problem for the political financier to resolve. There seems to come a time in the life of all great commerce-powers when the requirements of the defence, which in such a case means the maintenance of an undisputed supremacy over any practical adverse coalition, exceed the capacity of the nation to respond to, and when such a moment arrives the commerce-power only retains its position on sufferance. Historically the doom of Great Britain would seem to be certain but for the new factor introduced by the existence of powerful and patriotic colonies, an advantage no forerunner among colonising nations has enjoyed, for hitherto colonies have required protection instead of being strong enough to join in the defence of the empire to which they belonged. If the colonies, to whom the sovereignty of the sea is as much a matter of life and death as it is to the mother country, see the truth in time and take their share of the responsibilities, the empire may yet afford a new historical illustration.'[2]

[1] Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, *Naval Warfare*, p. 161.

[2] M. Oppenheim, *The Naval Tracts of Sir William Monson*, vol. i, p. 26 n.

IX

THE GERMAN WARS, 1914–1945

THE rise of a new naval Power in Germany brought with it a marked change in the situation at sea. Though the movement for the creation of a German navy was set afoot in 1894, and found its first expression in a 'Navy Bill' in 1898, the desire of Germany to become a maritime Power was of long standing. In 1869 the 'small' Powers were already in trepidation for their security in view of Bismarck's policy, and Lord Morley records that the Dutch Minister informed the British ambassador at Vienna that in 1865 Bismarck had given him to understand that without colonies Prussia could never become a great maritime nation and that he coveted Holland less for its own sake than for its wealthy colonies.[1] At a later date von Bülow records the opinion of General von Plessen that it was a matter of the highest interest to Germany 'to have not only Denmark in her hands but also Holland and her colonies, if it was for nothing more than the urgent need of coaling stations'[2]; and that the general was only persuaded that the realization of this desirable acquisition must be deferred to a more distant future because it would lead to sanguinary conflicts with all the great nations, including America. von Bülow further recorded that the German naval staff desired to acquire ports in South America as naval bases.

Thus there was good reason for the British Government to interpret the almost frenzied naval policy of Germany as a threat to herself when the first Navy Bill of 1898 was followed by a second in 1902 of a considerably extended scope, accompanied as it was by a virulent and widespread demonstration of hostility throughout the country during the South African War. Britain now saw herself faced not only by Russia and France but by Germany also. An entente with Japan in 1902 was a result. It eased the situation in the Far East and enabled a reduction to be made in the squadron in China and a consequent strengthening of the fleet in the European seas. The

[1] Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii, p. 320.
[2] von Bülow, *Memoirs*, vol. ii, chap. vii, *passim*.

increasingly aggressive character of German policy drew France and Britain together in the Entente of 1904, the common danger from Germany making them compose their differences; and the destruction of the Russian fleet in the war with Japan in 1904–5 disposed of the threat from Russia. The question which then arose was the manner in which the established British naval policy of a Two-Power Standard was to be interpreted. The United States had always been specifically excluded from the calculations, Japan was an ally, there was the entente with France; and, though Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance, the possibility of her acting against England could then be discounted. The Austrian navy was small, though not negligible. So, though for the next few years ministers continued to assert that the Two-Power Standard was being, and would continue to be, maintained, the shipbuilding programme was directed towards meeting the German challenge. A policy of two keels to one was suggested, but postponed finally, in 1912. The First Lord, introducing the naval estimates on 18 March 1912, announced that the 'standard' was *for the time being* one of a 60 per cent. superiority in 'Dreadnought' type capital ships; but that it sufficed only while the earlier types were still efficient. The original Two-Power Standard, adopted when France and Russia were the probable combination against Britain, was, he said, no longer suitable, and was now modified to one of a 60 per cent. superiority in modern capital ships over Germany. This figure made no provision for meeting the Austrian fleet as well. To do that, and to provide against the possibility of hostile Italian action, was the allotted duty of the French ally, the bulk of whose modern ships were transferred from Brest to Toulon.

The theory of 'splendid isolation', if it had ever really existed, now disappeared, and precisely as the British statesmen of the eighteenth century had argued that co-operation with European Powers was essential for the maintenance of British sea power, so Sir Edward Grey argued in 1911. The policy of Britain, he told the Dominion Premiers attending a conference in that year, was determined by sea power. If one great Power, or group of Powers, should dominate Europe after attacking and destroying each rival in turn, Britain, if she wished to retain the command of the sea, would have to meet a combination not of two, but of five, Powers. With the resources which that combination

would possess and with the positions it would occupy throughout the world, this would be beyond her strength. Almost word for word this was the argument used against isolation by the men of the eighteenth century; and it was identical with the view, to be expressed thirty years later, of the President of the United States on the same subject of isolation:

'It must be explained again and again to people who like to think of the United States Navy as invincible that this can only be true if the British Navy survives. That is simple arithmetic. For if the world outside the Americas falls under Axis domination the shipbuilding facilities which the Axis Powers would then possess in all Europe, in the British Isles, and in the Far East, would be much greater than all the shipbuilding facilities and potentialities of all the Americas,—not only greater, but two or three times greater. Even if the United States threw all its resources into such a situation, seeking to double and even redouble the size of our Navy, the Axis Powers in control of the rest of the world would have the man power and physical resources to outbuild us several times over.'[1]

In 1907, while the rise of German sea power was in its full swing, a second conference[2] sat at The Hague to discuss certain principles of belligerent and neutral rights some of which had been brought prominently into notice by Russian practices during the recent Russo-Japanese War. The results of this conference, and of a succeeding conference held in London in the following year, superimposed upon the conditions laid down in the Declaration of Paris,[3] promised still further to blunt the offensive capacity of British sea power. The abolition of capture at sea, under the alluring title of 'The Freedom of the Seas', which had been advocated by the United States in 1899 was again proposed, but received too little support for adoption. Another proposal, concerning which natures of goods might legitimately be classed as contraband, found some agreement at The Hague and was referred to a naval conference in London. The British statesmen advocated the abolition of all contraband —a startling departure from the attitude of their predecessors of three centuries. This, fortunately, found no support. A definition of different degrees of contraband was, however, evolved.

[1] *The Times*, 12 Sept. 1941.

[2] The first conference, convened at the instance of the Czar, had sat at The Hague in 1899. It evolved some platonic resolutions but no more.

[3] *Vide ante*, p. 266.

In place of the old and logical meaning of the term as expressed by the Solicitor-General in 1801 that 'All articles designed for, and contributive to, the advantage of the enemy were properly contraband'—a definition which rightly interpreted the meaning originally applied to it—a novel and artificial meaning was then attached to it in which a rigid and legalistic division was established between articles 'conditionally contraband', 'unconditionally contraband', and outside the category of contraband. How completely divorced from the realities of war this was is shown by the fact that among the 'free' goods were aircraft, raw cotton, and metallic ores. One of the principal reasons for the British acceptance of this shearing of the strength of Britain's sea power lay in the assumption that England would not intervene in a future European war; that her position would always be that of a neutral; and that, as a neutral, her interest lay in her commerce not being interfered with by the belligerents. If, on the other hand, she should become engaged in a war with another Power, it was to her interest that her commerce should be immune, since she was peculiarly vulnerable and upon her commerce her life depended. The steamship was, moreover, believed to have made attack on shipping more easy and its defence more difficult, while at the same time the pressure which could be exerted upon an enemy by sea power was supposed to be far less than it had formerly been. It was therefore considered that British interests were best served by reducing the offensive capabilities of sea power. Not only the abolition of contraband was advocated: a widespread cry again arose at the same time for the immunity of what was called 'private property' at sea. A great lawyer urged that 'unoffending ships and innocent cargoes should be unmolested though they might belong to enemy citizens': a plea which begged the questions of which ships were 'unoffending' and what cargoes 'innocent'. It was argued further that the exercise of the right of capture would not 'bring upon the enemy a pressure so severe that it would be decisive in our favour', because the neutral world would supply the enemy. The argument left out of account the fact that pressure upon an enemy by economic means is the result of the cumulation of a number of measures, not of one alone; as a battle is not won by one arm, but by a combination of all arms. The plain fact remained that if certain goods serve to nourish

the enemy's efforts in war it is militarily correct to deprive him of them, and therefore proper to include them in the category of contraband goods.[1]

The conclusions concerning the supposed ineffective character of economic pressure were largely drawn, in so far as they affected an historical basis, from the limited experience of a few recent wars of the nineteenth century; wars fought between nations which were not susceptible to injury through the loss of their sea-borne commerce, not from the long and varied experience of the past. The Prussian wars with Denmark, Austria, and France, the Russo-Japanese War, the Spanish-American War, the wars between South American States were none of them either of a nature or a scope which could render economic pressure an important weapon in a nation's armoury. The effect of the blockade in the Civil War in America and the many extensions in that contest of the belligerents' rights were overlooked; the wide distinction existing between wars fought between individual adjacent States and the great wars of coalitions, when all or most of the principal Powers of the world are at grips, was ignored. When vast armies must draw their almost illimitable range of material for their war industries from all parts of the globe, and when imported food and materials for civil consumption have to reach the belligerents from every oversea source, the situation is wholly different from that of those limited duels from which the assumptions were made. Recent events, both in 1914–18 and in 1939–45, have assuredly made this plain.

One of the arguments most freely used at this time in favour of the abolition of the capture of 'private property' at sea was the assertion that in land warfare private property is immune.[2] The complete illusion of this belief had been as clearly demonstrated in the two German wars as it had already been in the Franco-Prussian War. A further reason adduced in support of the abolition of capture at sea was that belligerents have no right to inflict harm on the neutral who is unconcerned in their

[1] In the course of this controversy two authoritative papers were written by Admiral Mahan and Sir Julian Corbett, appearing in the admiral's book *Some Neglected Aspects of War*.

[2] Cf. M. Jacques Dumas, *Les Aspects économiques du Droit de Prise* (2 vols., 1926). The first volume was written before the war of 1914, the latter after. The present writer expressed a contrary view in *The British Year Book of International Law* (1928).

quarrels by depriving him of his normal trade. Actually, so far from the neutral having suffered loss of his normal trade, either in the past or the present, he invariably made great profits. Thus, in the year 1914–15 American merchants or ships profited by the war by increasing their trade to the allied countries by $639 million and to the neutral European states by $217 million. In the next financial year these figures were respectively $1,954 million to the allies and $173 million to the neutrals. Against this was the loss to the Central Powers, but the net increase in two years was $2,119,000,000; and practically the whole of this increased trade was in goods needed for the prosecution of the war and logically contraband.[1]

Though sea power had been deprived of so much of its effectiveness as a means of bringing presssure on the enemy it was intended to use to the utmost what remained of that power. The prime difficulty, it was foreseen, in cutting the external lines of supply of Germany would lie in the fact that she would be able to obtain the goods she needed in neutral bottoms through adjacent neutral ports. This inevitably occurred. Goods poured into the neighbouring neutral countries under every form of subterfuge. The experience of Sir Leoline Jenkins, in his day,[2] was repeated in 1914–18 on a gigantic scale. Each neutral did all that lay in its power to circumvent the British control and to resist any restriction of this abnormal and most profitable commerce. Early in the war of 1914 it became evident that if Germany were to be deprived of the various raw materials she needed for the conduct of the war, the limitations imposed upon contraband by the Declaration of London—a declaration which Britain as well as other Powers had refused to ratify—must be removed. Moreover, it soon became impossible to distinguish between the military forces and the civil population. Both male and female citizens were engaged in the production of munitions or some other form of war effort, and in these conditions, says the American Professor Garner, 'the distinction between absolute and conditional contraband, and the rules governing their transportation and especially those proposed by the Declaration of London, ceased in a large measure to rest upon any

[1] *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, vol. xvi, no. 2, p. 67: article by Mr. Charles Warren, Assistant Attorney-General of the United States.

[2] *Vide ante*, pp. 56–7.

foundation of reason or logic'. The contraband list was therefore steadily, and properly, extended by eight successive Orders in Council. What was called the 'Blockade' of Germany was effected not by the stationing of ships off the ports of the enemy but by extension of the contraband lists, the capture of the contraband goods, and by a number of measures by which neutrals were induced to cease their traffic with the enemy.

Discussions as to the military strategy to be employed in a war with Germany necessarily revived the old problem of whether the national power should be used to strengthen the armies of the allies in the main theatre of military operations or to weaken the enemy by eccentric attack or diversionary action elsewhere and in obtaining the command of the sea. It was answered in favour of continental warfare. The complete absence of readiness in any form to undertake combined operations was due to the dominance of the 'continental' school of thought, largely under French influence, which showed itself unable to understand the use and influence of sea power. This school of thought set its face firmly against the employment of any military forces whatever elsewhere than in the main theatre, France and Flanders. The upkeep of even the small existing establishments of landing-craft was abandoned in the firm conviction that no such operations as those for which they had been built would ever be undertaken. Proposals for examining the questions of whether the enemy oversea bases in China, the Pacific, and Africa should be captured or left alone were set aside. Finally, when in the end of 1914 and the spring of 1915 the suggestion was made to exploit the command of the sea in a combined operation against the Dardanelles, with the object of striking a decisive blow at Turkey in her capital and throwing open the Straits and so re-establish communications with Russia, it was strongly opposed. That opportunity of using Britain's sea power in one of its most formidable forms failed. It failed through lack of preparation, delay, and the violation of almost every principle that had informed the planning and preparation of the successful operations of that character in the past, from the instructions issued by the Cabinet to the loading of the transports. Thereafter the national effort was devoted to the exercise of economic pressure by the blockade and the military operations on the western front. Invasion, though feared by some, was never an actual danger

in view of the British superiority at sea; but the fear led to the retention of numbers of troops in England even as late as the third year of the war. A real danger, the danger of the cutting of the nation's sea communications, did, however, arise when Germany, throwing all caution to the winds, embarked upon the intensive and indiscriminate submarine campaign. Old lessons had then to be relearnt, of which the most important were that convoy was the most effective form of defence and that convoy is possible only if the number of light vessels and craft is adequate to supply the many moving masses of shipping with an adequate defence, armed with weapons suitable to the situation.

It will have been observed that four principal reasons had actuated the strategy of colonial expeditions in the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: depriving the enemy of the shipping and seamen engaged in the colonial trade; destroying the colonial commerce which constituted at one time as much as one-third of the whole foreign trade of France and therefore a source of financial strength; protecting the British colonies; and weakening the power of the enemy to attack trade by depriving him of his oversea naval bases. Germany's colonies contributed neither to her naval strength in the form of shipping and seamen, nor to her financial strength—the entire German colonial trade amounting to no more then 1 per cent. of her whole trade. Moreover, cut off as the metropolitan country was from her colonies, their products, even if they could evade the control in the outer seas and find their way through neutral countries in neutral bottoms, were of insignificant military or national importance in the war. But the colonies possessed two important military characteristics: the forces in them threatened the neighbouring British possessions; they provided bases for commerce attack in the China Sea, the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and the South Pacific.

The question of whether action, and of what kind, should be taken against these colonies had received no consideration before the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914: hence no preparations had been made concerning them. A series of expeditions[1] was extemporized after the outbreak of the war in August 1914, the

[1] By Australia against New Guinea, New Zealand against Samoa, South Africa against German SW. Africa; Imperial forces against the East African and West African naval bases and Togoland.

objects of which were to protect the adjacent British territories and to deprive the enemy of his naval bases and of those wireless stations which afforded him a means of communicating with his cruising vessels abroad. The failure of the German cruiser campaign was attributed by German writers in 1916 to the want of bases abroad. At that time, when it appeared that a German victory was certain, German naval writers were looking forward to a return of the colonies and predicting the establishment of a number of powerfully defended bases in Africa from which their cruisers and submarines in a future war could conduct effective warfare against British, Australian, and Indian communications in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.[1] Thus the strategical object in the colonial campaigns was defensive—the defence of the colonies and the defence of trade.

As in all those earlier great struggles, British sea power in its three elements was the foundation upon which the eventual victory was built. The naval fighting vessels of all types, surface, submarine, and in the air, obtained the command of the sea, and maintaining it, though with difficulty during the intense phase of the submarine campaign in 1917–18, were able to protect the flow of supplies and the movements of the reinforcing armies to the allies. But it was not uncommon, both before and after the war, for French writers and publicists to set a low value on British sea power. M. Clemenceau, before the war, had derided its importance. How it appeared to him in 1917 was forcibly expressed in a letter to President Wilson—the campaign of 1918 was then in preparation:

'At the decisive moment of the war, when the year 1918 will see military operations begin on the French front, the French army must not be exposed for a single moment to a scarcity of the petrol necessary for its motor lorries, aeroplanes and the transport of its artillery. A failure in the supply of petrol would cause the immediate paralysis of our armies, and might compel us to a peace unfavourable to our allies.'

Of the other two elements, the oversea bases of the allies enabled the fighting ships and the merchantmen to operate and find their facilities in all the oceans and seas where their services were needed except the impenetrable Baltic; the shipping

[1] Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, vol. i, pp. 114–15, 123–31, 534 et seq.

industry furnished the tonnage without which the nations' and the armies' supplies, and the armies themselves, could not have moved; while the shipbuilding industry provided the indispensable expansion and repair of the fighting fleet, and the repairs and replacement of the merchant navy, which suffered a loss of some 9 million tons. Finally, it was the exercise of Britain's maritime rights, often in circumstances of great delicacy and difficulty, that enabled the external communications of the enemy eventually to be severed and that pressure brought upon him which both contributed to his military defeat and, in combination with that military defeat, brought about his surrender. But that pressure was slow in development. For many months it was not effective or even seriously injurious to the enemy. That slowness was mainly in consequence of the continuous and persistent opposition offered by the neutral nations to every assertion and reassertion of British maritime rights which tended to reduce the enormous volume of the abnormal, and most profitable, trade which they conducted. It is not too much to say that, but for the consecutive surrenders of maritime rights at Paris and in London which gave sanction to that opposition, as well as the opposition itself, that economic pressure which eventually contributed to the defeat and downfall of the German aggressor would have begun to take effect far sooner, that the lives of thousands of men would have been spared both in the Empire where the prolongation of the war into 1917 and 1918 cost 600,000 in killed and missing and another million wounded, and in the ranks of the allies and the enemy, whose losses were even greater; and that the vast expenditure of wealth which added to the difficulties of reconstruction would have been avoided. That loss of human life, that expenditure of wealth, and the exacerbation of national feelings were the price which was paid in order that individuals in neutral countries should enjoy their profits. It is not outside the region of probability that the Second German War would not have followed if the first had been brought to an earlier end, that those nations who were then so insistent on their gains would not have suffered the occupations of the years from 1940 to 1945.

Two matters fundamental to British sea power arose during the Peace Conference as they had arisen in the peace negotiations a century earlier—maritime rights and the disposal of the

enemy's colonies. As Castlereagh in his day had categorically refused to enter into any discussion concerning the Maritime Code,[1] so the British Premier in 1919 refused with equal force and promptitude to discuss a proposal for what was called 'The Freedom of the Seas', well aware that it would be useless to do so as it would never be accepted by the country. And, for the same reason as the British Cabinet of a century earlier had insisted on the retention of those colonies of the enemy which threatened the security of the sea communications of the Empire, so the Cabinet of 1919 insisted on the retention of certain of the German colonies. 'It would', said Mr. Lloyd George, 'be asking too much from us to give back to Germany such formidable naval and aerial bases from which to attack our lines of communication until international peace had been assured on a basis that could not be shaken by the ambitions or greed of any aggressive or ambitious States.'[2] The retained colonies were those on the Atlantic and eastern coasts of Africa in which the naval strategists of Germany had intended to set up the naval bases of their desires and those in New Guinea and Samoa, threatening Australasia. The other German bases in the Pacific and China were mandated to Japan who, in her turn as we have seen, proceeded to establish in them those bases which served her purposes so well in 1941 and afterwards.

After the Treaty of Versailles had eliminated the German navy, reducing it to a force of no more than eight armoured cruisers, a few light cruisers, and a small flotilla, and depriving it of submarines, aircraft, and of its actual and intended naval bases in the colonies, a decision on the new standard of British naval strength was needed. Looked at from the purely strategical point of view, as apart from the existing political factors—the naval movement which had taken place in the United States, the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, the relations of France and Italy and, not least, the need for a reduction in expenditure—the appropriate solution might be sought in those principles which had determined British naval strength during the preceding three centuries. Those principles may be crystallized in a few words; words which, in one or another form, recur constantly in the contemporary discussions: the fighting forces

[1] *Vide ante*, p. 255.

[2] Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, vol. i, p. 686.

of the British navy should be of sufficient strength to ensure the safety of the British Empire and its sea communications, wherever they exist, in all reasonably probable world conditions. This had been the historical doctrine upon which successions of British statesmen, consciously or unconsciously, had acted from the days of Elizabeth onwards. Thus, when English territory and interests were practically confined to the Narrow Seas, the need was for a navy capable of meeting that of those of any Power or Powers within those seas: at one time Spain, at another the United Provinces, at another a combination of the United Provinces and France. When the developments of commerce, and still more the international situation, carrying with it obligations to allies in a common cause, extended those interests to the Mediterranean, and the two Bourbon Powers were combined with fleets and bases in both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, the British navy needed to be of sufficient strength to meet both these Powers, in both those seas. It was no longer a one-ocean, but a two-ocean navy. When, in the nineteenth century, the course of events made a Franco-Russian combination probable, the strength of the British navy was similarly determined by the needs of meeting those two Powers, in those two seas and in a smaller degree the Pacific. When, after the war of 1914–18, a new sea Power arose in the Far East whose support while an ally had virtually ceased when its own aims—the expulsion of Germany from the Eastern Seas—had been achieved, whose subsequent conduct in China had been equivocal, and whose naval aims were now being expressed in a great building programme of sixteen capital ships, the strategical needs of Great Britain were no longer confined to the European seas. The safety of British interests and territory demanded the presence of a fleet in the East. A two-hemisphere Empire could be defended only by a two-hemisphere navy whose fleets in all the three seas could lie between the main concentration of the other Power and the territories or interests to be defended. This had been the principle upon which British naval strength in the Eastern Seas had been determined at the time when Russia was a prospective opponent. In 1901, when the tonnage of the British fleet in the East was some 170,000 tons and that of Russia 120,000, Lord Lansdowne observed that 'if Russia were to increase her tonnage, to say, 200,000 tons, we should have to

add proportionately to our naval strength'.[1] And in the final text of Article III of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance the intention was expressed of 'maintaining in the extreme East a naval force superior to that of any third Power'.

It was Lord Jellicoe's clear appreciation of this obvious and fundamental principle that informed his proposal in 1919 that an Eastern fleet of sixteen capital ships, with its due proportion of cruisers and flotilla, should be created by the joint efforts of the three communities interested, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand; and that a base should be built at Singapore in which position it would be interposed between the Japanese main bases and India on the one hand, and Australia on the other. This would cover both of those territories and provide the cruising vessels necessary for the direct defence of the communications of all. The cost, he suggested, should be shared between the three parties concerned. The proposal for a base was adopted, financial aid was given by the Malay States; but the proposal for the fleet was rejected.[2]

The decision concerning the standard to be maintained was made in 1921. In place of the traditional interpretation of British needs a 'One-Power Standard' was announced, defined by the First Lord to mean that 'the Navy should not be inferior in strength to that of any single Power':[3] a definition which, in the view of the Admiralty, needed greater precision to the effect that 'the Navy should be maintained in sufficient strength to ensure the safety of the British Empire and its sea communications against any other Power'.[4]

The agreement made at the Washington Conference of November 1921–February 1922, a conference summoned in order to avert a shipbuilding competition between the maritime Powers—Great Britain, the United States, Japan, France, and Italy—but more particularly between the United States and Japan, constituted a complete departure from the traditional principles of British security at sea. It measured British strengh in terms of the strength of a single foreign Power, the United States; the form of estimate which Palmerston had so definitely

[1] Lord Lansdowne to Sir Claud Macdonald, 16 Dec. 1901 (Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, vol. iii, p. 107).

[2] For details, cf. Bacon, *Life of John Rushworth, Earl Jellicoe*, chap. xxv, parts i and ii.

[3] Cmd. 1191 of 1921, p. 2.

[4] Cmd. 1581 of 1922, p. 10.

rejected in 1861. It did not provide the two-hemisphere British Empire with the two-hemisphere navy of its needs. In the purely mathematical terms of battleship tonnage it gave Britain a Two-Power Standard in Europe with a working margin of superiority over a Franco-Italian combination—itself an unlikely contingency at the time in view of the rivalry and existing strain between those Powers. It also gave a 40 per cent. superiority over Japan, a margin not excessive in view of the facts that the British possessions in the Far East were entirely dependent on sea power and that the British fleet would be operating at a great distance from its resources at the end of a long line of communications open to attack, while that of Japan would be close to its resources and have no long-stretched communications to defend. That superiority over Japan, however, would exist only if the entire British fleet could be sent to the Far East, without leaving any force in the European seas. That would be a risk which could only be taken in circumstances of exceptional tranquillity in Europe, circumstances which, in practice, could never be expected to exist. In fact, supposing Britain were engaged in a war with even one only of the European States she would have to allow for the possible hostility of Japan: and vice versa. The forces she could deploy would be no more than mathematically equal to those of the actually and potentially hostile Powers together, thus offering a temptation to either a Western or an Eastern 'unsatisfied' Power to attain its desires either by threat or action: for mathematical equality is far from strategical equality and still farther from the strategical superiority on which security at sea depends.

After 1922 conditions deteriorated. Until then the standard might be defended on the grounds that Japan was an ally, but with the dissolving of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, with the constantly expressed and increasing discontent of Japan with the terms imposed on her strength by the treaty, and with her growing truculence towards China, she could no longer be regarded as other than a prospective enemy.

Bad as the position was in which the British Empire was placed by the terms of the treaty relating to capital ships, it was made worse by subsequent treaties governing the strength of the cruiser and flotilla forces. As we have seen, successions of British statesmen and seamen had, without a single exception, repudiated

the view that the Two-Power Standard applied to either of those classes. The whole teaching of history and the plain logic of facts afforded conclusive evidence of the correctness of the principle that the strength of the cruiser forces was not dependent on, or primarily relative to, the number of those vessels of another Power, but was determined by the duties those vessels were called on to perform and the manner in which it was necessary to employ them. Thus, a great and experienced seaman, Pellew, in his report in 1810 on the number of cruising vessels needed in the East Indies wrote:

'The Board must be aware that a calculation of her actual force required to be employed in India must not be founded on the number of the enemy; the French have no trade to protect and the Dutch have very little. The immense trade of the British colonies alone forms a most important object of protection, *so scattered and divided as to require a very large force to furnish it with adequate security.*'

What was true in 1810 was equally true a century later. The great number of cruising ships needed to deal with the single *Emden*, with the five ships of von Spee's squadron, and with the scattered raiding of armed merchantmen of 1915–19, were fresh in the minds of seamen. But the statesmen of 1930 cast aside the lessons of experience, both remote and recent. They established the cruiser strength of the British navy on the basis of that of another single Power—the United States—whose needs differed wholly from those of the Empire, and reduced the number of cruisers to a figure a little more than half of that considered necessary by the seamen and considerably less than a half of what had been required in the recent war.[1]

The requirements of the flotilla were similarly misunderstood. It was incorrectly assumed that British flotilla strength was largely determined by the number of foreign submarines. This fallacious view was expressed in two Command Papers in 1930[2] and 1931.[3] The destroyer tonnage, then of 200,000 tons, it was asserted, could be reduced 'if the submarine tonnages of the other Powers were similarly reduced' and the aim was expressed of arriving at 'a satisfactory equilibrium between the French

[1] The number of cruisers in 1918 was 109 and 21 were being built, making 130 in all. The number decided on by the Government of 1930 was 50. See Appendix VI, Table IV.

[2] Cmd. 3485 of 1930.

[3] Cmd. 3812 of 1931.

submarine tonnage and British destroyer tonnage'—a sentence whose meaning is obscure. It would indeed be difficult to compress within a few words a more complete oblivion to the lessons which experience provided in all wars, and with particular emphasis in the war so recently ended. Though no less than 700 allied flotilla craft had been needed, of which 279 British were engaged in home waters alone, the total figure adopted for the entire British flotilla would provide a bare fifth of that number, namely sixteen flotillas of 144 vessels; and of those, seven flotillas, of 63 vessels only, were ear-marked for anti-submarine work.

Expectations of a prolonged peace have, on more occasions than one, been entertained by British statesmen, and have led to reductions in the navy of which the results have proved unfortunate to the country. As we have seen, the Duke of Newcastle in 1772 had insisted, against the advice of his Admiralty, on those reductions which paved the way to the misfortunes at sea of 1778–83, on the score that he did 'not recollect a more pacific appearance of affairs than at that moment'. In 1792 Pitt had confidently looked forward to fifteen years of peace. In 1801 Addington had believed the Treaty of Amiens to herald a prolonged peace and to represent a reconciliation between France and Britain. In February 1930 the British Prime Minister went even further in the same belief, and defended the reduction in the cruising forces on the grounds that we could feel justified in looking forward to a period in which armed conflicts need not be expected: and his successor, on 10 November 1932, announced his confidence that few of his colleagues would see another war. Even as late as the spring of 1936, the situation could be so misinterpreted by an ex-minister of the Opposition that he could describe the small programme of construction as being based upon panic and voted in a devil-may-care and happy-go-lucky atmosphere.[1] The nation as a whole, to be sure, shared the delusion that the Covenant of the League, the Treaty of Locarno, and the Pact of Paris had jointly removed all danger of war, and deliberately closed its eyes to the happenings in Germany and Italy, stigmatizing as 'warmongers' all those who, casting their vision back to the experiences of the

[1] Hansard, vol. cccx, no. 70, col. 75, debate of 16 March 1936; vol. cccxi, no. 96, col. 2309, debate of 28 May 1936.

past with the long record of failures to implement engagements in treaties and guarantees, thought with the younger Pitt that 'it is bad economy to tempt attack and thus by a miserable saving to incur the hazard of a great expense'.

The Anglo-German Treaty of 1935 contributed still further to the bad position into which Great Britain had been brought by these ill-calculated measures. It revived the German navy. The building of battleships and cruisers of the largest sizes laid down by the Washington agreements, which had been forbidden to Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, was now permitted, and in those classes she might possess a strength up to 35 per cent. of that of Britain. Submarines, totally forbidden to Germany at Versailles, were now allowed up to 100 per cent. The effect of this was to bring the combined battleship strength of Germany and Japan up to 95 per cent. of that of Britain,[1] but only so long as Japan adhered to the terms of the Washington Treaty: and that, it was plain, could not be depended upon. Japan had accepted that treaty with great dislike and under a storm of protest from the naval authorities and the younger school of officers, and the Treaty of London of 1930 had come in for even more severe Japanese criticism. Finally, in the previous December (1934) she had denounced the Washington Treaty altogether. Her acts were no less symptomatic of her temper. She had invaded Manchuria, closed the 'open door' in China, and openly insisted on her right and intention to build her navy to whatever strength and of whatever composition she deemed necessary.

There was, therefore, good reason to take the navy of Japan into consideration as well as the resuscitated navy of Germany. The attitudes of both of those Powers were no less threatening to Britain than the attitudes of France and Russia had been in the eighties of the last century when the Two-Power Standard had been readopted as a policy of naval strength. The meaning attached to that standard, as we have seen,[2] had been that Britain should be capable of meeting the combined navies of the two most powerful maritime nations other than the United States, and it had been recognized that a mere mathematical equality in the number of battleships did not provide strategical security. A margin of superiority was essential. While the

[1] Germany 35 and Japan 60 per cent.

[2] *Vide ante*, pp. 270–1.

smallest margin that had been assumed to be necessary at that time was 10 per cent. there were well qualified strategical thinkers who placed it at 40 per cent. Whether either the higher or the lower of these estimates were a correct calculation for a war against two Powers in Europe, it is plain that a 5 per cent. superiority was wholly inadequate for a war against one Power in Europe and another at the other end of the world, fighting in its own waters and with great naval establishments behind it. Moreover, Italy was stirring in an aggressive manner. The old friendship which had informed Anglo-Italian relations had dissolved, and Italian writers were pointing to Britain as the obstacle to that expansion of their country that was being represented as essential to her greatness.[1]

A feeling of anxiety, not to say alarm, very naturally arose in Australia and New Zealand, who saw that the shield which had hitherto protected them no longer could be counted upon. Writers in Australia pointed out that if Great Britain should at some future, and perhaps not distant, time become involved in a European war the entire British fleet would be needed in the European seas and the opportunity would then be offered to Japan to seize the territories in the South Seas on which her eyes had long been cast.[2] Conversely, in the weakness at sea arising from this series of concessions, if Britain were at war with Japan, the opportunity would be open for the 'unsatisfied' Powers in Europe to obtain their desires in the Mediterranean, the ex-German colonies, and elsewhere. Unfortunately the true solution of the problem of defence was not recognized either in the Dominions or in Britain, namely, the re-establishment by a joint effort of the Empire's sea power on a two-hemisphere basis. In the Dominions proposals were made to provide security by measures of local defence—of land forces, submarines, mines, and aircraft—measures which, in the disproportion of the strengths of the seven millions of Australia and the seventy or more of Japan were, and should have been known to be, completely useless: nor would such measures have afforded any security to either the Malay States or

[1] Cf. Alberto Lumbroso in *Napoleone e il Mediterraneo* (1934), in which Napoleon is presented as the champion of the freedom of the seas and England as the inveterate enemy of Europe and the tyrant of the sea.

[2] Rt. Hon. W. M. Hughes, 'Australia and War To-day', Albatross, *Japan and the Defence of Australia*; also articles in the current Australian press.

India, with whose security that of Australasia was intimately concerned.

Battleships, cruisers, and flotilla craft were now not the only types of fighting instruments at sea. The war had witnessed the coming of aircraft and, during the War of 1914–18, the navy had established a Naval Air Service of considerable dimensions and efficiency. In response to an ill-informed clamour this valuable force was dissolved and lost to the navy. The statesmen of Britain failed to understand that aircraft had become integral elements of a naval force, as integral as every other type engaged in the duty of overcoming the attempts by an enemy to obtain the command and control of the sea; and that the training and administration of this branch of sea fighting could only be conducted efficiently if the branch of the service in the air were developed in the most intimate relation with the other branches of the sea service, on the surface and under the surface. What was hidden from the statesmen of Britain was plain to those of the two other great maritime Powers, America and Japan; and the correctness of their views has since been proved in the acid test of war.[1] All the attempts to recover aviation in the navy were rejected by ministers until a bare year before the outbreak of the war in 1939, with the result that British naval aviation lagged seriously behind that of the other two Powers.

While that element of sea power which resides in the fighting instruments was thus being reduced in strength in these several ways, a similar disregard was being paid to the element of bases. The bases in Ireland, without whose use the Board of Admiralty of 1921 had assured Mr. Churchill that 'it would be very difficult, perhaps almost impossible to feed this island in time of war', were abandoned in spite of the reasoned arguments against abandonment, and the ample experience, which were at the disposal of the Government.[2] 'The danger that has to be considered, and which ought not to be excluded', said Mr.

[1] Admiral E. J. King of the United States Navy reported that 'the uniform success which has characterized our naval air operations is unmistakably the result of an organisation which was based on the conviction that air operations should be planned, directed and executed by naval officers who are naval aviators' (U.S. Navy Report covering Combat Operations up to 1 March 1944).

[2] For the discussion in Parliament see Hansard, vol. cccxxxv, col. 1071 et seq. of 5 May 1938.

Churchill, 'is that Ireland might be neutral. . . . What guarantees have we that Southern Ireland will not declare neutrality if we are engaged in war with some powerful nation? . . . The ports may be denied to us in the hour of need and we may be hampered in the gravest manner in protecting the British people from privation and even starvation.' A similar disregard to this essential element in sea power had been displayed in 1924 when an intention to abandon the construction of the base at Singapore was only dropped when it was found that it would cost more to cancel the contracts than to proceed with the work: but the work was suspended, causing a loss of one and a half years in its completion:[1] an act which showed little understanding either of the importance of the base or the urgency for its establishment.

In the third element of sea power, shipping and shipbuilding, a great falling off took place between 1919 and 1938 due to a number of causes but, in the main, to the unassisted British shipping being undercut by what the Prime Minister called 'the reckless subsidizing that is being done by foreign nations'.[2] The tonnage of British shipping which in 1914 had amounted to 41 per cent. of the world tonnage had been reduced by June 1938 to 26·4 per cent. The Cabinet's policy was described by Mr. Alexander Shaw (Lord Craigmyle) as one 'of doing nothing . . . of allowing our Empire trade routes to be captured by foreign subsidized shipping, a policy of apathy, negation and neglect . . . the end was the ruin of British shipping'.[3] The shipbuilding industry, like the shipping, declined at the same time: its importance in war was as much forgotten as that of the fighting ships, the bases, and the merchant navy.

Finally, an agitation was set afoot in this country, in France, and in the United States for the abolition, or emasculation, of British maritime rights under the slogan of 'the Freedom of the Seas', a slogan characterized by Sir Julian Corbett as 'one of those ringing phrases which haunt the ear and continue to confuse judgement'. This campaign against the maintenance of British rights at sea was conducted in the face of the experiences of the war so recently ended, the length and cost of which had

[1] *The Times*, 11 Feb. 1942.
[2] Mr. Baldwin, 4 Nov. 1935.
[3] *The Times*, 7 Nov. 1933.

been materially increased by the limitations imposed upon the action of sea power and of which the final allied success was only rendered possible by the reassertion and exercise of those very rights. The advantages which Great Britain would enjoy through abolition were paraded, the disadvantages she and her allies would suffer were either ignored or denied. If capture at sea were abolished, her commerce, it was confidently said, would move in safety during war, risks of starvation would disappear, she would be spared the burden of maintaining a costly cruiser fleet for its defence. The possibilities that an unscrupulous enemy would not observe the pact if it appeared to profit him to break it, and that the temptation to break it would be greatly increased if shipping were unprotected or inadequately protected, were lightly dismissed, notwithstanding the fact that Germany had broken every engagement that stood in the way of her success—from the invasion of Belgium to the sinking of hospital ships, and the mining and submarine campaigns—and that her doctrine, plainly defined by German statesmen and writers from Bismarck onwards, was that no engagement remained binding after it had ceased to be advantageous. Blockade was to be abolished. This strategical measure was described by one of the chief exponents of the proposal for 'Freedom of the Seas' as being 'not of as much importance as would seem. We all know that it was a potent weapon against Germany in 1914–18 *but the circumstances were then unusual and probably could not occur again owing to the unlikelihood of there being another coalition between France, Russia and England against Germany*'.[1] Fortunately, the movement came to nothing.

Among the many strange and dangerous delusions concerning sea power that found their places in men's minds at this time was the idea that it is possible to make a distinction between ships and instruments of an 'offensive' and of a 'defensive' nature. In the eyes of some the 'battleship' was offensive, of others that she was defensive. Some argued that the 'heavy' cruiser was offensive and the 'light' cruiser defensive. Those who disliked the submarine because of the injuries she had inflicted on shipping during the war pronounced her to be most markedly offensive and of small, and even negligible, defensive

[1] Colonel E. M. House, *The Freedom of the Seas*, Tract No. II of the National Council for the Prevention of War.

value; while others who saw in her a weapon capable of acting as a 'martingale' on the stronger sea Powers and of being 'the weapon of the weak', represented her as purely defensive and wholly incapable of inflicting injury on the civil population. The aircraft carrier, in the opinion either of those who did not need her because of their geographical situation, or of those who might be attacked by her aircraft within their own territories, was characterized as offensive. The only type of vessel that appears to have escaped the stigma of offensiveness was the destroyer, the fact that she is capable of attacking shipping in restricted waters and of bombarding coastal objectives escaping notice. The discussions revealed a profound ignorance of war in general and war at sea in particular, together with an attempt on the part of the representatives of each nation to get rid of those types inconvenient to their own interests on the score of 'offensive character' and to retain those it desires to possess on the score of their purely defensive nature.[1]

During the interval between the two German wars German naval doctrine underwent a change. Since it was impossible for Germany, even with the strength she as yet possessed in her re-established fleet, to contest the command of the sea in the traditional form of massing the sea forces and seeking to bring about the destruction of the opposing mass, her naval thinkers turned to the old French doctrine of direct attack upon the shipping upon which the life and the military efforts of her two western enemies depended. 'In future', wrote a German admiral, 'the less one has to reckon with the clash of large battlefleets, as at Jutland in 1916, the more trade warfare is going to become the main operative task of the strategy of naval war.'[2] The submarine had displayed her destructive power during the war of 1914 and, though the effort had failed, it had come near to achieving its aims, and its defeat had only been rendered possible by the vast increases made by the allies in their flotilla

[1] The Reports of the Conference of the League of Nations on Limitation and Reduction of Armaments, held at Geneva in April 1932, give the discussions. A summary will be found of a part of the arguments in *The Times*, 28 Apr. 1932. See also *Fortnightly Review*, Apr. 1932, 'British Naval Policy'.

[2] Vice-Admiral A. Meurer in *Militär Wochenblatt*, 1928, no. 20. In the same sense Vice-Admiral Wolfgang Wegener wrote in 1926 a study of sea warfare entitled *The Naval Strategy of the World War*. E. W. Kruse in *Neuzeitliche Seekriegsführung* expounded the doctrine of cruiser warfare.

forces.[1] The defeat of the German cruiser warfare was due mainly to the superiority of the British cruiser forces combined with the absence of German bases abroad. Those bases were again lacking, but the British cruiser strength had been drastically reduced in numbers and was composed mainly of vessels of the weaker type. A field of opportunity was thus thrown open for the employment of the type of heavy cruiser. Germany, following the earlier examples of Russia and France in the eighties and nineties of the last century when these Powers initiated the armoured cruiser for trade attack[2] proceeded to use the 'battleship' tonnage allowed her in the Treaty of Versailles to build heavy armoured cruisers, nicknamed in England 'pocket battleships': vessels more powerful than any of the 'Washington' cruisers, faster than battleships, and endued with a great steaming endurance which would be supplemented by a service of supply ships, meeting them at prearranged rendezvous in the several oceans. The terms of the Washington and London Treaties had deprived Britain of the power to answer these vessels, either in size or by numbers, as she had answered the previous similar naval policies of Russia and France, by building similar ships. The German staff argued that to protect convoys against even one of these heavy commerce destroyers, not less than three, or possibly four, of the existing types of British cruisers would be needed, while the number of cruisers to which, under the latter of those treaties, Britain was limited, were too few to enable her to provide escorts of the necessary strength to the many convoys which were needed to maintain the services of supply of the Empire. That the Germans had reason for estimating that a few of these heavy, fast, and well-armed vessels would be a match for such escorts as Britain might be able to furnish is shown by the armaments of the ships which fought in the Battle of the River Plate. The weight of the *Graf Spee*'s

[1]

	4 Aug. 1914	*11 Nov. 1918*	*Building on Nov. 11*
British			
Destroyers . .	216	433	108
Torpedo boats . .	105	94	..
Sloops . . .	11	117	11
	332	644	119

[2] e.g. *Minin, Dupuy de Lôme, Rurik,* and *Rossiya.*

broadside fire was 4,700 lbs.; the combined weight of the broadsides of her three British opponents was 3,136 lb.

The exiguous British cruiser force would be further called upon to deal with scattered attacks by fast well-armed auxiliary vessels, as they had been during the previous war;[1] and, to add to the weapons of this new *guerre de course*, there were mines of novel and ingenious types which would both add to the British losses and divert a considerable proportion of her efforts in destroying or rendering them harmless. Lastly, as the German bases in Germany were confined to the 'Wet Triangle' of the Heligoland Bight, exit from which into the open ocean presented some difficulties, German writers had pointed out the desirability of seizing harbours in Norway, all of which could not be watched, from which sallies upon the British blockading squadrons could be readily made and protection given to iron-ore traffic from Narvik. Such attacks on the trade and the blockading forces would be supported by the battleships and battlecruisers which, under the terms of the later Anglo-German Treaty, Germany was permitted to build. Their function primarily was to be that of exceptionally powerful cruisers, overwhelming the weak cruiser escorts and forcing the enemy to disperse his limited numbers of battleships as escorts to convoys.[2]

The offensive use to which the sea power of the allies was put in the opening phase of the Second German War was confined to the safe passage of the military forces to France and the cutting off of the external seaborne supplies of Germany. Those seaborne supplies were of two kinds, food and the materials of her war industry. As to food, Germany was largely self-supporting. She was producing some 83 per cent. of her needs, and the Russo-German agreement, which had enabled Germany to embark upon the war, had not only eliminated the danger of a war on two fronts but had also given her free access to all the food-producing areas in south-eastern Europe. All the measures which it lay in the power of the allies to exert in closing the channels of supply were, however, at once set in motion to stop the flow of those raw materials which her war industry needed,

[1] e.g. The *Speiermark*, sunk by H.M.A.S. *Sydney*, was an 18-knot ship of 9,400 tons, armed with six 5·9 guns and underwater torpedo tubes, carrying a crew of 400 officers and men. She sank nine ships, some of them neutrals, in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

[2] E. W. Kruse in *Neuzeitliche Seekriegsführung*.

in particular oil, nickel, rubber, aluminium, copper, nitrates, iron, and fats. The neutral Powers in Europe at once made protests, Russia making a particularly strong objection to the stoppage of necessaries to 'the peaceful population': an objection which made no further reappearance after Russia was attacked by Germany in June 1941.[1]

In the previous war the power of isolating the enemy from external supplies had been severely limited, until the United States entered the war, by the opposition to many of the measures adopted in the 'blockade'. That difficulty did not arise in the war of 1939 for two reasons. First, that in August 1935 the United States had passed a 'Neutrality Act' by which she practically abandoned her neutral rights at sea and isolated herself from contact with the belligerent Powers; seeking thereby to prevent any recurrence of those disputes and events which had drawn the country into the war in 1917. American vessels were forbidden to enter into those waters in which belligerent operations were proceeding: at the outbreak of the war they were ordered not to carry war material or enter the ports of the belligerents. When, later, the Axis Powers were in occupation of all the coast of Europe except the Spanish Peninsula, those convenient backdoors, the neutral ports, which had served the enemy so well during the earlier war, were no longer open to them. The only remaining backdoors were the Spanish and Portuguese ports, and the Russian ports in the Pacific until Russia herself was attacked and brought into the war, and the French ports in the Mediterranean after the fall of France until their occupation by the Germans in November 1942.

The hollowness of the comfortable belief that Britain would find security for her seaborne commerce if shipping were immunized from capture, as proposed by those who had advocated the 'Freedom of the Seas', was quickly to be exposed by German practice in the Second German War. During the brief period of the truce Germany had acceded to the agreement by which submarines were placed under the obligation of observing the

[1] In the first six weeks of the war the allied navies seized over 500,000 tons of contraband, mainly petrol, iron, aluminium, copper, and phosphates. Of the seizures about 14 per cent. could be classified as foodstuffs, but of these 9 per cent. were fatty commodities capable of use in the manufacture of explosives. (*The Times*, 2 Nov. and 6 Nov. 1939. Cf. also Sir William Beveridge on blockade policy, *The Times*, 26 Oct.)

same rules of capture as surface vessels and forbidden to sink ships without warning or without placing the crews and passengers in a place of safety. Though during the first days of the war, with the notable exception of the *Athenia*, the rule met with some observance, it quickly became a dead letter. Ships were sunk without warning in every condition of weather, in daylight and in darkness; lightships were bombed, hospital ships were sunk,[1] mines were laid in open waters. The neutrals received no consideration. Their ships were destroyed with as little consideration as they had been in the First German War. Four hundred and ninety neutral vessels of 1,420,000 tons were sunk by the U-boats, mines, surface vessels, and aircraft and other causes; their territories were invaded and ravished. To obtain the naval bases in Norway whose use had been coveted by the German naval writers, Denmark and Norway were invaded without warning. As there could then be no doubt that the Danish islands of Iceland and the Faroes would suffer the same fate, to the great discomfiture of British sea power by the establishment of German naval bases, those islands were occupied by British forces with the minimum of delay.

The spring and summer of 1940 witnessed a series of disasters to the allied cause in France and Belgium, with a far-reaching influence on British sea power. The invasion of Norway and Denmark was followed by the invasions of Holland and Belgium and, in turn, by the overwhelming defeat of the allied armies in France. The French armistice placed Germany in possession of the entire western coast of Europe from the North Cape to the Pyrenees, with admirable bases throughout its length; the assistance of the French navy was lost; Italy declared war, bringing a fleet of 6 capital ships, 19 cruisers, 49 large and about 70 smaller flotilla craft, 100 submarines, and the entire Italian Air Force, with bases in Sardinia, Sicily, and on the African coast flanking, within easy distance, the Mediterranean route from Tunis to the borders of Egypt. The French fleet of whose support Britain was deprived by the armistice had consisted of 9 capital ships, 18 cruisers, about 70 destroyers, and 100 submarines. There were also the French naval aircraft and the French bases in the western Mediterranean. Thus the differ-

[1] Thirty-six attacks on hospital ships were reported between May 1940 and May 1942.

ence 'on a division' of the changes in France and Italy was one of 15 capital ships, 37 cruisers, nearly 200 destroyers and torpedo craft and 200 submarines: besides the air forces of the two Powers. Malta, the British mid-Mediterranean base, now lay within easy bombing-range of Sicily, and its aerial defences had been neglected. There was thus no naval base available between Gibraltar and Alexandria, a distance of 2,000 miles.

The effects of the several treaties reducing British sea power and restricting Britain's ability to meet new situations, during the twenty years since the Peace of Versailles, were now experienced. Though Great Britain still retained a superiority of about one-third in her battleship strength, the German treaty of 1935, which had allowed Germany to build capital ships, had introduced a new and embarrassing factor. If those heavy ships[1] went out on the trade routes, either singly or in company, the British ocean convoys would need the defence of similar ships, and the number of British capital ships needed would then depend not directly upon the number of the enemy capital ships but upon the number of convoys needing simultaneous defence and the scale of probable attack: in other words, when the battleships became 'cruisers' the 'cruiser standard' of strength had to be applied to them on the trade routes, while a definite superiority might be needed at the same time to meet the continuous threat of the enemy capital ships in the North Sea. Thus battleships had to be detached from the main fleet to escort convoys when the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were out in the Atlantic, and the *Rodney* was engaged in convoy at the time of the *Bismarck's* sally in 1941. The number of ships and craft employed in the hunt for the *Bismarck* in May 1941 was not less than five battleships, two aircraft carriers, three cruisers, three destroyers, and an unspecified number of aircraft of the Coastal Command. While these demands on the battleships had to be met in Home Waters, the Italian battle-fleet of six ships had to be provided against by at least an equal number. The calls of these services in the North Sea, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean could not have been met by mere mathematical equality in battleships, and the existing margin of superiority was in this way excessive. But this left nothing available for the Far East

[1] Viz. the two battlecruisers, *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, and the two large fast battleships, *Bismarck* and *Tirpitz*, which were to follow shortly.

if Japan chose to move; and the possibility that she might soon do so could not be ignored, for in June 1940 a Japanese fleet arrived off Indo-China, and Japan made a categorical demand for the cessation of the supply of British arms to China, issuing at the same time a proclamation decreeing the 'New Order' in Asia. In September she signed the Three-Power Pact with the Axis Powers. How soon the need would arrive for battleships in the Far East could only be guessed.

Serious as the battleship situation thus was, the cruiser situation was no less serious owing to the false standard imposed by the Treaty of London. The German enemy, with bases in Norway and along the Atlantic seaboard, could send out cruisers and auxiliary cruisers upon the ocean routes, against which the only security was convoys; and the number of cruisers was so inadequate to that measure that armed merchantmen were employed. The *Rawalpindi* and the *Jervis Bay* paid the penalty of the shortage of regular fighting ships. In the Mediterranean, where the Italian enemy's cruiser forces were not commerce attackers—for British mercantile shipping had been diverted from the Mediterranean to the Cape route— but were portions of the main Italian fighting fleet, a number of British cruisers was needed to keep the enemy in check and preserve the military communications with Malta and Egypt; while in the more distant seas others were necessary to deal with the raiding armed vessels and, in the highly questionable attitude of Japan, to take such precautions as their small numbers would permit.

The flotilla situation was equally, or even more, disturbing. The reductions in the flotilla, based upon those wholly incorrect assumptions already referred to, had lowered the destroyer forces at the outbreak of the war to some 178 destroyers. After the campaigns in Norway and the embarkation from Dunkirk, some seventy of these were disabled or lost, leaving a bare hundred or so—the number that had been launched since the beginning of the war is not known to the writer—to meet the needs of convoying shipping in the Atlantic, the Channel, and the North Sea, of taking part in repelling the invasion known to be in preparation and which might be launched simultaneously from the Dutch, Belgian, and the French ports in the Channel and the western Atlantic seaboard, or from Norway

and Denmark, as well as to provide the flotilla needed to meet the Italians in the Mediterranean.

Thus the situation that ministers had to face after the fall of France in June 1940 was one of extreme danger owing to the very narrow margin of the country's superiority at sea. In a broad analysis, Great Britain was now fighting at sea on three 'fronts' with what, on a bare material and mathematical computation, was an insufficient force on land and sea and in the air in each. On the 'Home Front' of the Channel and the North Sea over twenty divisions of well-equipped German troops, flushed with victory, were assembling with their landing-craft and with transport ships in readiness to carry their reserves. On the 'Ocean Front' of the trade routes of the Atlantic, the Indian, and Pacific Oceans, British communications were threatened by German heavy cruisers, auxiliary cruisers, and submarines, with the prospect that before long these would be joined by the heaviest German battleships working from the Norwegian and French ports in the west, and by aircraft operating within the range of their endurance from aerodromes in western France. On the 'Mediterranean Front' from Gibraltar to the Red Sea, the entire Italian navy and air force, greatly outnumbering the British sea and air forces in every category, flanked almost the entire route in readiness to cover the movements of Italy's metropolitan army and to support her land and air forces already in North Africa and Ethiopia where they outnumbered the British by no less than ten to one. On any one of these 'fronts' a defeat would prove fatal to the country and the Empire: immediate, if the 'Home Front' collapsed and the British islands were invaded; a little less rapid, but no less certain, if the 'Ocean Front' could not be held and the island were cut off from the outer world; and more remote, but eventually certain, if the command in the Mediterranean were lost. For if that last disaster should happen Egypt would be conquered, the canal and the Red Sea would be thrown open for the passage of Italian armies to Ethiopia, to Aden, and to the East African colonies, and for ships to prey upon the trade and military communications in the Indian Ocean from secured bases in East Africa. One immediate result of an Italian victory in the Mediterranean would almost certainly have been the prompt entrance into the war of Japan whose attitude, as

already remarked, left little doubt either of her sympathies or her eventual intentions.

The importance of the Mediterranean command was thus essentially military in character, not commercial. The defence of trade formed no part in it, for it was not intended to attempt to maintain the flow of the one-fifth of British imports which normally pass through, or originate in, that sea. It had been fully realized some years earlier that, until the Italian sea and air forces were overcome, it would not only be impossible to protect the trade, but a misdirection of effort to attempt it and thereby to divert the sea and air forces from the offensive against the enemy fighting forces to the defensive work of convoy. Hence preparations had been in hand in recent years for increasing the facilities for handling and fuelling shipping at the Cape of Good Hope. One material of direct military importance passed through the Mediterranean: oil. Some came from Persia by way of the Red Sea, some from Iraq by the pipe-line to Haifa, some from the Black Sea; but a great part, if not all, of this supply would be needed either for the use of the forces operating in the centre of the sea and the Levant or for those farther east.[1] Nor was it only on the score of defence that the command of the Mediterranean was important. Italy drew practically the whole of her oil supplies by way of Gibraltar, Suez, and the Dardanelles, Germany obtained about a third of her imported supplies—as distinguished from her synthetic products—from Rumania, by sea; her other two-thirds were cut off by the blockade in the Atlantic.

While these were considerations of the highest immediate importance, affecting as they did the survival of Britain in the struggle to which she was now committed, far-reaching issues of an ultimate character were also at stake in the Mediterranean. Italy's aim, loudly proclaimed, was an Italian domination of the Mediterranean with the two doors, Gibraltar and Suez, and

[1] The mineral oil imports in 1936 were as follows:—

Total in 000 tons	*From Black Sea and Medn. (Haifa)* %	*Through Suez Canal* %	*From U.S.A.* %	*From Central and S. America* %	*From other sources* %
11,114	14·4	18·7	10·2	51·5	5·2
	33·1				

the central position, Malta, in her possession. She was to be the sole and undisputed mistress of the inland sea, and Britain was to be rendered as incapable as she had been before she acquired Gibraltar in 1704 of influencing the course of affairs in Europe by the use of her sea power in the Mediterranean. As the preceding sketch has shown, the Mediterranean had been a vital theatre of operations in all those great wars of coalitions in which Britain had taken part in opposing a would-be dominator of Europe, from Louis XIV to Napoleon. It was there that she could make the most effective military contribution, as distinguished from the contribution of economic pressure, to the common cause. If she were to be expelled permanently from the Mediterranean through the loss of her bases and the occupation of Egypt by another Power, her sea power would be shorn of a great proportion of its strength unless, or until, she should be able at the great cost of a powerful military expedition to restore her position. As Palmerston had said in his day: 'Prevention is better than Cure.'

On each of these 'fronts'—Home, the Ocean, the Mediterranean—command of the sea was an essential condition of Britain's survival during the summer and autumn of 1940.

On the 'Home' front the greatest danger was invasion. On 16 July[1] Hitler issued his directive for the invasion of England, the aim of which was stated to be 'to eliminate the English homeland as a base for the carrying on of the war against Germany'.[2] The first essential condition for the secure passage of the army was the material and moral destruction of the Royal Air Force. This duty of obtaining the command and control of the sea passages was confided to the Luftwaffe, and the attempt began on 8 August with widespread attacks from the air on the convoys in the Channel and on the aerodromes in southern England, in order to drive the air force out of the sky and destroy its bases and resources. While this attack was in progress, a stream of landing-barges, some specially built in Holland and some coming from the interior of Germany, Belgium, and Holland, was moving close inshore, under the cover of coastal batteries to protect the craft against the British flotillas,

[1] According to the Report of the Chief of the Staff of the United States Army of Oct. 1945 no orders were issued to prepare for the invasion of Britain before 2 July.

[2] *The Times*, 5 Dec. 1945. Speech of Sir Hartley Shawcross at Nuremberg.

to the assembly ports in the Straits of Dover and in the Channel. The German 16th Army was to sail from Ostend, Calais, Boulogne, Dunkirk, and the mouth of the Somme to land between Margate and Hastings, and the 9th Army, assembling at Dieppe, Caen, and Havre, between Brighton and Bournemouth. Airborne forces would be dropped behind the British coast in Sussex. A second group of armies, with its transport at Cherbourg, would land near Bournemouth. Great masses of merchantmen and barges were assembled in Rotterdam and Antwerp to follow up with the reserves, munitions, and other supplies so soon as the foothold had been made good at the bridgeheads. Other shipping was at Hamburg and Bremerhaven.

How to clear the way for this great armada was the first problem, and how to maintain its line of supply once it was ashore, the second, with which the German staffs had to deal. The disposition of the heavy ships of the German navy, all of which were in Baltic ports, and the small number of the lighter craft and flotilla in the North Sea German ports, appear to indicate that the German sea forces were not intended to take a part in the direct defence of the army on its passage, though they might either attempt to intercept British naval reinforcements coming from the northern bases or to create a diversion in other ways. How completely that attempt was defeated by the British fighter aircraft of the Royal Air Force is well known. After the crushing losses which the Luftwaffe sustained between 8 August and 15 September that endeavour to establish command in the Narrow Seas was abandoned and the attacks were transferred to the inland cities. But some hopes appear to have been entertained that the invasion could still be carried out, if the British air force had suffered such heavy losses that it could no longer constitute a serious menace to the invaders. There yet remained, however, one other obstacle—the British cruisers, flotilla, and submarine craft, which would sweep upon the transports.

'Field-Marshal Kesselring stated that he urged the invasion since it was generally believed in Germany that England was in a critical condition. Field-Marshal Keitel, Chief of the Staff of the German Armed Forces, however, stated that the risk was thought to be the existence of the British Fleet. He said that the Army was ready but

the Air Force was limited by weather, the Navy dubious. Meanwhile, the German Air Force in the air blitz over England had suffered irreparable losses from which its bombardment arm had never recovered.'[1]

Thus, even if the crossing and subsequent landings should be made without such losses as would cripple the army, there would still remain the question of maintaining the flow of reinforcements, equipment, and munitions. Admiral Raeder is reported to have stated definitely that the German navy was not strong enough to ensure the steady and continuous supply of these essentials against the British sea forces, and that, on that, General von Brauchitsch decided that the invasion should not be attempted.

The extent to which an effective opposition could have been made by the navy, first to the passage and disembarkation of the first contingents of the invasionary army in Kent, Sussex, and Dorset, and afterwards to the reinforcements and supplies coming from the Dutch and German ports, will only be known when full information is published of the strength and disposition of the available British cruiser and flotilla forces at this time. The accepted principle of naval defence against a barge-carried landing in the Narrow Seas had always been that direct opposition would be offered by the very numerous force of light vessels—small cruisers and fast flotilla craft—supplemented, in our own day, by submarines. Thus Lord Haldane in 1909 had defined the first line of defence against an invasion to be 'the divisions of the fleet in home waters and the flotilla of destroyers and submarines which guard our coastlines' which, he said, 'we have to keep at such a strength that they can afford adequate protection against the advent of hostile transports.'[2] Admiral Sir A. K. Wilson had taken the same view. Since then two new factors had arisen—the 'flotilla' had its highly formidable reinforcement in the air force; the submarine had introduced an added demand upon the services of the flotilla. In September 1940 the surface flotillas in home waters were far from numerous. The limitations imposed upon cruisers and flotilla forces by those treaties to which reference has been made earlier

[1] Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, recording conversations with General Jodl, F.-M. Kesselring, and F.-M. Keitel, October 1945.

[2] Haldane, *Autobiography*, p. 119.

had left the country with cruising vessels of these classes in numbers insufficient to furnish the necessary convoys and to meet the many other demands which inevitably arise for small craft in every war, still less to 'provide adequate protection against the advent of hostile transports'. Moreover, the losses and injuries suffered in the Norwegian campaign and in the rescue from Dunkirk, combined with the large detachment to the Mediterranean rendered necessary by Italy's entry into the war, had still further reduced the strength of the flotilla defence. Fortunately, however, the losses inflicted on the cruiser and destroyer forces of the enemy in the Norwegian campaign, at Narvik and Oslo, had materially weakened his cruiser and light forces and thus reduced his power of providing direct defence to his transports—an illustration of the sound principle of taking every possible opportunity of destroying the enemy's fighting forces. Even so, the British light forces in the southern part of the North Sea and in the Channel were most dangerously weak for the purpose of intercepting the barges, moving as these would on several lines of passage from the many ports in which they were assembled, and covered, as those in the Straits of Dover would be, for a great part of their passage across the Channel, by the heavy artillery set up on the French coast. Some, too, of the British flotillas might be expected to be diverted at the moment of attack by demonstrations by German naval forces in the North Sea ports—an obvious diversionary move open to the enemy.

Thus, though the meagre British flotillas on the east coast and in the Channel bases would certainly have given the invaders a rough handling both on their short voyages and while disembarking, it cannot be said that a strong body of enemy troops would not have got ashore. Their maintenance, however, would have been difficult, as the German naval staff is understood to have considered. For one thing, once the whole scope of the enemy's plan disclosed itself, as it would when he had committed his forces to the assault and his main lines of communication no longer remained in doubt, some reinforcements of both cruisers and flotilla craft from other parts, such as the northern bases and the commercial ports on the Clyde and Liverpool, would become available. But these would take some time to reach the required spots. Much would then have depended upon whether the invaders had been able to seize the ports

close to the lines of passage and so to impose upon the British cruising vessels the considerable disadvantage of operating from distant bases. Time, as always, was an element of the first importance. What the prospects were of holding up the enemy's advance towards the positions at which he is understood to have aimed can only be estimated by military authorities, but there can be no doubt whatever that the country was exposed to grievous internal injuries, and even possible defeat, owing to the reckless and ill-informed reductions in its light sea forces in the years preceding the war: and that such rearmament as was, late in the day, begun, was conceived neither in the atmosphere of unreality nor in the 'happy-go-lucky' spirit attributed to it.

The weakness of the surface flotilla, on which the defeat of the attempt at invasion so greatly depended, was also severely felt at this moment on the 'Ocean' front. During the spring and summer of 1940 the sinkings of shipping, though serious, had been kept within bounds. Now, in June 1940 and onwards, the protection which it could be given was wholly insufficient and an alarming rise in the losses of shipping at once began, due mainly to the submarines but also to the magnetic mine.[1] In the end of September there was a promise of an improvement by the arrival of the first of fifty American destroyers, in accordance with an arrangement initiated by the Prime Minister in August whereby, in return for the services of these craft, bases in Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Antigua, and British Guiana were loaned to the United States for ninety-nine years, and two others, in Newfoundland and Bermuda, free of charge. Even, however, with this aid shipping was being lost at a greater rate than it

[1] *British Shipping Losses, March 1940–June 1941*

Month	*Number*	*Tonnage*	*Month*	*Number*	*Tonnage*
Mar. 1940	14	39,467	Nov. 1940	65	299,816
Apr. „	21	75,258	Dec. „	55	230,307
May „	31	75,151	Jan. 1941	41	205,473
June „	65	269,783	Feb. „	68	275,574
July „	69	290,270	Mar. „	85	348,118
Aug. „	58	282,432	Apr. „	72	346,408
Sept. „	60	307,427	May „	77	380,035
Oct. „	66	299,399	June „	52	228,284

No further information of shipping losses was given after June 1941.

could be repaired or replaced, and it was plain that far greater protection was needed. While additions of fighting ships were being made to the greatest extent of which the shipbuilding industry of the country was capable, it was recognized that the aerial defence also needed strengthening. 'Coastal Command', which had numbered only 171 aircraft of all types at the beginning of the war, must now, said the Prime Minister, 'play a more important part than it had hitherto done in trade protection': it must both be increased and come under the operational control of the Admiralty, in order to assure integrity of direction.[1] The debate in the House of Commons at this time showed that the fact that aircraft are an integral portion of a navy had not yet been grasped by many members.

On the 'Mediterranean' front, embracing the whole inland sea and also the waters of the Atlantic off the coast of French West Africa, the position at sea was rendered serious not only by the entrance of Italy into the war but also by the possibility that the Axis Powers might obtain the use of the French navy, the greater part of which was in ports in the Mediterranean—Toulon, Alexandria, Oran, and Mers el Kebir—from all of which it had hitherto been co-operating with the British squadrons. In June the British Prime Minister had consented, after one refusal, to the request of the French Government of the day that France might be released from her treaty obligation not to make a separate peace, but only on the express condition that effective steps, which were defined, would be taken, before the Franco-German armistice negotiations were completed, to place the French navy out of the reach of the enemy Powers. But that Government fell and this condition was ignored by its Vichy successor. In this threatening situation, a situation aggravated by the action of the Vichy Government in releasing some 400 German air pilots shot down by the British, the Cabinet met on 3 September and decided to take possession, forcibly if necessary, of all the French ships in British and Egyptian ports, and to demand the removal to Britain, the West Indies, or the United States of those French ships in the bases at Oran and Mers el Kebir, with the alternative of their destruction. A strong squadron was sent to Oran to present this demand. As the demand was unconditionally refused, fire

[1] Hansard, vol. ccclxvii, no. 8, col. 687, debate of 10 Dec. 1940.

was opened by the British squadron, as a result of which two out of the four capital ships in port were sunk and two damaged and placed temporarily out of action.[1] Profoundly to be regretted as the orders of the Cabinet were, the conduct of the French admiral was no less to be deplored. In a not greatly dissimilar situation in 1813 the Prussian General Yorck interpreted loyalty to his monarch in a more comprehensive form. When ordered to remain in alliance with Napoleon, then retreating from Moscow, Yorck recognized that the King of Prussia was not master of his own will but a vassal carrying out the orders of the French Emperor. In spite therefore of the King's orders he carried the Prussian army over to the allied cause and by so doing made a notable contribution to the freeing of his country from the Napoleonic yoke. 'With bleeding heart', he replied, 'I burst the bond of obedience and carry on the war upon my own responsibility. . . . The King himself desires it, but his will is not free.' The bondage of Vichy to Germany differed only slightly in degree from the bondage of Frederick William to Napoleon. If Admiral Gensould could have brought himself to interpret loyalty with the same breadth of outlook as Yorck and Stein, the war in Africa would have been shortened and France would have achieved her liberation at an earlier date and with far less suffering.

In the Mediterranean the high importance attached to the maintenance of the position at sea and in Egypt—two interdependent matters—as well as the confidence which ministers reposed in the naval and aerial defence of the United Kingdom against invasion, is indicated by the fact that, in spite of the danger that still threatened the country, reinforcements were sent to the Eastern theatre. 'We have not failed', said the Prime Minister in October, 'to reinforce our armies in the Middle East and elsewhere. All the while great convoys have been passing steadily and safely on their course through the unknown wastes of the oceans, drawing from all the Empire the forces which will, I trust, enable us to fill in time the terrible gap in our defences which was opened by the Vichy desertion.'[2] The confidence called for great courage, courage comparable to that

[1] See Appendix VIII for a more detailed discussion of this unhappy event and the subsequent episode at Dakar.

[2] Hansard, vol. ccclxv, No. II, cols. 297–8, debate of 10 Oct. 1940.

of the Government in 1798.[1] But those reinforcements of both land and air forces could only reach the menaced positions in Egypt and Syria after a long three months' voyage round the Cape. The reopening of the route through the Mediterranean was eminently to be desired.

Steps in the direction of such an opening took place during the winter of 1940. The British squadron, reinforced by some heavy ships to make up for the loss of French support but still markedly inferior in numbers to the cruiser, flotilla, and air forces of Italy, maintained its position in the eastern basin of the sea. The Italian attack on Greece in October enabled the British to occupy Crete and so to obtain the use of a base in Suda Bay which, in the words of the Prime Minister, would enable us sensibly to extend the activities and radius of the navy and the air force, halving as it did the existing distance between the fleet base at Alexandria and the Italian base at Taranto and the line of passage of enemy supplies to Africa. The situation was still further improved in November by the disablement of a portion of the Italian fleet at Taranto by the Fleet Air Arm and in January by the army's capture, in its offensive launched in December, of Tobruk. With these two advanced bases the striking powers against the Italian communications in the mid-Mediterranean were appreciably strengthened, and in May the Government expressed its firm intention to hold them 'to the death'. The power of holding them depended on the policy which it was intended to pursue in regard to the main direction of its fighting forces.

That conflict of opinion between what I have called the 'maritime' and the 'continental' schools of strategical thought which, as we have seen, had taken place in almost all the great wars, again found expression in the Second German War. Though the differences of view assumed a new form, they partook of some of the fundamental characteristics of the former disputes.

The 'maritime' school regarded it as axiomatic that command of the sea is the first and essential object in a British war, the achievement of which must precede all other activities; that it is the foundation that must be laid, without which no stable

[1] *Ante*, pp. 196–7.

structure of offensive campaigns can be built; that, in the opening stages of a war, the efforts of all the fighting services should be combined in, and concentrated to the utmost practicable degree upon, establishing that command; and, therefore, that measures aimed at the destruction of those elements of sea power which compromise or threaten the command of the sea should take precedence of all others. It recognized that a complete and absolute command, in the sense of the removal of all opposition, is never practicable, and also that some deflexion of effort has always to be made for purposes of defence; but it held that attempts upon other *offensive* objects, unconnected with, or not contributory to, the establishment of command at sea should be avoided. This was indeed no more than the elementary principle enunciated by Wellington: 'The only mode by which we can be successful is by the application of our means to one object.' When the essential degree of command at sea should have been established, and the sea communications rendered safe—in so far as 'safety' can be defined in the business of war—for the transport of the goods needed to sustain the country's life and of the materials and weapons of the fighting forces, then, and then only, an offensive, with decision as its aim, would rightly begin in whatever might be the form most appropriate to British resources—military invasion of the enemy's country or its satellites or bombardment of the enemy from the air. Such an offensive would then be undertaken with supplies undiminished, or as little diminished as the fortunes of war would allow, by the sinking of ships and the loss of their cargoes of war material. This did not mean that no oversea campaigns could be begun until the enemy's opposition at sea was effectively crushed. Precisely to the contrary, oversea operations on land were as essential to the task of establishing the command at sea as they had been in so many of the great struggles of the past. The Mediterranean, in 1940, was the theatre of those operations.

The new 'continental' school had advanced the view that the development of the air arm had introduced an entirely novel factor into all strategy, a factor which rendered obsolete the old and hitherto accepted principles of war. The air arm, it had been argued, could strike directly at the enemy in his muscles, his heart, his stomach, and, not least, his nerves. By bombard-

ment it could not only destroy his resources, his factories producing war material of all kinds—armament works, shipbuilding yards, fuel-producing establishments—but also his ships in harbour and on the slipways,[1] his internal means of communication—railways, canals, inland ports—and, even more fundamental, the will of the enemy people to resist. Modern war, it was asserted, differs from war in the past in being 'national': in place of being waged by dynasties or governments it was now waged by the whole people. Therefore the enemy people themselves, not the armed forces, had become the potential objective of attack. 'The defeat of the enemy nation *by breaking its powers of resistance and will to continue the struggle* is, therefore, the ultimate aim in war.' The air force possessed a new power of breaking that will. 'Whereas the Army and Navy, before they can influence that morale, must first defeat the opposing armed force, the Air Force can, owing to the three-dimensional conditions in which it operates, *strike directly at the morale of the enemy nation without having first defeated the enemy Air Force.*'[2] From this premiss it followed logically that the civil population is a proper objective of attack and that this would be the means of bringing a war to an end in the most speedy and least costly manner. While the less extreme protagonists of this doctrine rejected the idea of a separate war in the air, and recognized the need for co-operation with the two other services,[3] there was also a school which went so far as to relegate navies and armies to the scrap-heap and to advocate the use of the air weapon alone.[4]

The decision between these two conflicting conceptions of strategy rested, as it always had in the past, with the statesmen. It was for them to decide which object was primary and which secondary, and to allocate to the primary object the maximum strength possible consistent with meeting the inevitable diverting demands of defence and policy. Thus the question now was, if the available forces in the air were not sufficient at the same time to satisfy all the needs of the naval and military forces engaged in the struggles for the command of the sea in the Mediterranean and on the ocean, and also to conduct an

[1] 'Most important of all, the Air *can destroy and damage the sources of submarine production.*' Lord Trenchard in *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 Dec. 1942.

[2] Air Vice-Marshal E. L. Gossage, *The Air Force*, p. 26 (1937).

[3] Ibid., p. 27.

[4] e.g. Alexander Seversky, *Victory through Air Power* (1942).

effective offensive against the material and moral objectives in the German cities and industries, to which of those objects it should make its first allocation of force.

The decision was to devote the greatest effort possible against the objectives in Germany. So, during the months between the defeat of the German attempt at invasion and the German attack upon Russia which brought that Power into the war on 22 June 1941, the major effort in the air was directed against the cities and factories of Berlin, Essen, Skoda, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Mannheim, Hamburg, and Hanover. Secondary to these were two direct contributions to the war at sea—the bombing of the German shipbuilding establishments at Hamburg, Bremen, Emden, and Kiel, and, thirdly, attacks on the German cruisers in Brest. The campaigns in the Mediterranean and on the ocean were treated as subordinate to these.

That the bombardments of the shipbuilding yards and establishments reduced the output of submarines cannot be doubted: neither, however, can it be doubted that it did not prevent the growth and continuance of a very high and dangerous figure of shipping losses, as the statistics given on p. 311 have shown. Nor, even if they did reduce the output of submarines, did they prevent the immense and effective expansion of the German submarine flotilla from some threescore craft in 1939 to over 800 in 1945.[1] The losses due to known causes lead to the conclusion that those of the 'maritime' school were right who dissented from the view that the most effective defence of shipping was to be found in attacking the submarine in its shelters and slipways, and who urged that it was by operations upon the high seas that security was to be sought in the combined action of surface and air forces: for 550 submarines were reported to have been destroyed at sea and no more than thirty-seven in the shipyards. The view of the 'maritime' school was that the needs of the nation would be better served in developing its powers at sea by an increase in the use of aircraft, both shore based and shipborne, in co-operation with the surface vessels of the navy, than by employing them in territorial raids; for out of those 550 sub-

[1] The ascertained losses of German submarines have been given as 713, and over 100 were available for disposal or destruction by the allies at the end of the war. Since the above was written, more extended figures have been published; which do not, however, alter the arguments above.

marines disposed of at sea over one-half were the victims of aircraft. Moreover, the effectiveness of the defence of shipping was so greatly increased in 1943 when, eventually, after long delay, considerable additions had been made to the air forces at sea, that it is legitimate to conclude that, if this had been done sooner at the cost of reducing the volume of the attacks on the German cities, that most grievous loss of 3,520 British merchantmen, of a value of £230 million, would not have been suffered, and that many cargoes of badly needed war material which lay at the bottom of the sea would have reached the fighting forces: while the bottleneck of shipping, from which the military operations in all the theatres suffered throughout the war, would not have been so constricted nor the world recovery after the war have been so impeded.

On the other hand, the bombing attacks on the German cruisers in Brest yielded a handsome return. Those attacks began almost immediately on the arrival of the two battle-cruisers after their damaging cruise in the Atlantic in which they sank a score of merchantmen. Though it proved impossible to destroy the ships, the bombings rendered them useless, inflicting such recurrent damages that they were confined to the port for ten months and only put to sea again in order to retreat to the Baltic from whence one of them never again emerged, and the other only to be sunk by the navy when attacking an Arctic convoy.

In the Mediterranean the services were needed of every aircraft that could be sent to, and could be maintained in, that theatre. The 'maritime' school regarded it of greater importance to drive the enemy out of Africa, to obtain bases from which the airfields in Sicily and Sardinia whose aircraft attacked the convoys could be bombed, and the Italian fleet effectively attacked and disabled, than to reduce the output of German munitions or lower the morale of the German people by bombing the cities of the Reich. To expedite the destruction of the Italian fleet by every possible means was of particular importance at this time (1941) in view of the threatening attitude of Japan and the consequent need for setting free, as soon as possible, a fleet for service in the Far East. Greater results might have been derived from the successful attack made by the Fleet Air Arm on the Italian fleet at Taranto in November 1940 if the blow could have been followed up with the other

attacks by heavy bombers and the 'tactical victory' of the fleet aircraft consummated; as a victory in the field or at sea is consummated in pursuit. Permanent destruction, in place of temporary disablement, might well have resulted from a renewal of the attack by heavy bombers. The loss of Crete in June 1941, after a seven months' occupation, was attributed to the lack of airfields in the island, of aircraft, and of anti-aircraft artillery, and to the difficulties and delays due to the long sea transport round the Cape. If in its strategical doctrine the Cabinet had assigned primacy at this time to the command of the sea, with the bombing of Germany in the second place, the needs of the defence of Crete in at least three of those matters could have been met. The value of that island was well recognized. The intention to hold it to the last had been expressed. What was lacking was the means, which were being allocated to other purposes.

On 22 June 1941 Germany attacked Russia and so brought that neutral Power into the war. A new situation then arose. Now Great Britain was no longer fighting a single-handed war. She had an ally on land. But the decision between the 'maritime' and 'continental' policies was still the crucial one for the statesmen. The old question that had so often arisen when Britain was fighting as one of an alliance repeated itself: in what manner could she make the most effective use of her armed forces to aid that ally and to further what was now a common cause. 'Our resources', the Prime Minister said, 'though immense, are limited, and it must become a question as to where or when those resources are to be used to further to the principal extent the common effort.'[1]

Broadly speaking, the methods by which British help could be rendered to Russia were, as they had always been in past wars, of two kinds—weakening the enemy and strengthening the ally. The former of these could be effected by eccentric attack or diversionary operations, the latter by furnishing the ally with those resources in money, munitions, or materials of which he was in need.

Diversionary or eccentric attack in its military form, the opening of what was at the time inaccurately called a 'second front'—inaccurately, because as we have seen Britain was

[1] Mr. Churchill on 14 Aug. 1941.

already engaged on more fronts than one—was not then possible, for all the British land forces that were available, or could be equipped, were fully occupied in the Mediterranean, in the campaigns in North Africa, Syria, and Iraq. Reinforcements had also to be sent to the Far East in consequence of the threatening attitude of Japan: the first of these reached Singapore in May, and they were followed by others from the United Kingdom, Australia, and India which arrived there in August. The need for this wise precaution was emphasized in the latter part of July when Japan obtained from the Vichy Government the use of naval bases and aerodromes in French Indo-China and shortly after landed a strong body of troops in that country.

The 'weapons' with which to assist Russia at this time were therefore confined to the forces in the air and at sea.

Weakening the German enemy might be effected by air bombardment, reducing the output of German munitions of all kinds, interrupting the essential internal transport system, and, so far as it lay within reach, the transport of the German armies invading Russia. Success in this form of eccentric attack would have the further diversionary effect of compelling the enemy to devote a portion of his striking forces from the offensive of the invasion of Russia to the defence of these several interests. Added to this there was the effect which, as before, the bombardment was expected to produce upon the morale of the enemy people, the effect on which so much emphasis had been laid by the 'continental' school of thought.

Strengthening the Russian ally might be achieved by providing him with weapons and materials of all kinds. His need of these was great. Russia had suffered great losses of war material and of the factories which were overrun in the first German onrush. She needed at once great numbers of tanks and aircraft, tons of petrol and raw materials.[1] Out of 739 cargo ships carrying goods to the Arctic 62 were lost—a loss of 8·4 per cent.[2] These supplies, essential to the Russian armies,

[1] According to a Russian statement issued in June 1944, Great Britain, the United States, and Canada had by then dispatched to Russia over 101 million tons of munitions and supplies. These included 14,698 aircraft, 9,214 tanks, 219,975 trucks and transport vehicles, 40 million shells, 1,311 million cartridges, 240,000 tons of explosives, 5,395 guns. The raw materials were principally petrol, aluminium, copper, zinc, nickel, steel and steel rails, tin, lead, and cobalt.

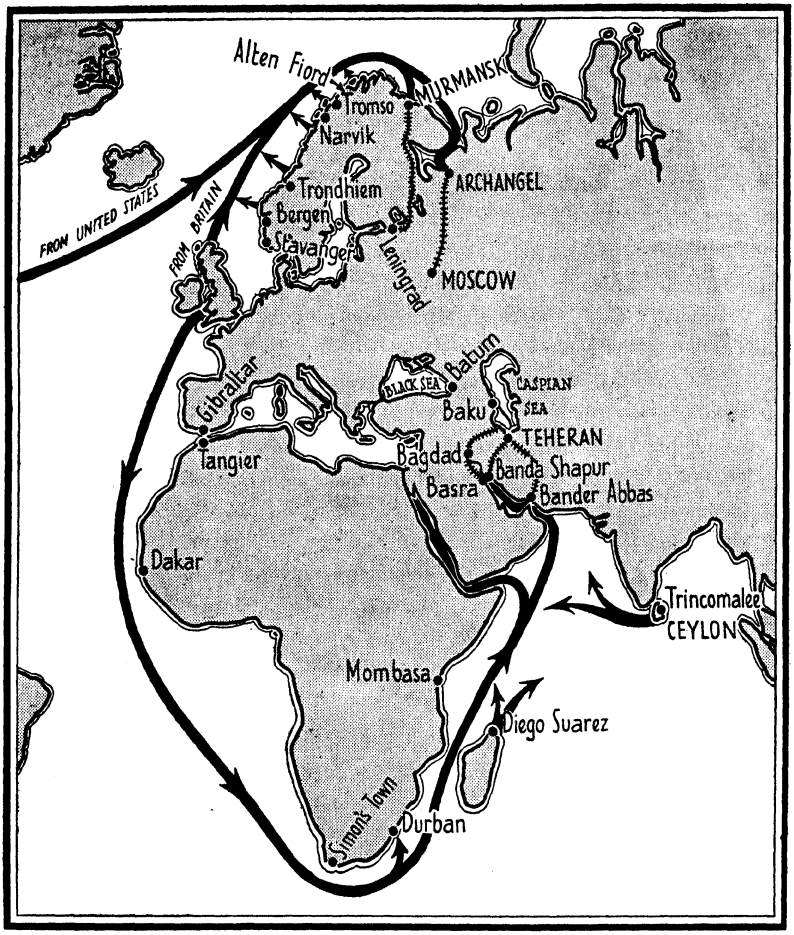
[2] *The Times*, 20 Mar. 1945.

could reach them by sea only, moving across the Atlantic, the North and Arctic Seas, and by the long sea route round the Cape to the Persian Gulf and the Caspian. A third route, across the Pacific, was barred by Japan, who protested against American shipments going to Vladivostok—an additional indication of her hostile intentions. British sea power thus had very heavy additional demands imposed upon it: demands for both shipping to carry the goods and fighting ships to protect the shipping. The strain on shipping was already severe for the losses had been heavy—up to the end of June 1941 1,028 British merchantmen of 4,605,132 tons had been sunk[1] and, though a welcome improvement was experienced during the following quarter, when the losses fell to one-third, it was plain that the struggle for the command of the sea was far from being at an end. 'There must be no vain talk of the Battle of the Atlantic being won', the Prime Minister warned the country in September. A continuation, or a repetition, of the heavy losses, the rate of which during some months had been as much as four, or even five, times the rate of replacement, could only have one end: the defeat of Britain. The production of German submarines was increasing and new instruments and appliances were fully expected to be brought into use. The need for a great effort to establish the command of the sea in the Atlantic was thus beyond any possible doubt. A German admiral's view of the decisive character of the struggle at sea was no less clear: 'The decision in this war', said Admiral Cadow, 'depends on the result of the battle of the Atlantic and on our own success in fighting the blockade by widening the basis of our supplies.'[2]

Great, too, was the need in the Mediterranean. There the situation in the summer of 1941 was serious. Crete had been lost, mainly for lack of aircraft. The campaign in North Africa, brilliantly begun, which had carried the British army to Benghazi, had ended with a reverse which brought the enemy to the borders of Egypt; and respectable forces were also engaged in restoring the position in Syria and Iraq. At sea, convoys, carrying much needed stores to Malta, were fighting their way

[1] The total of British, allied, and neutral shipping, all of which were capable of serving the needs of supply, that had been lost by the end of June was 1,738 vessels of 7,118,112 tons.

[2] Quoted in *The Times*, 5 Sept. 1941.



MAP IX. THE SEA COMMUNICATIONS WITH RUSSIA AND EGYPT, ILLUSTRATING THE IMPORTANCE OF ACHIEVING THE COMMAND OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

So long as the Mediterranean was closed to shipping, all help to Russia had to be sent either north-about by way of the Arctic Sea or round the Cape of Good Hope to the Persian Gulf and Caspian. The importance of preventing the seizure of Iceland and Madagascar is plain: also that of holding Ceylon against Japanese occupation.

The savings in distances, and therefore tonnage, in recovering the command of the Mediterranean are illustrated by the following figures:—

	Direct to Black Sea Ports	*Via Cape to Persian Gulf*	*Via Suez to Persian Gulf*	*Direct to Suez*	*Via Cape to Suez*
Southampton . .	3,500 m.	11,200 m.	6,400 m.	3,000 m.	11,600
*New York . .	5,700 m.	12,000 m.	8,500 m.	5,050 m.	12,220

* For details in diagrammatic form cf. J. H. Stembridge, *The Oxford War Atlas*, vol. ii, Maps 14 and 15 to which I am indebted for the above figure.

thither with difficulty and suffering losses in both merchantmen and their protecting vessels. Reinforcements were on their way around the Cape and the strength of the Army of the Nile was being restored in preparation for a renewal of the offensive; but at the same time enemy reinforcements and supplies were able to cross the Mediterranean for the German and Italian armies. The control of the Mediterranean was as essential to Russia as it was to Britain, for although none of the materials she needed were passing through that sea, command of the waters by the Axis Powers would have given them victory in Egypt, the possession of the oil-producing areas in Iraq and Persia, and the means of transporting the oil from thence to their own ports. The way would open for their forces to move down the Red Sea into the Indian Ocean and there to cut the supply route to Russia by way of the Persian Gulf. Finally, it would have offered the most acceptable opportunity to Japan to enter the war at once. On the other hand, the expulsion of the enemy from Africa would be the first step towards opening the Mediterranean to traffic, thereby shortening the route to the Persian Gulf and the Far East, easing the tonnage problem, and enabling supplies to reach Russia quicker and with less loss: and, no less essential in the rising temper of Japan, the probable freeing of fighting ships for service in the East; for it might well be that the end of the Italian fleet would follow, at no long interval, an African victory. The first step towards that victory was the cutting of the communications of the Axis armies, depriving them of the reinforcements, the munitions, and the fuel without which they could not have thrown the British army back from Libya to Egypt. Thus the building up of the strongest possible force of all arms, land, sea, and air, in the Mediterranean was of the very highest importance to both of the allies.

So the decision, stated in the broadest terms, which ministers were called on to make was, to which of these two courses of action for giving the utmost help to the hard-pressed Russian army priority and precedence should now be given. Since it was as yet impossible to furnish adequate air forces to both simultaneously, should the aim be to weaken the enemy by blows at his material, his communications, and his morale or to obtain the command of the sea? If the former, the needs of the bombing forces must be given preference to those of the sea

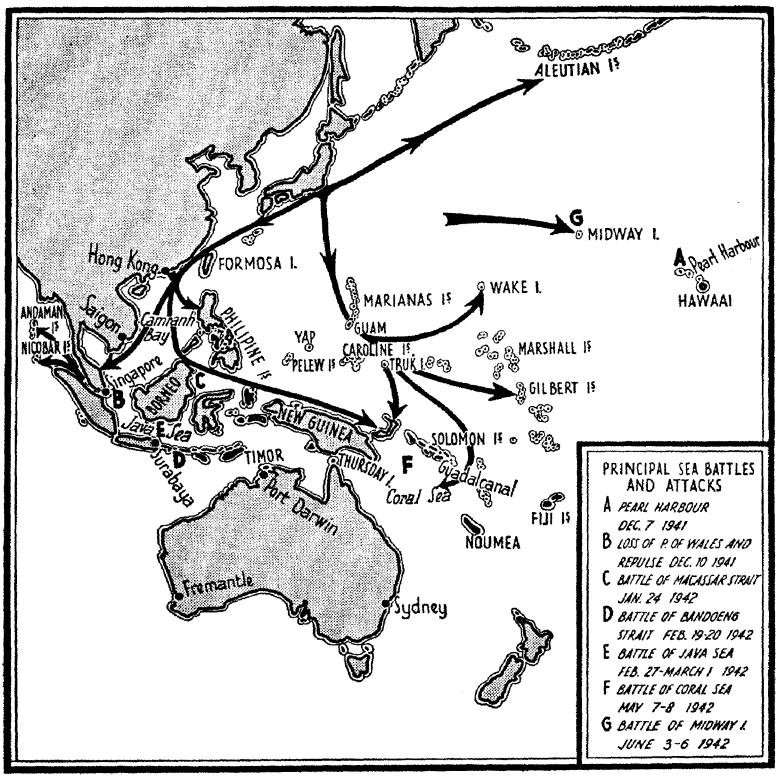
forces engaged in the 'Atlantic Battle' and of the land and sea forces engaged in the Mediterranean campaigns: if the latter, the needs of those forces must first be fulfilled, and those of the bombarding forces met by what could be spared from those services; and, in such bombardments as would then be undertaken, those targets which most directly contributed to the success of the struggle at sea should be preferred to those which constituted internal objectives in Germany and the territories in her occupation. There were two practical limitations upon the quantity of air strength that could be allotted to the Mediterranean theatre; the power of maintaining the force and the tonnage available for transportation; and because tonnage was one of the principal determinants, so the measures affecting the preservation and increase of tonnage would properly become a predominating consideration.

In the decision on this great strategical question precedence was given, as in 1940 and 1941, to the bombing effort in Germany. The attack on those internal targets became the main preoccupation of the Bomber Command; command of the sea, of which the Mediterranean campaign and the 'Atlantic Battle' were the expression, again ranked second. A proportion of the bombing effort, reaching occasionally, but not continuously, as high as 40 per cent., was directed against the submarine and flotilla bases at Boulogne, Havre, Dunkirk, Cherbourg, Saint-Nazaire, Calais, l'Orient, Bordeaux, Ostend, Antwerp, Ijmuiden, and Rotterdam, and against the building and repairing yards at Emden, Hamburg, Kiel, Bremen, and Wilhelmshaven, and the engineering works at Augsburg where submarine engines were constructed. It will be possible, when the whole history of the war is disclosed, to judge whether the common cause profited more at this time from the efforts against the German production, communications, and morale at this period than it lost from the reverse in North Africa, which among other things deprived the army of Tobruk, and from the very heavy losses at sea which were suffered both then and later.

In December 1941 the opening of the new war in the Far East, accompanied as it was by the entry of the United States into the war and the declaration of war upon the United States by the Axis Powers, was quickly to confirm to the full the warning that the 'Battle of the Atlantic' was not yet won and, with

that, the pressing need for the development and use of every possible measure, means, and instrument for the destruction of enemy submarines. Increases in the Coastal Command, greater co-ordination of the air and sea forces operating in the Atlantic, and the use of ship-carried aircraft as part of the escorts of the convoys had produced favourable results during the latter part of 1941, greatly hampered though the defence had been by the lack of bases in Ireland. The mass of submarines which had been operating during the early part of the year in the approaches to the north-western ports was now driven farther from the western approaches into the more open waters of the Atlantic where evasive routeing was practicable. So during the summer and autumn of 1941 the efforts of the submarines were spread widely, from Greenland to the West African coast. Searching for targets in the open sea is always bound to be less profitable than doing so in the more confined areas of the approaches to ports. By the end of the year, therefore, the losses, though still heavy, had fallen considerably. But with the entry of the United States they rose alarmingly. The German submarine flotillas were at once concentrated in an attack upon American shipping off the seaboard of the United States and stretched from Newfoundland to the Caribbean, into the Gulf of Mexico, and off the oil ports of Venezuela where a special attention was directed to oil tankers, numbers of which valuable vessels were lost as well as a great quantity of American coastal shipping. The need for the most complete integration of the sea and air was quickly recognized in the United States and all aircraft of the military wing employed on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts were placed under the Naval Command.[1] In spite of the most strenuous efforts, which included the dispatch of a number of British anti-submarine units to the aid of the American forces, the losses of shipping had reached higher figures in the summer of 1942 than at any previous period of the war and the need for increasing the number of aircraft employed in the campaign was extreme, for the severity of those losses was jeopardizing the allied cause. The German High Command was well aware that the struggle at sea in the Atlantic was vital to them. They saw that it was, in actual fact, an integral portion of their campaign in Russia. Together with the other campaign for the command of the sea

[1] By joint decree of the Army and Navy Departments of 28 Mar. 1942.



MAP X. SEA COMMUNICATIONS IN THE PACIFIC: ILLUSTRATING THE ADVANCE OF JAPAN, DECEMBER 1941–JUNE 1942

With an unopposed command of the sea owing to the absence of British sea forces, the disablement of the United States Fleet at Pearl Harbour, and the allied losses off Malaya and in the Java Sea, Japan could move her military forces freely into the Philippines, Malaya, the Dutch and British Islands, and the immediate approach to Australia and the Aleutian Islands. The tide of victory is checked by the two sea battles of the Coral Sea (May 1942) and Midway (June 1942) which defeat attempts upon Australia and Hawaii.

which was being fought in North Africa and throughout the length of the Mediterranean Sea it called, on the part of the allies, most clearly for priority over those operations directed against German production and morale, for which both the resources and the development of methods were as yet unequal to the task of influencing effectively the Russian battle. Hard blows were undoubtedly being struck at the German cities and communications, but the enemy was striking even harder blows at the allied sea communications; blows whose results could not be so readily mitigated by replacement. A factory could be rebuilt more quickly than a ship could be produced or lost territory in Africa regained. 'No Cologne, no six Colognes, make up for one Tobruk', wrote a military commentator at this time.[1]

In the Far East the new enemy had it all his own way. Having disabled the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour he possessed a superiority at sea so overwhelming that he could, without any delay, embark upon a series of well-prepared expeditions against the British, Dutch, and American possessions in the Pacific. The Japanese navy comprised at least 12 battleships, 43 cruisers large and small, 6 or more aircraft-carriers, over 160 destroyers or flotilla craft, and about 140 submarines. To oppose this great force the allies had no more than some 18 cruisers, 24 destroyers, and 40 submarines: and these were scattered in various duties. Two British battleships, arriving at Singapore a bare week before the declaration of war, were sunk. What strategical purpose informed the dispatch of these two ships alone, in the face of the vastly superior battleship force of the enemy, has not been disclosed.

Eight weeks after the opening of hostilities the great naval base at Singapore, built at the cost of many millions to serve the needs of a Far Eastern fleet, fell. Whether, with all the advantages enjoyed by the enemy, among them the advanced positions in which he had established himself with the complicity of the Vichy Government, Singapore, even with its reinforced garrison of 90,000 men, could have held out longer, is not a question on which any expression of opinion is either possible or proper at present. One thing, however, is certain and admits of no doubt. Unless aid could have come in a shape in which it could deprive the enemy, and secure for the British,

[1] General H. Rowan Robinson in *The Times*, 27 June 1942.

the sea communications of the invading and defending forces respectively, the fall of Singapore, sooner or later, was inevitable; as the fall of every isolated fortress on land or at sea has been inevitable throughout the whole history of war. Londonderry, Gibraltar, and Malta are among the prominent examples of strong places held only because it was possible to send timely aid by sea on many occasions: Middelburg, Minorca, Yorktown, Kut, Paris are among the many defended places whose surrender was due to being cut off and starved into submission. The fundamental principle of the defence of the outlying territories, possessions, and bases of the British Empire had always been that the local defences should be of sufficient strength to hold the enemy in dispute for the period necessary for naval forces to arrive and either resume, or recover, the command of the sea, or to throw in adequate supplies and reinforcements to the garrisons. It was idle to seek scapegoats either in the colonial administration or the military command for neglect or any other misdemeanour in cultivating the fighting spirit or the means of resistance of the civil population, in designing the defences, or in repelling the attack; or to attribute the loss of the base either to an error in furnishing defences on the sea front instead of the land front, or to rejection of the proposal to confide the defence to air forces. It had been fully recognized, twenty years earlier, that any attempt upon Singapore would be made by forces landed on the mainland of the Malay Peninsula, that the defence of the base was a field operation, and that there was a time-limit to that defence—the time which it would take for a fleet superior to the Japanese to reach the spot was the crucial question. Singapore was built to serve the needs of a fleet, but the fleet necessary was not built. The old principle which had informed the adoption of the Two-Power Standard of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been abandoned—the principle that the navy should be capable of meeting the combined attack of any reasonably probable coalition, in the several seas in which vital British interests lay. It was the illusion that a Two-Hemisphere Empire can be defended by a One-Hemisphere Navy that sealed the fate of Singapore.[1] The stark truth of Burke's warning that of all the public services that of the navy is the one which can least be tampered with, can least be sup-

[1] Cf. *Fortnightly Review*, March 1942, pp. 240 et seq.

plied in an emergency, and of which the failure draws after it the longest and heaviest train of consequences,[1] has been exemplified to the full in the misfortunes and dangers in the Pacific.

With a promptitude as commendable as that with which the Government had forestalled a German occupation of Iceland and the Faroes[2] in 1939 when Denmark had fallen into German hands, an expedition was at once prepared to forestall a Japanese occupation of Madagascar. With the admirable base of Diego Suarez in Japanese hands their cruisers and submarines would have been a most serious menace to the Cape route convoys on their way through the Indian Ocean to Egypt and the Persian Gulf, involving the need for greatly increased escorts which, hard pressed as Britain was for both cruisers and flotilla craft, she could only have found with difficulty, if at all. The expedition sailed from England in March 1942, and landed at Diego Suarez on 5 May. It was opposed by the French troops and a four months' campaign was necessary to complete the conquest of the island, which was then turned over to the keeping of the Free French forces. The parallel will be observed between this seizure of a potential enemy base and the several expeditions to the Cape, sent for precisely the same reason and in similar conditions, to prevent the Cape from becoming a French naval base.[3]

As it had been lack of sea power which had caused the loss of the naval base, of Malaya and of Borneo, and had exposed Australia and New Zealand to imminent danger, so it was sea power in sufficiency, coming from the United States, which saved those Dominions from the conquest with which they were threatened. The defeats which the United States fleets and flotillas inflicted on the Japanese in the Coral Sea, off Guadalcanal, and Midway Island were the turning-points in the Eastern war. Those American victories at sea provided the foundations upon which the brilliantly conducted combined campaigns of the United States land and sea forces were built. On the other hand, it was the lack of sea power in one of its elements, transport and landing-craft, that forced the Fourteenth Army to undertake, in place of a sea-borne operation, that magnificent but most arduous campaign by which it expelled the Japanese from Burma. At whatever stage we examine the war in the

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 141. [2] *Ante*, p. 302. [3] *Ante*, pp. 225–6.

Pacific one thing plainly emerges: it was the control of sea communications upon which everything hung.

Very heavy losses of shipping continued throughout the summer of 1942, leading the Prime Minister to recognize, in a speech on 8 September, that 'we must regard the struggle at sea as the foundation of all the efforts of the allies'. So far from the policy of bombing the sources of production having proved effective in preventing, or even checking, the losses at sea—for the sinkings in November 1942 were far the highest that had so far been suffered—it had contributed indirectly to them: for the more the production of aircraft and their subsequent employment were directed towards attempts to destroy German production, the less had it been possible to meet the crying needs of the campaigns at sea. The change in the situation was remarkable when, as the end of the year came, new aircraft of an increased range were brought into service in the Atlantic. This, combined with improved co-operation between the surface and air forces engaged in the 'Atlantic Battle', was reflected in a most gratifying reduction in the sinkings during the first months of 1943. Nevertheless, there was still a school of thought which persisted in the belief that war in the air is something separate from, and independent of, war on land and at sea, and was demanding that every effort should be concentrated on the bombing of Germany to the exclusion of other matters, and even going so far as to advocate the withdrawal of aircraft from the submarine campaign and from Africa. No more disastrous a policy could possibly have been adopted.

The last months of 1942 marked the opening of a new phase of the war, in the beginning of the transition from the struggle for the command of the sea to the reaping of the benefits of that command. The improvement in the situation in the Ocean battle resulting from the steps taken to increase the protection of shipping was accompanied by a transformation in the Mediterranean. On 23 October the Eighth Army launched its offensive at Alamein, threw back the enemy, and began that pursuit which brought it to Tunis. A fortnight later sea-borne armies coming from the United States and from Britain, carried in over 500 transports under the protection of 350 fighting ships together with aircraft, landed in North Africa at Casablanca, Oran, and in Algeria. Exemplifications of the influence of sea

power upon military operations in every war are numerous, but none of them, not even the Peninsular War, is more striking than this. Owing to the degree to which command of the sea had at last been established after the initial successes of the enemy submarines in American waters it was possible to undertake the transport of these great masses of shipping across the Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay. Secrecy was so well achieved that complete surprise was attained: neither the sailing of the expeditions nor the places at which the landings were to be made was known to the enemy. Though the command of the sea within the Mediterranean did not as yet (November) extend far enough to the westward to prevent Axis reinforcements being thrown into Tunis, it had proved able severely to restrict the supplies of fuel to the Afrika Korps, a restriction to which one German general attributed its defeat when the prize, Egypt, was so nearly in its grasp. The reinforcements could not stave off the Axis disaster. With bases farther to the west the sea power was able to close all the communications of the Axis armies, and it was a mere handful of the enemy that escaped.

The ejection of the enemy from North Africa did not complete the establishment of command in the Mediterranean. Though the Italian fleet had been greatly reduced in its cruiser and light forces, its strength, both in heavy ships and flotilla craft, was still by no means negligible, and until these were disposed of it would act as a containing force, threatening communications and preventing the dispatch of reinforcements to the Far East. The Axis air forces also were still where they had been: their menace to the communications was not removed by the victory, for the principal bases from which they had acted had been not in Africa but in Sicily and Sardinia. Finally, there were the submarines. They could still operate from bases in Italy, and from Toulon which the Germans had occupied when Tunis was threatened.

The natural sequel, therefore, to the African victory was the invasion of Sicily, possibly also of Sardinia and Corsica, to be followed by an invasion of Italy which should, in the first instance, deprive the enemy of his naval bases at Taranto, Brindisi, and Naples. Thereby such vessels as should still survive would be driven to the northern ports—Spezia, Genoa, and Venice—at a considerable distance from the sea routes. The

amphibian allies, therefore, after some delay landed in Sicily, conquered the island and passed over into the mainland. On 8 September Italy surrendered unconditionally. The struggle for the Mediterranean was now ended; command of the sea was achieved. Such interruption of the sea communications as the enemy might effect from the bases remaining to him was of comparatively small consequence.

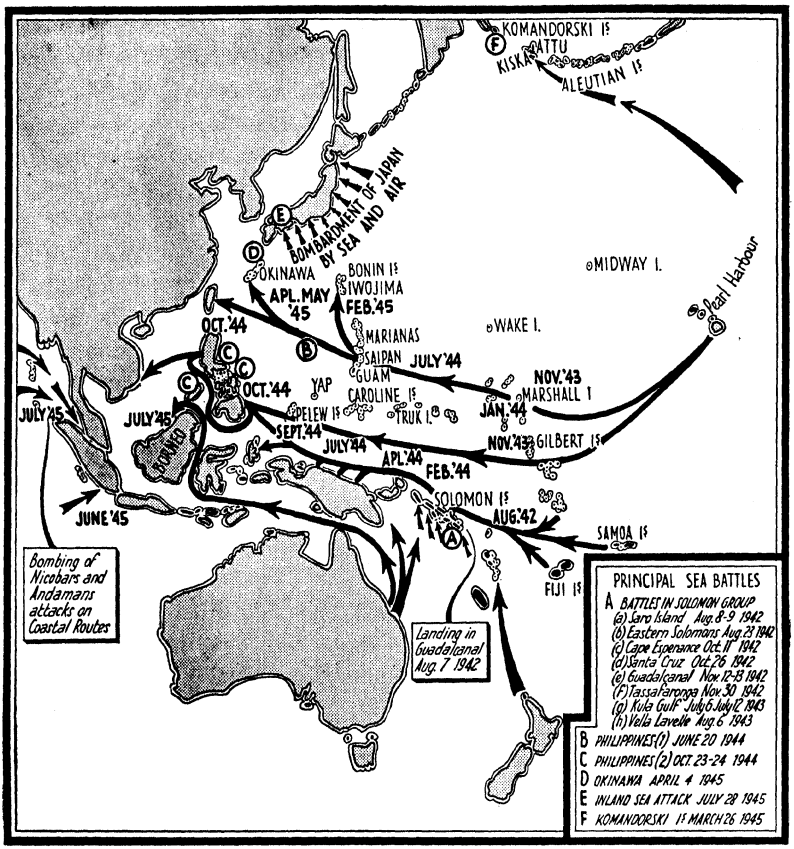
On the Ocean the struggle for the command was approaching a decisive stage at the time of the Tunisian surrender in the middle of May, after a somewhat disturbing flare-up in March which had caused considerable losses. By the summer the replacement of tonnage was exceeding the losses and more submarines were being destroyed than merchantmen. This favourable result was due to the strengthening of the escorts, both surface and aerial, the introduction of the long-range shore-based aircraft, improved co-operation, and the development of new devices and weapons; and the effectiveness of the vessels and craft engaged was increased in September by the possession of a base in the Azores, placed by Portugal at Britain's disposal in accordance with the ancient Treaty of 1393.

So, by the autumn of 1943 the command of the sea in both the Western theatres of the war—the Mediterranean and the Ocean—had been secured by the combined action of the land, sea, and air forces directed against the armed forces of the enemy. The commanded sea was now a safe bridge across which the allied land forces could move into whichever of the enemy or enemy-occupied territories should be selected. The position of Germany and of such vassals as still remained to her was now serious. She had lost some ten divisions at Tunis, another twenty or more at Stalingrad, and, so long as she persisted in her attempt to keep the allies at a distance from the actual territory of the Reich, another eighty or more divisions were strung out in defence of the coasts of Norway, Denmark, Holland, France, and northern Italy, and in holding down the peoples of those countries. The sea power of the allies conferred upon them the initiative. They could choose where, when, and how their next blow should fall—an extension of the occupation of Italy which would bring the southern areas of Germany within a closer range of bombers, a landing in southern, western, or northern France, in Holland or elsewhere.

The decision of the allies had already been made. A massed invasion of France on the coast of Normandy would be associated with a secondary landing in southern France by Franco-American troops from Italy. Shipping played a part in this decision. Proposals were discussed for bringing the Franco-American troops in Italy round by sea to land either on the Biscay coast or with the main army in Normandy, on the principle of massing the greatest possible strength at the decisive point and so do all that could be done to ensure the break-through: but in view of the quantity of tonnage that this would require the decision was made to make the secondary landing in southern France.[1] The magnitude and complexity of the preparations needed for the Normandy landing furnish an incontrovertible reply, though not the only one, to those ignorant but noisy individuals, both in this country and in Russia, who, at intervals during the two years since 1942, had cried out for the opening of a 'second front' in order to relieve the pressure on the Soviet armies. Nearly a year's work was called for to produce the landing-craft required and build the 'synthetic' harbours without which the operation would have been impossible, as indeed Hitler believed it to be: 'If we hold the ports we hold Europe.' The part which shipbuilding capacity played in this great affair is an eloquent reminder of its place as an element of sea power, for as it was sea power which enabled the operation to be undertaken at all, so it was the ability to provide the means of transport and of disembarkation that made it practicable. Even, however, with the great output of tonnage the quantity of landing-craft available was not sufficient to meet all the military needs in home waters, the Mediterranean, and the Far East. The previous loss of shipping, sunk by submarines, and the urgent necessity for its replacement, had absorbed shipbuilding labour and material which would otherwise have been available for producing landing-craft.

Though it had been rightly estimated in July 1943, when the landing in Normandy was decided upon and the preparations for it put in hand, that a degree of command at sea was in sight sufficient to permit the undertaking of this sea-borne invasion, this did not imply that it was supposed that all danger had been removed from the ocean routes. Not only was a very large force

[1] *The Times*, 18 Dec. 1945.



MAP XI. SEA COMMUNICATIONS IN THE PACIFIC. THE ALLIED REPULSE OF JAPAN FROM AUGUST 1942 TO AUGUST 1945

With the recovery of sea power by the United States Navy the allies pass to the offensive, landing in Guadalcanal in August 1942. Thenceforward the fleets and armies working in combination drive the Japanese forces back from the Gilbert Islands to the approaches to Japan, isolate the Japanese forces in southern China, Malaya, and Burma, and also such garrisons as have been by-passed, and bombard, from the air and the sea, the military establishments, munition factories, dockyards, and the ships of the Japanese Navy in their ports.

of submarines known to be in existence but also a number of new devices was expected to be in readiness. During the winter of 1944–5 losses of shipping rose to some extent, and in the spring of 1945 a great all-out attack was begun by the U-boats operating from their remaining bases in Norway. The convoys to the Arctic had hard fighting to reach the Russian ports and, during the advance of the army through France and Belgium, every effort was made by submarines and light surface-craft to interrupt the army's supplies and to block the way to Antwerp. This, together with the rapidity with which attack upon shipping had been set in motion in September 1939, serves to remind us that, as in the past, sporadic warfare must not only be expected to begin in the very early days of hostilities, but that it will continue until the last day of the war. The six years of the second war with Germany should have brought home to this country the need for both clearly thought out principles of defence of sea-borne commerce and for the existence, in readiness to act, of the means in their two forms of the necessary material of all types and of officers and men trained to its use. Responsibility for formulating the principles must rest with one Department of the State, and that same department must also be responsible for stating the needs, in numbers and types, of fighting instruments whose use it contemplates, and for the provision and training of the men who will fight them.

The German surrender was followed, more quickly than it had seemed permissible to expect, by the surrender of Japan. The eventual defeat of Japan was inevitable when the allies had broken and destroyed her sea power. The great navy with which she had entered the war four years earlier[1] was now—August 1945—reduced to one damaged battleship, two heavy and two light cruisers, four aircraft-carriers, all damaged and crewless, a couple of dozen destroyers in a fit condition for the sea, and some fifty submarines. Her merchant fleet of 6½ million tons in 1939, to which another 2⅓ million had been added during the war by building and capture, was down to under 2 million tons. She had lost, or lost the use of, all her oversea bases. Except between the metropolitan islands and Korea the sea was closed to her as a route for the supply of both her own needs in food and

[1] See *post*, p. 327.

raw materials and those of her armies, scattered in the regions she had invaded. She still had, however, 5 million men under arms, at home, in China, and in Indonesia, and an air force of over 11,000 bomber and fighter aircraft: but these could not save her, able though they might be to put up a more or less prolonged resistance in all the severed territories. The allies, with their now complete command of the sea, threatened Japan with three measures: invasion of the home islands, bombardment from the air and the sea of her factories and cities, and blockade, cutting off both those food-supplies she could draw from the mainland and the fisheries round her coasts. 'With our sea power making possible the use of all our other resources', said Admiral Nimitz, 'we gave Japan the choice of surrender or slow but certain death. Our victory was the product of integrated teamwork from the highest echelon of command to the lowest.'

Those words express, in a concentrated form, two fundamental and eternal truths concerning sea power. It enables its possessors to exploit all their own resources, to draw upon the resources of the world for the raw materials and finished goods of their needs in war, to carry those goods whither they are needed, and to transport the fighting forces of the other arms to whatever points in the vast theatre of war where they can be most effectively used. Sea power did not win the war itself: it enabled the war to be won. It was, as the British Prime Minister had said, the 'foundation' essential to victory. That victory was won by 'integrated teamwork' on the part of the nations, of the High Commands, and of their individual arms.

In this there was nothing new. It is no more than the lesson of over three centuries of maritime warfare. It is indeed no more then the expression, on a world scale, of what Drake had said at Saint Julian's Bay in 1578:

> '*I must have the Gentleman to haul and draw with the Mariner and the Mariner with the Gentleman.*'

APPENDIXES

I. DUNDAS AND CASTLEREAGH ON THE PRINCIPLES OF BRITISH WAR, 1801–15

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VIII. ORAN AND DAKAR, JUNE 1940

APPENDIX I

DUNDAS AND CASTLEREAGH ON THE PRINCIPLES OF BRITISH WAR, 1801–15

THE following quotations from statements by Dundas and Castlereagh, in 1801 and 1814 respectively, explain the place which colonial warfare occupied in their interpretation of British strategy during the Napoleonic War. As will be seen, both of these statesmen regarded the enemy colonies as the theatre in which Great Britain, with her superiority at sea and her limited strength on land, could exert the greatest influence in any war in which she might be engaged.

Dundas, speaking in March 1801[1] in defence of the British strategy of the period since 1793 said:

'Before we can form a judgement respecting the conduct of this war, it is necessary, in the first place, to decide what are the principles by which Britain ought to be governed when engaged in hostilities; secondly, how far these principles have been adhered to in the conduct of this war, and thirdly, what has been the result of the war so conducted, compared with any other period of war in the annals of our history. Upon the first of these heads I must observe that, from our insular situation, from our limited population not admitting of extensive continental operations, and from our importance depending in so material a degree upon the extent of our commerce and navigation, it is obvious that, be the causes of the war what they may, the primary object of our attention ought to be, by what means we can most effectually increase those resources on which depends our naval superiority, and at the same time diminish or appropriate to ourselves those which might enable the enemy to contend with us in this respect. Navigation and commerce are inseparably connected, and that nation must be the most powerful maritime state which possesses the most extensive seaboard. I need scarcely observe, that it follows as a necessary corollary from these premisses, that, if possible, we ought as early as we can at the commencement of a war to cut off the commercial resources of our enemies as by so doing we infallibly weaken or destroy their naval resources. I need not attempt to prove to this house what must be obvious to all, that upon the possession of distant and colonial commerce the extent of our trade must in a great degree depend. It is therefore as much the duty of those entrusted with the conduct of a

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxxvi, p. 1071.

British war to cut off the colonial resources of the enemy as it would be that of the general of a great army to destroy or intercept the magazines of his opponent. So much do I consider offensive operations against the colonial possessions of our enemies as the first object to be attended to in almost every war in which Great Britain can be engaged, that I have no hesitation in laying it down as a fundamental maxim in the policy of this country, that, at the breaking out of hostilities, exertions of that nature ought to admit of no limitation, except what may arise from the necessary reserve of force to be kept at home for the security of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. This, although the most obvious, is not the only reason which should induce the councils of Great Britain to seize upon the foreign possessions of its enemies. It becomes a necessary consequence of every war in which this country can be involved, but particularly if an extensive continental war should prevail at the same time, that our manufacturers must be deprived of many of their accustomed markets: and the effect of seizing upon the distant and colonial possessions of the enemy, is to provide new and beneficial markets, as a substitute for those in which there is a temporary interruption.'

Dundas then proceeded to show that this had been the principle upon which the war from 1793 to 1801 had been conducted. In 1793 Britain had taken Tobago, St. Pierre, and Miquelon, with the right of the fisheries of Newfoundland, Pondicherry, and part of San Domingo. The French fleet at Toulon was taken and destroyed. In 1794 Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, the Saintes, Mariegalante, and Deseada were captured. In 1795 Malacca and Trincomali were taken, followed by the occupation of the whole of Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope. In 1796 Amboyna, Banda, and the Dutch dependencies in the East, and Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice in the West Indies. In 1797 the French establishment in Madagascar was destroyed and Trinidad taken, together with four ships of the line that were there. In 1798 Minorca, in 1799 Surinam, in 1800 Goree, Curaçao, and Malta fell.

He then went on to say that expeditions had been sent in 1799 to Holland, Ferrol, and Cadiz, which were failures; but they had definite objects. They were related to, and had an effect upon, the continental campaign. The immediate objectives were the Dutch fleet at the Texel and the Spanish fleets at Ferrol and Cadiz. The destruction of the naval forces at those ports was of high importance, particularly when a new naval coalition was forming against Great Britain in the north. To deprive the enemy of the ten sail of the line at the Texel and of the unstated number at the Spanish ports would, he said, have been of the utmost value.

The view that attack upon the colonies of the enemy should take a foremost place in British strategy was again expressed by Castlereagh at the end of the war. 'The power of our establishments', he then wrote, 'should be so contrived as to admit of a rapid extension at the outset of a war, so as to place us at once in security at home whilst we are enabled to reach the full fruits of our maritime superiority in striking an early blow against the colonies of the enemy.'[1] It was not solely for the purposes of depriving the enemy of their resources that the capture of the enemy's colonies was important. They provided the oversea bases from which the enemy conducted his raiding war against British commerce.

Dundas's defence of the 'maritime' policy that had been pursued, while it recorded the colonial captures made from the enemy, makes no reference or estimate of the influence which those captures had had upon the course of the war, or whether they had fulfilled their asserted purpose of crippling the enemy or weakening his sea power, or of expenditure of effort and life that had been incurred. We can now see that they did not produce the expected results on the course of the war as a whole and that the same efforts of the combined services expended in one or other of the European fronts would have been more profitable.

On the other hand, Mahan has defended 'the much derided policy of Pitt in capturing sugar islands', not for its results on the general course of the war, but because the colonies were 'alike valuable as pieces of property, as possessions to be exchanged when framing a treaty, and as bases for cruisers. . . .' He regarded it as a waste of military effort on the part of France in 1778 to capture a number of small islands, but 'when one navy is overwhelmingly preponderant, as the British was after 1794, when the enemy confines himself to commerce destroying by crowds of small privateers, then the true military policy is to stamp out the nests where they swarm'.[2] Among other advantages the trade with the captured colonies assisted to increase the revenues by which the war was maintained. The importance of the enemy's colonial bases as well as the need for new markets, expressed by Dundas, were referred to by Sir Julian Corbett in his analysis of the British strategy after Trafalgar.[3] 'When, within a year after Trafalgar, Napoleon's raiding squadrons were driven from the seas, there still remained the privateers acting from oversea bases. These remained a thorn in our side till the bases from which they worked were in our hands. Over and above the necessity

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, vol. v, pp. 29–30.

[2] *Influence of Sea Power on the French Revolution and Empire*, vol. ii, p. 252.

[3] Creighton Lecture, 11 Oct. 1921 (*Quarterly Review*, April 1922, p. 238).

for the vitality of our sea power was the need for new markets and new sources of supply in place of those of which Napoleon was depriving us.' So the British reply to Napoleon's policy of attempting to exhaust Britain by excluding her trade from Europe and forcing a heavy naval expenditure upon her by reviving his fleets was 'to capture new markets and destroy the new navy by combined operations'. The war was a war of exhaustion. In order to possess the means of endurance until new coalitions could be formed—and to achieve that seemed unlikely after Austerlitz—Britain had not only to protect, but also to foster, her oversea commerce.

APPENDIX II

DEFENCE OF COLONIES AND TRADE

Two broad principles concerning the part of sea power in defence of colonies and trade, which were re-examined by the Admiralty during the War of 1812, deserve notice.

Concerning colonies, Sir George Beckwith, the commander-in-chief of the garrisons in the West Indies, had made formal complaint to the Secretary of State, Lord Bathurst, that owing to the inadequacy of the naval force in the West Indies those colonies were insecure. In reply the Admiralty wrote: 'If Sir George Beckwith means that the Navy Department should be responsible for the security of the several West Indian islands from invasion, their Lordships do not at all accede to his proposition. Notwithstanding the most active zeal and vigilance of his Majesty's officers employed in watching the enemy's ports it is quite impossible to ensure their complete blockade, and squadrons may undoubtedly put to sea unobserved by them, and thus obtain the start of his Majesty's ships.' But no time would be lost in pursuing the enemy, and it was highly probable that the naval part of the expedition would be destroyed: in the first instance, however, the defence of every colony must depend on the military means confided to the care of the General Officer commanding.

Fundamentally this is the doctrine of colonial defence expressed by the Admiralty in their memorandum of 1756 regarding the loss of Minorca,[1] wherein it was laid down that since it was impossible to keep at all, or perhaps any, of the distant dominions a strength at sea equal to what the enemy could send thither, 'the best, indeed the only security, arises from a detention of the enemy's strength in

[1] *Papers relating to the Loss of Minorca*, p. 96 (Navy Records Society).

their ports'. Blockade of the enemy fleets in their bases was the first line of defence, rapid pursuit the second, local defences, capable of holding out until the relief could arrive, the third. The same idea was put into words by Sir Thomas Holland in 1887, when outlining at the Colonial Conference in that year the principle of colonial defence: 'The whole standard of defence of the Australian Colonies is based on the fact that an enemy could send small squadrons only into those waters; that very few, if any, ironclads would be able to reach Australian ports; and that considerable expeditions could not be undertaken against them. But these limitations to an enemy's action, which have been universally accepted and acted upon, exist solely in consequence of the great ironclad fleet maintained by the Imperial Government in European waters. . . . It is the function of this fleet to seal the enemy's ports, and to follow and intercept any considerable expedition against a distant colony.'[1]

The continuity and consistency of doctrine find expression in the memorandum on naval defence prepared in 1912 in answer to a request from the Canadian Government: 'Naval supremacy is of two kinds: general and local. General naval supremacy consists in the power to defeat in battle and drive off the seas the strongest hostile Navy or combination of hostile Navies wherever they may be found. Local superiority consists in the power to send in good time to, or maintain permanently in, some distant theatre, forces adequate to defeat the enemy or hold him in check until the main decision has been obtained in the decisive theatre. It is the general naval supremacy of Great Britain which is the primary safeguard of the security and interests of the great Dominions of the Crown, and which for all these years has been the deterrent when any possible designs prejudicial to or inconsiderate of their policy and safety.'[2]

The principle is plain. The distant colonies are covered against attack on a major scale by a mass stationed in the area of departure so disposed as to render evasion difficult, or, if effected, capable of instituting a rapid pursuit by a superior force. Until recent years the only 'areas of departure' lay in Europe, in the North Sea, the Channel, and the Bay, and the Mediterranean. When a new and aggressive sea Power arose in the Far East the security of the Eastern Dominions demanded the application of extension of that principle to those seas. It was the absence of a mass capable of intercepting the Japanese expeditions in their area of departure, or failing interception, of proceeding rapidly in pursuit, that left the way open for the Japanese armies to move unmolested and in force across the sea

[1] *Parliamentary Papers*, 1887, vol. lvi, statement of 5 Apr. 1887.
[2] Ibid. 1912, Cmd. 6513 of Dec. 1912.

to the many British and Dutch islands and possessions in the Pacific. Even though local garrisons existed, their powers of resistance were limited to holding out until relief should arrive, and the force needed to provide it did not exist, the entire mass of the navy being locked up in the European theatre. Aid came to Australia, but only just in time, in the shape of the American navy. The economies which limited the navy to a single hemisphere for the defence of a two-hemisphere Empire proved costly and furnish an ample confirmation of the truth of Burke's warning in 1763.

In the matter of the defence of trade the Naval Commander-in-Chief in the West, during the War of 1812, complained of the inadequacy of his squadron. It consisted of eleven capital ships, thirty-five frigates, and thirty-eight sloops. That force was not proving able to provide sufficient protection against the attacks of the few frigates and the very numerous privateers which were operating in the Atlantic. The remedy, the Admiralty replied, lay in blockade and convoy. 'You must afford regular and frequent escort.' If that were done, 'no serious injury to trade is possible'. The emphasis lies in the word 'serious'. Absolute security could not be ensured, even with so many vessels. Close upon 1,400 merchantmen were lost, but this was a small proportion of the whole of the British shipping. The provision of convoy demanded a great number of cruising vessels of the smaller types as well as the larger frigates: without them the many convoys could not be escorted. What statesmen had to learn then and in our own times was that the number of 'cruisers' is not dependent on the number of enemy vessels, large and small, but upon the number of convoys to be defended, the positions to be kept under observation, and the strength of the individual escorts. As the attacks are ubiquitous, so defence must be similarly ubiquitous. The expansion in the cruiser and flotilla forces called for in the Napoleonic and the two German wars, and the losses suffered until that expansion had been effected, are costly reminders of the need of maintaining the necessary forces, whether they be 'cruisers', 'frigates', or any other type of either surface or aircraft, at all times. The economies of peace have proved costly in war.

APPENDIX III

THE ORDERS IN COUNCIL OF 1807

THERE were altogether fourteen Orders in Council.

I. *7 January, 1807.* This order states that the French Government, in violation of the usages of war, has prohibited the commerce of all nations with Great Britain and declares the country in a state of blockade though French fleets are confined to harbour. Great Britain has the right of retaliation. The French decrees would warrant a similar prohibition, and it lay in the power of Britain to support it 'by actually investing the ports and coasts of the enemy with numerous squadrons and cruisers'; in other words, to institute a blockade in the required form. But while unwilling to proceed to such an extremity which would distress nations not engaged in the war, 'the King cannot suffer such measures to be taken without taking some steps to restrain this violence and retort upon France the evils of their injustice'. Hence, the order directs that no vessels shall be allowed to trade between ports in or of France or in the possession or so far under her control that British vessels cannot trade thereto. Neutral vessels coming from or destined to such ports will therefore be ordered by British men-of-war to discontinue the voyage and if the order is disregarded, will be made prize.

II. *4 February, 1807.* Vessels bound to Britain with certain enumerated cargoes not to be interrupted, viz. cargoes in the nature of corn, wool, Spanish wine, raw silk, skins, pitch, timber, planks, masts, yards, brimstone, cork, and various other raw materials.

III. *18 February, 1807.* Ships and goods from Bremen, Hamburg, and other north German ports employed in trade with Britain to pass free, though those ports may be under French control.

IV. *19 August, 1807.* Vessels from Mecklenburg, Oldenburg, Papenburg, Kniphausen to be warned not to trade at any hostile port unless going to or coming from a port in the United Kingdom.

V. *2 November, 1807.* (The 'Blockade Order'.) As the Order in Council of 7 January, 1807 has not compelled the enemy to rescind his decrees, or inclined neutrals to interpose to obtain the revocation, but contrariwise the decrees have been enforced with greater rigour, the ports and places of France and her allies or other countries at war with Great Britain, and all ports from which the British flag is excluded, or enemy colonies 'shall be subject to the same restrictions as if the same were actually blockaded by His Majesty's forces'. And as some countries not at war have acquiesced in the orders of France and accepted certificates of origin declaring that

their cargo does not consist of the produce of the United Kingdom, this being part of the system of warfare against British trade, in retaliation any ships bearing such certificates will be made prize.

[It is important to note that the initial aim of this order was not the complete stoppage of trade with the coasts mentioned. Besides being retaliatory it had the further purpose of strengthening that element of British sea power, shipping, and by forcing the enemy's trade to pass through British ports, to maintain the country's revenues which it was Napoleon's object to destroy. 'The objects of the Order in Council', said Spencer Perceval 'were not to destroy the trade of the Continent, but to force the Continent to trade with us.'[1]]

VI. *2 November, 1807.* A relaxation of the Navigation Act permitting foreign goods to be imported in foreign bottoms.

VII. *2 November, 1807.* France having declared the sale of ships by a belligerent to a neutral to be illegal, and the trade of France being largely protected by transfers to neutrals, the order treats such sales as illegal.

The remaining seven orders, issued during November and December 1807, dealt with details of routeing, clearances, and other lesser matters.

The orders were attacked by Brougham and others. Brougham argued[2] that they contravened the Law of Nations; that while they made an assertion of being retaliatory this was a pretence only, and they were in reality directed against neutrals whom Britain had no right to injure unless they had acquiesced in the wrongdoing of the enemy and made themselves partners to the quarrel; that the measures would prove ineffective, failing to prevent neutrals from trading with France and forcing them to trade in a manner profitable to Britain; that whatever might be the intention of the enemy in his decrees, his power of executing it was confined to shutting his ports to certain ships—all the rest was 'empty threat and insult and constituting no excuse for our aggression on neutrals whether they resent them or put up with them'. Even if it were admitted, he said that the French Government could circumvent the proverbial ingenuity of neutral traders and prevent their goods from getting into the Continent directly in their bottoms, that was the most they could do. British direct trade with the neutrals, and consequently through their countries with the countries subject to French influence, would have remained—an argument which assumed the continued free existence of those countries; which was precisely what Napoleon would not permit.

[1] Cobbett's *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. xxi, p. 1152.

[2] *Edinburgh Review*, Jan. 1808, pp. 434 et seq.

APPENDIX IV

BURKE ON THE STRATEGY OF THE WAR IN 1793

To the Comte de Mercy, August 1793.

'IF I conceive rightly of the spirit of the present combination, it is not at war with France, but with Jacobitism. . . . We are at war with a *principle*, and with an example, which there is no shutting out with fortresses, or excluding by territorial limits. No lines or demarkation can bound the Jacobin Empire. It must be extirpated in the place of its origin.'

To Sir Gilbert Elliott, 22 September 1793.

'I cannot help thinking that we are again on the wrong tack and that we are resolved either to consider ourselves as in war with the whole nation of France, merely on common political points or that we have taken up some of the republican factions in order to establish their power, and to crush the remainder of the royalists in that unhappy country. If I understand at all the true spirit of the present contest, we are engaged in a civil war; but on a far larger scale, and on far more important objects than civil wars have generally extended themselves to, or comprehended. . . . Strongly impressed with the soundness and justice of this idea I have always looked on the proceedings in Poitou with greater interest, and in truth as of greater importance, than the proceedings of the Combined Powers on the side of Flanders. These brave and principled men, with very inadequate means, have struggled, and hitherto victoriously, for upwards of six months, and have in fact, by the mere dint of courage and constancy, done more against the common enemy, and deprived him of a larger extent of territory, than all the regular armies of Europe put together, though they have in the field perhaps not less than 400,000 men and all the resources of so many mighty kingdoms. They amount to about 40,000 though ill armed and ill provided in every respect. . . . Where can we hope to plant 40,000 men in the heart of the enemy's country at less than 100 times what the support of this would come to? I know that we were hurried on by the torrent of circumstances to send the body of our forces to Flanders. I don't blame the measure, but indeed I lament it: and I am quite sure that the fourth part of these forces, sent to Poitou, would have turned the scale in our favour.'

To Henry Dundas, 7 October 1793.

'The opening at La Vendée appears to me the most important of

any that has happened in this war, and I beg leave to suggest that the first and most vigorous of our efforts ought to be made there. Everything that is done is in the style of hostility to France, as a nation: without distinction of causes, persons and parties. Here is a war maintained for more than eight months against Jacobinism. It is its sole principle. They strike at the enemy in his weakest and most vulnerable part. Here, at a comparatively less expense, we may make an impression likely to be decisive. In other places, with millions of expense and torrents of blood, little progress has been made. I am far from being sure that the expedition talked of for Martinique promises any advantage like a strong push at la Vendée, if we regard the speedy and final issue of the war. . . . All operations in the tropics are at an immense expense of human lives.'

APPENDIX V

CASTLEREAGH'S STATEMENT CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE DISPUTE WITH THE UNITED STATES

In a speech on 18 February 1813 Castlereagh, moving a resolution for the resolute prosecution of the war with the United States, stated the views of the Cabinet at that time. 'The great questions before the countries, he said, were the Orders in Council, which it is customary in America to call an illegal blockade, and the impressment of our seamen. . . .' Not satisfied, he went on to say, with the revocation of the blockades of 1806, the American Government claimed the abandonment by Great Britain of the future right of the exercise of her rights involved in these orders and that blockade.

The blockade of 1806 had not been complained of by the United States during the three years past. Far from being illegal it was a legitimate blockade. 'It rested on the ordinary and acknowledged principle of international law that the Power by which it was instituted possessed a force capable of maintaining it.' Fox, who ordered it, did not do so until he had inquired of the Admiralty whether they could support it by an adequate force and only when he had received their affirmative reply the order was given. A sufficient force both existed and was in operation to maintain it.

Claiming that the revocation of the Orders in Council had disposed of the question of the blockade, Castlereagh went on to say that the sole question which therefore then stood in the way of peace was the right to impress British seamen serving on board American

merchant ships. No question could more closely interest the country, as it touched upon one of the main features of Britain's security, the support of her naval power. 'The exercise of the right itself was not merely a convenience to Great Britain but belonged to her very conservation as a State: the abandonment of it would not have been merely inconvenient but would have proved vitally dangerous if not fatal to her security.'

He divided the American complaint into two parts: first, that American citizens were being seized and forced to serve in British men-of-war; second, that American ships were being boarded and men taken out of them who, whatever their origin, were entitled to the protection of the flag under which they sailed.

Replying to the assertion that Great Britain had impressed 15,000 to 20,000 American citizens, Castlereagh emphatically rejected both the figures and the intention. When the whole question had been examined in January 1811, out of a total complement of 145,000 men the number who claimed American citizenship was 3,500, but it was found that the proportion who were able to establish that claim was about one in four. 'Let it be supposed, however, that one half of the number so claiming really were, or established themselves by proof to be, American citizens; then there would be 1,600 or 1,700 individuals who had national claims for demanding their liberty. Now would the House believe that there was any man so infatuated, or that the British Government was driven to such straits, that for a petty consideration of 1,700 sailors his Majesty's Government would needlessly irritate the pride of a neutral nation or violate that justice which was due from one country to another . . .?'

The object of Great Britain in insisting upon the right of search was not to acquire American seamen but the much broader and more important one of guarding herself from being deprived of her own. Certificates of nationality were fraudulently obtained, and the claim that a man who, by a false oath, converted himself into an American citizen, or who naturalized himself in consequence of American laws, thereby ceased to bear allegiance to his country, could not be accepted. We had to, he said, 'consult our own security before we gave up to America or to any other Power the means which we possessed to defend ourselves, by the exercise of a right which never had been, and never could be, justly questioned'.

Fundamentally, what came to roost was the long neglect of successive British Parliaments to establish a just system of manning the navy, of rewarding the seamen, of alleviating the hardships of service and the brutality of discipline. It was that long-continued neglect that had caused the difficulties of manning the fleet from the time

of Charles II onwards and had brought on the mutinies of Spithead and the Nore. In the debates only one speaker appeared to realize that the losses from desertion were due to this cause. Somewhat timidly, the Earl of Galloway suggested consideration of whether desertion 'might not be obviated by an increase in petty officers from the best among them, and by more liberal remuneration'.

APPENDIX VI

THE SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY AND SEA POWER

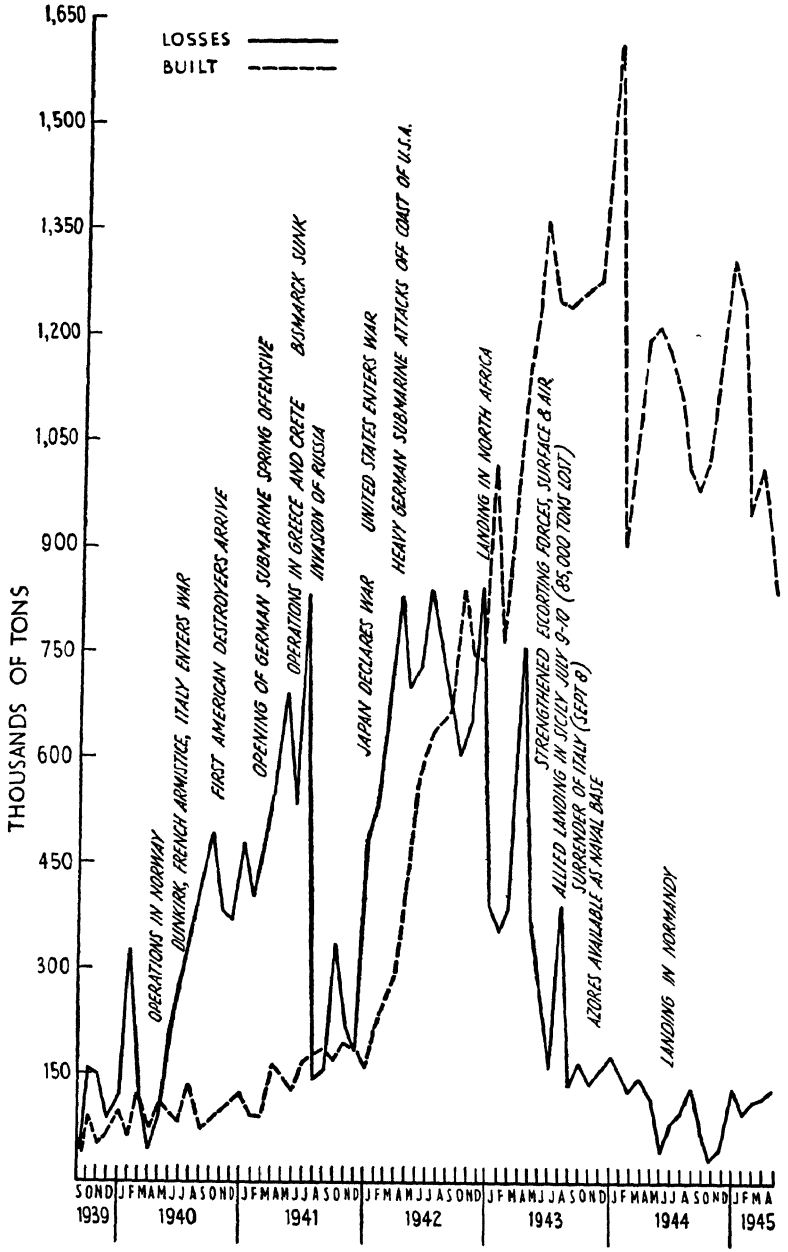
THE vital importance of the shipbuilding industry and all that appertains to the production, repair, and equipment of ships of war as well as merchant vessels is partly illustrated by the losses suffered in the great wars of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Tables I, II, and III give these losses in their several categories. Besides making good these losses the industry was called on to expand the peace establishments to the strength demanded by the wars.

Table IV gives the growth in the 'cruiser' forces of the three principal types in the wars with France of 1793–1815 and in the First German War of 1914–18. In spite of the difference of the material in those periods, there is a common resemblance in two matters: the 'light' cruisers and the flotilla craft increased vastly in each case, the numbers of 'heavy' cruisers declined. The experience of the Seven Years' War (1759–63) told the same tale. The 82 frigates with which the war began had to be increased to 123; and that increase of 50 per cent. was made in the 'light' cruisers, of which 58 were added, the 'heavy' types being nearly halved—from 38 ships they fell to 21.

Apart from the cruiser types specified in Table IV, the number of very small auxiliary craft, called for in the First German War by the developments of the submarine and the mine, increased from 12 in August 1914 to 5,081 in November 1918, among them 1,520 trawlers, 1,365 drifters, and 507 motor launches.[1] The Second German War has brought the same experience on an even greater scale.

For all of these small craft, as well as for the augmented force of fighting ships of other categories, officers and men are needed. The essentiality of a seafaring reserve in peace as well as an organization for expanding that reserve in war is a problem therefore of no less importance to the statesman than the maintenance of the shipbuilding industry in all its branches.

[1] *Official History of the War; Naval Operations*, vol. v, Appendix F, p. 430.

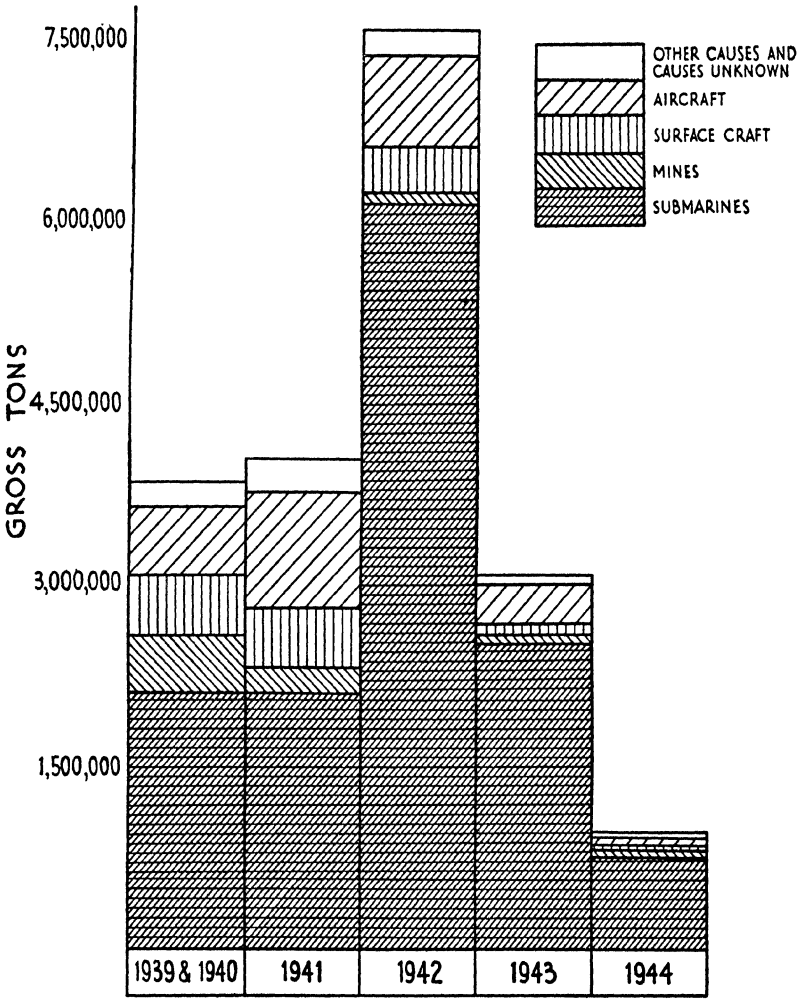


MAP XII. LOSSES OF ALLIED MERCHANT SHIPPING FROM ALL CAUSES, SEPT. 1939–APRIL 1945. BRITISH, CANADIAN, AND AMERICAN SHIPPING BUILT, SEPT. 1939–APRIL 1945.

TABLE I

Losses of Ships in the Great Wars of the Eighteenth Century

Period	*Class*	*Losses*		*Total*	*Remarks*
		Enemy Action	*Wreck, &c.*		
1739–48	Capital	1	5	6	The term capital ship is here used to mean the ship of the line of battle. The 'cruisers' are partly the 'heavy' frigates from 56 to 40 guns, partly the lighter frigates of 38 to 20 guns.
	Cruisers	7	9	16	
	Flotilla	11	20	31	
		19	34	53	
1756–63	Capital	1	13	14	
	Cruisers	6	13	19	
	Flotilla	11	8	19	
		18	34	52	
1775–83	Capital	1	15	16	The flotilla includes the sloops, corvettes, brigs, gun brigs, and cutters, whose numbers greatly increased in the war after 1775, owing in part to the increased privateering and in part to the threat of invasion.
	Cruisers	38	36	74	
	Flotilla	76	39	115	
		115	90	205	
1793–1801	Capital	3	16	19	
	Cruisers	9	51	60	
	Flotilla	35	79	114	
		47	146	193	
1803–5	Capital	1	11	12	
	Cruisers	19	39	58	
	Flotilla	79	156	235	
		99	206	305	



LOSSES OF ALLIED MERCHANT SHIPPING, 1939–44, AND ANALYSIS BY CAUSE

TABLE II

Losses of Ships in the German War of 1914–18

	Enemy action	*Wreck or accident, &c.*	*Total*
Capital . .	14	2	16
Cruisers . .	18	7	25
Destroyers . .	45	23	68
Submarines .	54	..	54

In addition to the above, from unspecified causes, but mainly enemy action were the following:—

Coast defence ships . .	1	Armed boarding steamers .	13
Monitors	5	Coastal motor boats . .	13
Sloops	18	Hospital ships . .	815
Torpedo boats . . .	11	Minesweepers . .	
Patrol vessels . . .	2	Auxiliary patrol vessels .	
Minelayers	2	Colliers . . .	
Armed merchant cruisers. .	17		

TABLE III

Losses of Fighting Ships in the War of 1939–45

Royal Navy		*Dominion Navies*	
Capital Ships . .	5	Canada:	
Aircraft-carriers . .	8	Destroyers .	6
Cruisers . . .	26	Lesser craft .	17
Destroyers . .	128		
Submarines . . .	77	Australia:	
Armed merchant cruisers	16	Cruisers . .	3
Corvettes . . .	20	Destroyers .	4
Frigates . . .	20	Other craft .	6
Sloops	11		
Minesweepers .	51		
Trawlers . . .	240		
Drifters . . .	48		
Minelayers . . .	6		
Yachts . . .	10		
Gunboats . . .	7		
Cutters . . .	3		
Monitors . . .	1		
Small craft . . .	63		

TABLE IV

Growth of British Cruiser Forces in War

	Heavy frigates, 56–44 guns		*Frigates, 38–20 guns*		*Sloops, 18–10 guns*		*Brigs, 14–10 guns*	
	In Commission	*In Ordinary*	*In Commission*	*In Ordinary*	*In Commission*	*In Ordinary*	*In Commission*	*In Ordinary*
1793 . . .	10	20	47	49	34	4	Nil	Nil
	30		96		38		0	
1810 . . .	14	1	151	11	242	4	141	3
	15		162		246		144	
+ or −	−15		+66		+208		+144	
	A Heavy Cruisers		*B Light Cruisers*		*C Sloops and Destroyers*		*Armed vessels*	
	Built	*Building*	*Built*	*Building*	*Built*	*Building*	*Built*	*Building*
Effective Aug. 1914 .	40	6	62	17	227	23	Nil	Nil
	46		79		250		0	
11 Nov. 1918 .	27	0	82	21	450	108	63	0
	27		103		558		63	
+ or −	−19		+24		+308		+63	

Note 1. The total allied cruiser strength included, of course, the cruisers of the other allied powers.

Note 2. The figures do not include 106 torpedo boats in 1914, reduced to 94 in 1918: nor the cutters in 1793–1810.

Note 3. Of the armed vessels in 1918, 33 were merchant cruisers, 20 boarding vessels, 10 escort vessels.

Note 4. Sloops might alternatively be shown with armed vessels. In Aug. 1914 there were 4, in Nov. 1918, 117. During the war 135 were laid down.

Note 5. The losses in *A*, *B*, *C* respectively were 12, 13, and 68 (destroyers only). Building had therefore to produce 37 cruisers and over 356 destroyers and sloops.

APPENDIX VII

SIR EYRE CROWE ON SEA POWER AND POLICY[1]

'THE general character of England's foreign policy is determined by the immutable conditions of her geographical situation on the ocean flank of Europe as an island State with vast oversea colonies and dependencies, whose existence and survival as an independent community are inseparably bound up with the possession of preponderant sea power. The tremendous influence of such preponderance has been described in the classical pages of Captain Mahan. No one now disputes it. Sea power is more potent than land power, because it is as pervading as the element in which it moves and has its being. Its formidable character makes itself felt the more directly that a maritime State is, in the literal sense of the word, the neighbour of every country accessible by sea. It would, therefore, be but natural that the power of a State supreme at sea should inspire universal jealousy and fear, and be ever exposed to the danger of being overthrown by a general combination of the world. Against such a combination no single nation could in the long run stand, least of all a small island kingdom not possessed of the military strength of a people trained to arms, and dependent for its food supply on oversea commerce. The danger can in practice only be averted—and history shows that it has been so averted—on condition that the national policy of the insular and naval State is so directed as to harmonize with the general desires and ideals common to all mankind, and more particularly that it is closely identified with the primary and vital interests of a majority, or as many as possible, of the other nations. Now, the first interest of all countries is the preservation of national independence. It follows that England, more than any other non-insular Power, has a direct and positive interest in the maintenance of the independence of nations, and therefore must be the natural enemy of any country threatening the independence of others, and the natural protector of the weaker communities.

'History shows that the danger threatening the independence of this or that nation has generally arisen, at least in part, out of the momentary predominance of a neighbouring State at once militarily powerful, economically efficient, and ambitious to extend its frontiers or spread its influence, the danger being directly proportionate to the degree of its power and efficiency, and to the spontaneity of 'inevitableness' of its ambitions. The only check on the abuse of political predominance derived from such a position has always

[1] *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914*, vol. iii, pp. 402–3.

consisted in the opposition of an equally formidable rival, or of a combination of several countries forming leagues of defence. The equilibrium established by such a grouping of forces is technically known as the balance of power, and it has become almost an historical truism to identify England's secular policy with the maintenance of this balance by throwing her weight now in this scale and now in that, but ever on the side opposed to the political dictatorship of the strongest single State or group at a given time.

'If this view of British policy is correct, the opposition into which England must inevitably be driven to any country aspiring to such a dictatorship assumes almost the form of a law of nature, as has indeed been theoretically demonstrated, and illustrated historically, by an eminent writer on English national policy.'

APPENDIX VIII

ORAN AND DAKAR, JUNE 1940

THE question of whether preventive action should be taken to ensure that the French fleet should not fall into the hands of, and be used by, Germany in the summer of 1940 was one which, in one or another form, had arisen in many of Great Britain's wars at sea: the question of whether, and if so when and in what form, forcible action should be taken to ensure that a Power, neutral at the moment but whose neutrality, or whose power of preserving its neutrality, was suspect, should be prevented from taking steps which would either place it in a favourable position for beginning hostilities itself, for affording direct assistance to an enemy, or from being forced by an enemy to place its forces at his disposal. Thus Admiral George Byng had attacked a Spanish fleet covering an expedition to Sicily in 1718, though no war had been declared; Boscawen had been sent to prevent a French fleet from landing troops in Canada at a time of strained relations in 1775; Chatham, in 1761, convinced—and correctly convinced—that Spain, then neutral, was preparing to join France, awaiting only the arrival of a treasure fleet with which to finance the war, proposed to the Cabinet that Spain's power of making war should be crippled by the seizure of the fleet, and, on the rejection of his proposal, he had resigned. His son, in like conditions and for a like reason, had seized the Spanish frigates in 1804. In 1807 Canning, guessing that it was Napoleon's intention to seize the Danish navy, forestalled the French army that was preparing to march on Copenhagen to lay hands on the ships, and captured them;

and in 1808 the British Cabinet foiled Napoleon's attempt to seize the Portuguese navy, removing it out of his reach under British protection.

In June 1940 a situation of a similar nature arose. On the 16th of the month, when France was about to conclude an armistice with Germany, the British Prime Minister, after having declined when first asked three days earlier, acceded to the request of the French Government to release France from her treaty obligations not to make a separate peace, but on the express, and assuredly reasonable, condition that the French navy should sail for British harbours and remain there until the negotiations were concluded. The French Government fell, and that condition went unfulfilled by its successor of Vichy which accepted the German terms that the fleet should be collected in ports to be specified and there disarmed under German or Italian control. One touch of comedy was included in this sombre business in the declaration by the German Government disclaiming any intention of using the fleet for their own purposes, thereby provoking the caustic comment from the Prime Minister: 'What is the value of that? Ask half a dozen countries what is the value of such a solemn assurance!'

The units of the French fleet included nine capital ships[1] of which the two most powerful were lying in French ports, four lay in Oran, one at Alexandria, and two in British ports: also eighteen cruisers, ten in French ports, two in British, four at Alexandria, and two in colonial ports abroad. The ships in the British and Egyptian ports were disarmed by consent. There remained the four capital ships and one carrier at Oran. On 3 July the Cabinet met and decided that a demand should be conveyed to the French admiral at Oran that he should either unite his squadron with the British and continue the war or carry his ships to a British, a West Indian, or an American port and disarm them or scuttle his ships. A strong squadron was therefore sent to support this demand in order that compliance could be made without dishonour—the mistake of 1804 over the Spanish frigates was not going to be repeated.[2] The French Admiral declared to the envoy who was sent into the port to convey the Government's demands that it was his intention to obey his own Government's orders, that he would neither surrender nor remove his ships, and that if necessary he would fight: and notwithstanding all the efforts made by the envoy to convince him that the British would not shrink from the most extreme measure of attacking and sinking the French squadron, he was unable to believe that this

[1] Viz. two 35,000-ton modern ships, five older, but rearmed, battleships, and two battlecruisers of a modern type.

[2] *Ante*, pp. 223–4.

would be done. The British, on their part, neither doubted the good intentions of their late ally nor Admiral Gensould's assurances that the ships would, in no condition, be handed over intact to either enemy. What they doubted was his power to prevent the transfer. Thus there were tragic misunderstandings. As the Admiral persisted in his refusal, fire was opened, one of the old battleships was sunk and another disabled, one battlecruiser was run ashore, damaged, and the other, though she made her escape to Toulon, was injured. Two thousand French seamen were killed. What a different situation, what far-reaching effects might have followed, if Admiral Gensould had acted as General Yorck acted in 1814![1]

Thus the immediate strategical advantage that was gained in this unhappy affair was confined to ensuring that two battleships of an older, though efficient, type could not be employed by the enemy and that two battlecruisers were temporarily out of action. But this advantage, such as it was, was set off by the political, and therefore ultimately strategical, disadvantage of creating a profound and natural resentment in France, and, in particular, in the French navy. Whether the drastic action was necessary to ensure that the ships would not be used against Great Britain was far from certain. Many of the British officers to whom this highly distasteful operation against their late ally was committed were convinced, from their personal acquaintance with the French command, that the word of those officers could be relied upon and that in no circumstances would they serve, or allow their ships to take part in operations, against Britain. On the other hand, there was the unpleasant fact to face that the Vichy Government had deliberately released 400 German airmen to serve against their recent ally and none could prophesy in what manner a direct order from Vichy would be received and acted upon.

Was the gain of depriving the enemy of the problematical help of two, or even of four, heavy ships—if all at Oran had been eliminated—worth the candle? The margin of British capital ship superiority was undoubtedly unduly low; but if there were a possibility that the French navy might be used against Britain, did the act effectively diminish the danger? or did it tend to increase the risk of such action? The destruction of even four heavy ships would not destroy French sea power, for France still possessed a fine body of cruisers, heavy and light, a large flotilla of destroyers, many of them of great power, numerous submarines, and her air forces. In the condition in which Britain then stood, short of cruisers, short of destroyers, threatened with a struggle in defence of her sea communications in which these four types of vessel would play a far

[1] *Vide ante*, p. 313.

larger part than the battleship or battlecruisers, it was surely unwise —to put the matter on no higher level than mere expediency—to provoke a resentment which might tip the scales, in a delicately balanced political situation, in the enemy's favour. There had been more than one, among them Napoleon, who in their day had considered that Britain had lost more by incurring the active hostility of Denmark than she had gained by the capture of the Danish navy in 1807; but whereas it was then practically the entire Danish navy that had been taken, the Oran affair accounted for no more than this small fraction of the navy of France. To be sure it was in accordance with those schools of thought which estimated naval strength wholly in terms of battleships and had so belittled the importance of cruiser and flotilla craft that the number of those vessels had been fantastically reduced.

This event was followed in September by two others, each of a hardly less unfortunate character. General de Gaulle, having convinced the British Cabinet that the French in Senegal would rise and welcome him, proposed to carry a body of his adherents to Dakar and establish the Fighting French authority at that important base; and requested the naval support of a British squadron. The Cabinet, forgetful, it would seem, of long experience stretching from the Athenian expedition to Syracuse to the landing of *émigré* forces in Brittany in the end of the eighteenth century, and of the chronic failure of placing any reliance on the assistance of communities believed to be hostile to an existing régime, assented; and carried their assent so far as not even to inquire whether, if the assumption of the French general should prove ill founded, he was prepared to go through with the operation to the end: in other words, to fight.

While this expedition was preparing, the Vichy Government was also acting and taking steps to ensure that Dakar should adhere to its own cause. For that purpose it was reported[1] to have assembled a body of supporters to take over the control of the port, and embarked it in a heavy squadron of three powerful modern cruisers, with three large destroyers in company. Information that a squadron was being prepared and that it would probably sail within three days reached London. The destination was not known. The Cabinet took no steps, nor did the Admiralty, to intercept this mission. They neither gave orders, nor sent any reinforcement, to Gibraltar, leaving, by their silence, the clear impression that they attached no

[1] Whether it is a fact that a body of 'bitter Vichy partisans' was embarked appears uncertain. As a speculation it was reasonably probable, but as no mention of it appears to have been made, at the time, to the admiral at Gibraltar, little importance seems to have been attached to it at this stage.

importance to the passage of this force through the Straits of Gibraltar.

The expedition duly sailed from Toulon on the day predicted and passed the Straits on 11 September. Such communications as had been made with the Gibraltar command had tended to indicate that the Government desired to improve the bruised relations with France, and therefore friendly signals were exchanged with the British patrolling vessels in the Straits. The French squadron, after calling at Casablanca and remaining there a short while, proceeded to the southward and duly arrived at Dakar and assumed control.

The Franco-British expedition appeared off Dakar on 23 September. General de Gaulle's overtures, and his attempt to land, were at once resisted by the shore batteries, the fire of the ships in harbour, and the submarines of the port defences. The operation was then abandoned. The reason for this extraordinary decision was given in an official announcement. 'When it became clear that only a major operation of war would secure the fall of Dakar it was decided to discontinue hostilities as *it had never been the intention of his Majesty's Government to enter into serious warlike operations against those Frenchmen who felt it their duty to obey the commands of the Vichy Government.*' The general, it was said, 'was most anxious that he should not be the cause of bloodshed to his fellow countrymen'.[1] The words in italics above are singularly inconsistent with the action taken against those Frenchmen at Oran who had equally 'felt it their duty to obey the commands of the Vichy Government'.

It would be difficult to find, in the whole history of war, a more deplorable fiasco than this. An expedition was sent to obtain the surrender of an important place of arms, on the bare assumption that the local garrison would prove friendly and without deciding whether, if that assumption should prove wrong, the demand was to be enforced. No clear instructions had been sent to the naval commander at Gibraltar that he was to prevent French ships from proceeding to a French port not in the occupation of the enemy. In view of the other omissions it appears probable that he was not informed that an expedition to Dakar was about to be undertaken, or that it was on its way. One effect of the failure was to make Britain ridiculous in the eyes of the world. 'A wise commander', wrote an American commentator in the *New York Times*, 'never begins a battle unless he has the strength and determination to carry it through to the end. The British have now violated the principle in their conduct of their expedition'—a criticism which, directed against the commander's conduct, would more properly have been applied to the authority which planned and dispatched it.

[1] *The Times*, 26 Sept. 1940.

On more occasions than one in British history a Government which has blundered in its conduct of an operation has sought shelter from attack by throwing the blame upon its commander. Thus, when in 1741 owing to the Cabinet's failure to reinforce the Mediterranean squadron, a Spanish fleet was able to proceed from Barcelona without interruption and engage upon an invasion, the Duke of Newcastle most shamelessly deceived his critics in Parliament both as to the instructions given to the commander and the force at his disposal.[1] The same minister in 1755 when Minorca was lost mainly through his ministry's failure to dispatch a squadron in time to the Mediterranean, procured the judicial murder of Admiral Byng in order to stave off the criticism of the country.

'In England arose an outburst of exasperation that frightened Newcastle and his friends into an activity as disgraceful as their former neglect. . . .' The Duke urged the Lord Chancellor to prepare for the 'immediate trial and condemnation of Byng'; and the Lord Chief Justice, reporting on the excited condition of the country, 'assured Newcastle that the only way was that Byng must be punished capitally'.[2]

So in 1940, when, after the failure at Dakar, questions were asked in Parliament as to why the Vichy squadron had not been stopped on its way, the blame was thrown on the admiral at Gibraltar, and the House was assured that 'disciplinary action' was being taken.[3] The fact that neither the Cabinet nor the Admiralty, both of whom, it would appear, were informed of the prospective sailing of the Toulon squadron with its supposititious cargo of 'Vichy partisans of a most bitter type' as early as 6 September, had given plain orders that it was not to be permitted to leave the Mediterranean, was discreetly kept out of sight, and the House was led to believe that the admiral had failed to carry out the duties he had been ordered to carry out, and that he had a force adequate to that purpose. Finally, to crown all, following an evil precedent of the previous war, the admiral was refused the trial by court martial to which naval officers in the past had always been regarded as entitled, in which a fair and dispassionate examination of his conduct could be made.

The lack of any clear instructions from the statesmen to the admiral as to how he should act stands in striking contrast to the instructions issued in a similar situation at an earlier period. In 1741, Britain being at war with Spain, and there being reason to believe that France, then neutral but unfriendly, might send a

[1] Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739–48*, vol. i, pp. 173–5.
[2] Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*, vol. i, pp. 132–3.
[3] *Hansard*, vol. cccixv, no. 112, col. 209, debate of 8 Oct. 1940.

squadron to join the Spanish force at Ferrol, the Inner Committee of the Cabinet in the persons of Walpole, Hardwicke, and the First Lord, Sir Charles Wager, gave the following plain indication as to how the admiral should deal with such an attempt:

'It is not his Majesty's intention to begin hostilities against France unless the conduct of the French squadron should make it unavoidable by showing an indispensable resolution to attempt to join the Spanish fleet, which can only be with a view to protect and defend the King's enemies against his Majesty's arms. . . . Upon the first intelligence you shall receive from any of your cruisers of the French squadron putting to sea and coming towards Ferrol you should endeavour to put yourself between that port and them, and dispose your squadron so as to make it difficult for them to go into Ferrol without either using force against you, or you removing from before that port, which you will refuse to do though demanded, and declare to the Commander of the French squadron that though his Majesty is firmly resolved to preserve the most perfect friendship with the most Christian King, yet that you cannot suffer any ships of force belonging to any Power whatever to go at this juncture into Ferrol as long as the Spanish squadron shall continue there. . . .'

If instructions such as that had been given by this Cabinet, accompanied by such a reinforcement—if a reinforcement were needed—as would have ensured an unquestioned superiority over the French squadron, that squadron would have been turned back and never have reached Dakar.

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