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The Failure of the Western Democracies

to maintain peace

1929 - 1939

By

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T o

The millions of young men - to whom I feel
greatly indebted - who had died to preserve
the world from the avalanche of the blood
thirsty Nazi hordes of destruction and vandalism,
that the weakness, the negligence and the blunders
of the Western Democracies, have let free.

May their sacrifice be not vain !

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C O N C L U S I O N

How far as Democracies, have the Western Powers failed to maintain peace ?

Prospects of the Future.

PART I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

I n t r o d u c t i o n

To write a thesis on the subject "the failure of the Western Democracies to maintain Peace after World War I had been won, - I still wonder if it has - is to write the tragic story of a post war period mainly characterized by heavy mistakes, blunders and failures, such as the "war guilt" and "war criminals" provisions embodied in the Treaty of Versailles, the effort to collect reparations, the Rhur episode, the failure to close the "gap" in the League Covenant, the failure to give France the security she demanded, the failure to disarm, the economic nationalism that spread like wildfire after 1929, the failure to extend a helping hand to the German Republic before it was too late, the failure to apply sanctions against Japan, and against Italy and finally the sheer madness of granting Hitler what the Allies had refused to the German Republic.

Millions of healthy and vigorous young men had died during four frightful years (1914 - 1918), millions of others were still alive but crippled for life, and still millions of others though alive and unwounded physically, had their nerves so deeply shaken, that they had to go idle, because unfit for their jobs.

And all this for what ?

For this, that such a cataclysm should never happen again :

And yet 20 years had scarcely elapsed before another upheaval broke out, this time much more frightful, bloodier and costly in human lives; full of cruelty, horror and terror sowed by the most modernized killing machines, invented by the flower of the finest 20th Century scientists.

From 1919 to 1939 the world - or at least Europe was at peace, in the sense that there was no fighting on battlefields. Germany was defeated and the victors were the democratic powers. There is may be a little exaggeration in representing the four years war as a conflict between democracy on one hand and autocracy on the other. However taken in general, the formula is not inaccurate. On the Allies side fought the three greatest democracies of the world : France, England and U.S.A., while the Central Powers, the defeated Hohenzollern and Hapsburg could not claim any right to democratic tradition. And so the victory may be called the victory of democracy and the historic gathering at Paris its first attempt to reorganize the Old World in accordance with its own principles with the result that most of the states of Europe saw the rapid establishment of complete democracy in the political sphere.

This having been said, is there no contradiction with the topic of the present thesis ? No ; for the explicit

reason that if the democracies won the war, they failed to maintain the peace that was to end war.

On the other hand the change in the political regime was tried at a time when the whole world had been seriously impoverished and disorganized : the consequence was that it led to a good deal of confusion, disappointment and disillusion, and in some countries a reaction against democracy. "Democracy as a form of government, and as a means for the making of a better world was on its trial in the years after the war", and it cannot yet be confidently claimed that it had stood the test. (1)

It is evident that democracy is difficult to handle on the international scene as well as on the national one. However the League of Nations was the great attempt at an international democracy so much indeed that article one, paragraph 2, "prescribed to admit only those countries which govern themselves freely". It was not applied. And "because it was a democracy, and its success would have insured, in the long or short run, the development of democracy in the World---- everything that was aimed against democracy was more or less against the League. And this opposition became bolder and bolder, so much the more, that democracy lost much of its dynamism and its force of propaganda, the governments which

(1) The Political Consequences of the War - Ramsay Muir p.100.

governed in its name, daring not to say any more, that they were fighting for it" (2). In fact what has weighed most on this body of international democracy, is the same fatal mistake which led the French democracy to its defeat, and almost cheated the British and American democracies of the means to win the final victory; this mistake was to believe that a certain ideal of justice and liberty, to which they were deeply attached and for which they fought and won was for ever safe from the attacks of force and violence. They were living in a world of reality that their idealism could not grasp. In the first World War, says Mackinder, they were saved "by exceptional genius and exceptional heroism from the immediate results of an average refusal to foresee and prepare-an eloquent testimony to both the strength and weakness of democracy" (3). In the IInd World War the Democracies resisted the authoritarian aggression with such weapons and means that brought victory to their camp. But how much have they abandoned of their internal democratic policy, and how much have they departed from their democratic principles in the pursuit of war !!

Europe until 1939 has failed in its mission as it failed in its purpose.

To begin with let us look at the kind of peace which was planned and established by the Treaty of Versailles.

(2) Entre deux guerres - J. Baul-Boncour, p. 133.

(3) Quoted by Sir Halford Mackinder in "Democratic Ideals and Realities p. X.

The Treaty of Versailles at the close of the last World War established an uneasy armistice - not peace ---. There seemed to be a chance that the Paris Conference might have created an enduring peace. World conditions were extraordinarily favourable. Germany, Austria, Hungary and Russia were defeated, and powerless. Italy and Japan were second rank powers. Overwhelming force was in the hands of the United States, Great Britain and France. They were all democracies. And their leaders, W. Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau seemed to have "the power to remold the world into a form close to the desire of all sane men for justice, liberty and peace" (4). And yet they failed.

The Hon. Harold Nicolson M.P., in one of his lectures given on April 23rd, 1944, under the auspices of the Comité France - Grande Bretagne - Etas Unis, says of the Paris Conference :

"I have often tried to analyse the causes of our failure. But the enigma persists. For it is an enigma, you can be sure of it. We had won a crushing victory: we had in our possession at the time an outweighing material power --- our intentions were not so bad. But we have not built a lasting peace " (5).

At the first meeting of the Conference, Mr. Jules Cambon, French Ambassador to Great Britain, leaned to Mr. Nicolson and whispered to him :

"Do you know what will be the result of all this ? An Improvisation".

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- (4) Consider now the tragedy of Versailles - article written by William C. Bullitt in the Reader's Digest of June 1944, p.3.
- (5) Ce qu'on peut apprendre des traités de 1919 (article dans Choix N° 5.

And he was tragically right. "They were compelled in order to avoid present evil, to improvise instead of laying solid foundations, to take ad hoc decisions, to devote a large part of their energies to ephemeral but crucial problems, and to put aside as irrelevant such problems as were of not immediate practical importance" (6). Undoubtedly it was a hard necessity, but it was a moral failure as well. However, it seems and it is somewhat dangerous to solve the problem of Versailles by saying that the statesmen who negotiated the Peace Treaties were ignorant, insincere or came with bad intentions, bad faith and covetous eyes, and whose discussions were only spurred by national self-interest, without any consideration to international peace. Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau were very intelligent men, wholeheartedly seeking for peace. Having this common purpose in mind however, they aimed at it along different paths, upholding different views which sometimes were totally divergent. Security by all means was the "Tiger's" motto. To preserve the Balance of Power and also acquire some bits of territory for the British Empire were Lloyd George's tasks. To establish peace on earth for ever was Wilson's dream. Clemenceau failed to obtain security for France. Wilson failed to establish an enduring peace. Lloyd George did score some success since he preserved the balance of power in Europe and gained some German spoils for the British Empire. In fact, he too has failed, for England's greatest interest is peace,

(6) The World after the Peace Conference. Arnold J. Toynbee, p.2.

and 20 years later England was at war. Indeed there was no winner in the "tragedy" of Versailles. Mankind as a whole was the loser.

Now to what extent, if any, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles must bear the responsibility for what followed in between the two wars, is a complex and controversial problem to which no single solution can be found. They were severe, yet by no means as severe as they might have been. Germany was neither destroyed nor cut into pieces. She was made powerless, for the time being, but - as the facts showed it - not permanently impotent. Very generally, the economic policies - erection of new and higher tariff barriers, reparations and debt payments, are credited with a part of the blame. But every one will admit that the foreign policies of the Great Powers from 1919 and on, were an important, if not a decisive factor. To be more specific even, the European scene was dominated in the 20 years that elapsed, by the Great European Powers, victors and vanquished and the fate of the new order came to rest almost exclusively on the course of action which they decided to pursue. London and Paris caught the eyes of the world whenever this latter was confronted with a new crisis; they were the two main beneficiaries of the Treaty and their prestige and preponderance were unquestioned. Still even when their early leadership began to vanish, the nations turned to them to mould their policies on theirs. As a matter of fact from 1931 and on, they are more and more openly becoming the Ally

of the Fascist Powers. They were letting Germany repudiate, unmolested, the clauses of the Versailles Treaty - Rearmement Rhineland) and helping her to become mistress of Central Europe; they were helping Japan to make war on China, and Italy to conquer Abyssinia and Spain - Why? The key to this policy rests on their "fear of communism" as it is very clearly shown by the writing of the Manchester Guardian of Feb. 1937...." A large section of English opinion is obsessed with a delirium tremens which sees everywhere the red rat of Bolchevism gnawing its way into its bank cellars. Hitler may arm to the teeth, bestride our trade routes, yell for colonies ----. Hitler, they think may save them from being plundered by "the Reds". And one year later the same news paper wrote :

"The fear of communism has produced a phenomenon new in English History ----. Today there is a large class of Englishmen who in their dread of Communism think that the success of Franco in Spain, of Mussolini in Italy, and of Hitler in Germany is so important that the fate of British power in the Mediterranean is a secondary matter".

And on his visit to London in 1938, Mr. Daladier was told by the British Government that it was better to let Hitler dominate Central Europe without war than risk Russian intervention in Europe, a fact, they say, which will threaten British and French "vital interests". This policy was pursued to the bitter end. Even in the League, their policy was fatal in the end. For, all the forces of cohesion which converged into it - the Little Entente, and the Entente Balkanique - disbanded the day the Great Powers, still in the League and which should

have been its best supporters, gave regularly way to the undertakings of force; the small states thought they would be spared, if each one was alone untied by a regional group, which the rising Power of the Fascist state would consider as aimed at it. Of that the League of Nations is not responsible, but its abandonment was. It was not the instrument which was bad; they did not know how to or they did not dare, use it". (10).

As a matter of fact the League was the prominent obstacle in the way of those who wanted to upset the established European order. They understood it very well and tried to destroy this body in which alone it could have been possible to build a permanent coalition for peace. That is why " it is not just by chance that the heaviest blows dealt at the Versailles Treaty and which prepared the war of 1939 and the defeat of France in 1940 - rearmement of Germany, remilitarisation of the Rhineland, the Anschluss, Munich, have followed the forced sleep into which Geneva was driven by the very beneficiaries of Versailles". (11). That is why the failure to maintain peace is mainly their failure.

Now the thesis I am presenting here, is in no way an attempt to deal with or criticize the "Diktat of Versailles",

(10) Entre deux guerres - J. Paul Boncour - p. 131.

(11) " " " - " " " - p; 135.

as the 1919 Peace Treaties are usually referred to - though I must add, however, that in many clauses lay some of the roots of the failure of the democracies of Europe to enforce and maintain peace - However, there is a "mise au point" which I feel bound to make about this qualification of "imposed peace" and that Mr. Seton Watson makes in his excellent book "Britain and the Dictators" : the real criticism against Versailles is not that it was imposed, but that the German government - and the one who had no ties with the old regime and had accepted the democratic principles - "was excluded from the preliminary discussions and negotiations and treated with insult and ignominy such as every German was bound to resent".... This shortsighted and tactless conduct on the part of the victors, -- "was the first cause of that keen sense of grievance which has so long obsessed the German nation and which gave added impetus to the deep and at first unsuspected groundswell of the Nazi storm"(7).

As a matter of fact, Germany had some legitimate grievances, to begin with, against the economic and financial clauses of the settlement; and though it is an exaggeration to say with Mr. Keynes that the treaty "reduced Germany to servitude and perpetuated its economic ruin", and that if it were enforced, "Germany must be kept impoverished and her children starved and crippled", - an exaggeration that Mr. Etienne Mantoux shows

(7) Britain and the Dictators - Seton Watson, p. 56.

admirably well in his excellent book "The Carthaginian Peace" - we must admit that she was badly hit for a certain time and that the reparations were a burden not only because of their huge amount, but especially, because she was to pay them when she was not yet on her feet economically - "For once, says Mr. Seton-Watson, "the logical French mind was incapable of realising that it was clamouring not merely for the impossible but for the fantastically impossible" (9). The statesmen who worked out the amount of reparations to be taken from Germany, did that without any due consideration to the effect that so large a transfer of money and goods and services from Germany to the Allied countries might have in upsetting - as it did - the financial and economic structure of the world.

Another grievance^{was} against the unfulfilment by the Allies of Article III of Wilson's 14 points or article 8 of the Covenant of the League. This latter says that "the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations". On the other hand, Germany had been disarmed to the "lowest point" on the assumption that her disarmament would be just the starting point" in order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations..." - as the military

(9) Britain and the Dictators - Seton-Watson - p. 56.

clause of Part V of the Treaty Open - No one today will reasonably try to argue that these two provisions do not constitute a moral obligation on the Allies and that Germany has a strong case against them for not reducing their own forces subsequently to her own disarmament. As a matter of fact the Allies' aim was to put Germany at the biggest possible disadvantage, military, to them; and this aim was far stronger in the minds of the Allied statesmen than the wider one of securing permanent peace by reducing armaments all round. They were blind not to see that if a general disarmament does not follow within a certain number of years then the rearmament of Germany was bound to follow - as it did and on what a scale - And the world at large, continued in spite of the Geneva speeches full of good resolutions seldom accompanied by action, its military parade .

The peace established was therefore an armed peace, in truth an armistice. It has ended one chapter of history, but at the same time, it had opened another. In a word the Treaty of Versailles was at once and the same time the epilogue of one war and the prologue - still hidden in the first years - of another.

Now why was it so ? The one main reason was the dangerous adoption by the Paris Conference in the drafting of the Treaty of one single underlying theory which was mainly political.

Let me put it clearly : the Congress of Vienna in 1815 remoulded Europe on the principle of "legitimacy" and the Peace settlement was frankly based upon the doctrine of the Balance of Power. The statesmen in Paris in 1919, made the right of self-determination the basic principle of the Paris settlement. They thought that as the Vienna settlement gave Europe 50 years of peace, their political system was destined to endure for many years in promoting a lasting peace. In fact they swung to a dangerous extreme: Vienna had completely ignored the idea of nationality, and Paris dealt only with it and ignored to a large degree, more important questions for the time being and for the future of world peace such as markets, raw materials, custom houses, tariffs and transports. When it came to practice, the application of the principle, involved grave consequences unforeseen by its advocates. As Mr. Frank Simonds puts it :

"The Paris Conference failed to provide Europe with a stable system of peace and an adequate foundation of prosperity primarily because of the impossibility of reconciling the ethnic and economic circumstances of the Continent with the principle of self-determination"(12).

Wilson's Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, describes this principle as "loaded with dynamite" and said,

"It will raise hopes which can never be realized. It will, I fear, cost thousands of lives. In the end, it is bound to be discredited, to be called the dream of an Idealist who failed to realize the danger until too late to check those who attempt to put the principle in force. What a calamity that the phrase was ever uttered ; What a misery it will cause " (13).

(12) Can Europe keep the Peace - Frank H. Simonds, p.35.

(13) Quoted by Alfred Cobban in his book : "National Self Determination" p. 19.

Indeed to apply the principle of self determination to the Centre of Europe - where racial differences are still accentuated by religions - not only involved condemning minorities to live under alien and oppressive rule, but amounted to passing a sentence of death upon many cities and upon large industrial regions and agricultural areas through the dislocation of transportation systems. Political separation meant economic divorce and everywhere on the continent at once with the political frontiers rose formidable tariff walls between populations, Yesterday intermingled and interdependent and today separated and disastrously cut off from one another. As the political dogma of the 19th century, the principle of self determination proved to be completely out of harmony with the economic realities of the 20th. Europe will inherit after 1920 the evil of many territorial disputes and the clash between those - dissatisfied - who demanded the revision of the treaty, and those who had attained unity and security with liberty, will prevent the reconciliation of peoples and postpone the return of the continent to normal conditions.

And Europe was left to face its own problems. As a matter of fact there is no great power inside or outside of Europe that did not add to the troubles of the Continent: the Soviet Union, calling upon Europe to unite under the banner of Communism, Japan by starting a new era of imperialistic expansion, the U.S.A. by refusing to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, thus turning their back to Europe, abandoning the policy of active participation in European affairs, and shutting the

themselves into political isolation.

The heavy and difficult heritage of the Conference of Paris rested almost exclusively on the shoulders of France and Britain. Now there were no fundamental divergences between them as to the aim which was to be reached : Peace and security for the future though already in the Conference itself a striking difference in interest and outlook that separated them was revealed - But there was clearly a conflict of opinion as to the means through which security should be obtained and maintained. France and England and even the U.S.A. realized that the main danger which would threaten the peace, would spring from a possible revolt of those who were dissatisfied and embittered by the peace settlements. They grasped very clearly this fact and moulded their respective policy to avert this danger. But instead of having one common attitude which neither time nor force could have shaken, they adopted conflicting policies, which were to become a major source of their misfortunes.

"The Common Idealism, inspite of different aspects, which has supported the two allied peoples to hold till the end, till victory comes, disappeared like a bad fever when the fit has passed" (14).

"To say the truth", said Mr. Clemenceau" the only serious opposition to the most severe clauses of the Armistice came from our British Allies, who wanted to spare Germany, fearing nothing much than a too vivid reaction of power to the benefit of France, her ally" (15).

[14] Albion Perride on Loyale - Geneviève Tabouis, p. 139.
[15] " " " " " " " " p. 140.

As a matter of fact, "British public opinion coming back to its traditions, expected that France would accept to reduce her demands vis-à-vis Germany, in order that this letter might without delay produce again and consume, and so become again a good customer of British industry and commerce" (16). However, with this trend of mind and these almost opposite policies, "the politicians in London and Paris were not trying --- to work out something for the future the bases of which would be in the conscience of the necessary solidarities and in the inevitable concessions. They should have continued the alliance of the hearts by the alliance of the spirits" (17).

And from the very beginning one could have felt the pulse of this tension which will grow stronger and stronger, the symptoms being that London thought to make a peace with Germany; while Paris wanted to sign it between the Allies against Germany. And this resulted inevitably in what Mr. Alfred Fabre Luce has perfectly analysed as follows : -

"Every time that Germany will decide to violate the Treaty of Versailles, she will put before the Allies a question to which they will not be able to give an identical answer" (18).

"England persisted in treating the French as if they were Germans; and the Germans as if they were English".

In general, the attitude towards a defeated enemy can be twofold :

(16) Albion - Perfide ou Loyale - Geneviève Tabouis, p. 142;

(17) " " " " " " " " " " " "

(18) Quoted by Geneviève Tabouis, p. 164.

(1) Either the victors weaken him to a point that he will not be able to stand on his feet at least for a long time, and this in building up an overwhelming power equipped with the means of coercion to prevent or suppress any revolt.

(2) Or they are generous towards him and treat him on equal footing, though he is defeated.

In other words, the Allied Powers in 1919 could have made a severe peace, or a generous peace based on mutual understanding and trust. The Peace of Paris was neither or rather, it was both: Peace with justice.

Germany was so completely down that it would have been perfectly possible to impose on her the sort of peace which would have made it impossible for her to threaten anyone again for generations. Not to have gone to Berlin, not to have split Germany into a number of small units, not to have made the Germans beg for mercy, say some people, was the big mistake of the Conference. This is one view. Another possibility was to say with some people that it was time to set up a new world based on justice, abolish war, in closing the gap leading to it, by establishing an era of cooperation instead of competition. This was the kind of peace President Wilson was dreaming of, that he promised and tried to establish. But this was the kind of peace that was not realized, any more the severe one was. In some respects, the peace made at Paris in 1919 was so drastic that it gave birth few years later to a generation of "mea-culpiists" who were ready to do anything to help Germany to forget their sins towards her. It is in this benevolent attitude that one

should find the easiness with which Germany got along unmolested with her repudiations of the clauses of the Versailles Treaty. In other respects it was probably the most idealistic peace that had ever been written. Unfortunately the two kinds of peace mix about as well as fire and water : let us have enough of both together in a small space, the result is first steam pressure and then explosion. And this is exactly what happened with the Peace of Paris. In its essence, the conflict was a conflict between idealism and realism.

"Man, said President Wilson, is an animal peaceful by nature; if sometimes he makes war, it is because he has been induced into error by false prophets; expel them and you will have eternal peace".

"No, said Marshall Fosh : "The German is an animal warlike by nature; after this defeat he will get ready for the revenge; against this revenge we will need physical guarantees rather than spiritual"(19).

"This river" (the Rhine) he said, "settles everything. And at the very Conference he denounced the military clauses in a lapidary way: "It will last five years, may be 10, may be even 15 years. After that you will have a third war with the Germans" (20).

And he was tragically right. The solution which was found was a compromise, which sinned from both ways. "We had mixed up the principle of force and the principle of conciliation to a point where both ceased to act or to react" (21).

Europe had sowed the seeds of the next war with its own hands. One of the American delegates to the Peace Conference

(19)& Quoted by the Hon. Harold Nicolson M.P. in his lecture :

(20) "Ce qu'on peut apprendre des traités de 1919" reproduced in Choix No. 5 p. 36,37.

(21) Idem : Choix p. 37.

General Tasker Bliss, made one of the shrewdest prophecies about the settlement at the time :

"We are in for a low period", he said, "then a high period, then there will be the devil to pay all over the world".

As a matter of fact, we may distinguish three main periods, in the 20 years that elapsed from 1919 to 1939 :

(1) From 1919 to 1924, an era which I shall call an "Era of transition" which corresponds to the low period General Bliss had in mind.

(2) From 1924 - 1929, the "Era of prosperity" or high period, and

(3) From 1929 - 1939, the period which the present work deals with and that I shall call the "Era of failure".

The first and second periods are outside the scope of my study. The third period is the main object of my thesis.

CHAPTER 2

Why have I chosen 1929 as a starting point ?

From 1918 to 1923, the Allies had pursued a vindictive peace, without getting anything constructive out of it. In 1924 they began at last to cooperate with Germany in the reconstruction of Europe. It was the beginning of an era of prosperity, of real peace, and of great hopes, an era of which 1929 is the end, and for many reasons.

To begin with, Germany no longer possessed Stresseman, the one statesman who might have succeeded in persuading the Allies to lighten Germany's burden at the time of the general economic collapse. He had practised the "policy of fulfilment of the treaty obligations, the only sound policy - not devoid of heroism - that Germany could have on the morrow of defeat; he had signed with France, Belgium, England and Italy the Locarno Pact in October 1925, a Pact so important along the path of solving the thorny problem of France's security, that Europe for some years lived quiet and peace-minded under the widely stretched wings of the "spirit of Locarno". And less than a year later, he had succeeded in letting Germany enter the League of Nations on an equal footing with the other Powers.

His death on October 3rd, 1929, "left a blank among the statesmen of Europe which remained unfilled" (22). He disappeared at a time when Europe and chiefly Germany needed

(22) Britain & the Dictators - Seton Watson.

him most for one could say without exaggeration that his death happening at the time of the World economic collapse tolled the bell for the German Republic. To Europe Stresemann's death meant a great loss for after all, the problem facing Europe was mainly the German problem; and to solve it in dealing with such men as Stresemann was, internationally minded and honestly cooperating to keep the peace, would have been an easy job : Locarno was the first step towards such cooperation, and the evacuation of the Rhineland by the British on September 14th, and the first and second zone of the same territory by French and Belgian troops on November 30th 1929, was the first immediate and constructive result of such a policy.

Unfortunately too, the year 1929 marks the weakening of Briand's power at the Foreign Office - Briand who had guided France into cooperation with Germany and the only one who could have stretched a friendly hand to reach an agreement with her in order to help her out of her financial havoc - And now overshadowed by the coming to power of the reactionary Tardieu, the man who had condemned the framers of the Versailles Treaty for being too lenient, Tardieu whose policy, in refusing to grant Chancellor Bruening equality in armaments - goes a long way to explain the coming of Hitler to power.

A third and final reason supporting my choice of 1929, is that it was the year of the greatest economic depression the world at large had ever suffered.

The oddest thing about the world at the beginning of 1929, was the general mood of optimism that prevailed. Apparently a successful recovery had already been made from the greatest war yet known in history. Thanks to the Young Plan Germany was on her feet again, the newly created nations had established themselves, every nation had balanced its currency and machines were producing more goods. "In 1929", wrote Sir Arthur Salter, while some countries had lost in relative position, the world as a whole was well above all earlier standards and seemed to be advancing at an unprecedented pace to levels of prosperity never before thought possible".

It was the greatest illusion. Within a very short time the world was plunged into the greatest slump ever known; and the crisis which ensued and which was not confined to a country or a continent but was a world crisis - caused so much economic disorder and distress, that according to some observers, "this period witnessed the collapse of democracy capitalism and internationalism. In many circles faith in Government by popular intelligence yielded to a worship of dictatorship"(23). Indeed, more states abandoned democracy for dictatorship. Yugoslavia, Germany, and Japan, which fell under the influence of a military "clique",^{with} financial and economic internationalism gave way to the opposite principles of monopoly, economic nationalism, spreading like wildfire - especially in Eastern Europe - and speculation. "Statesmen", says Mr. Buell, ----

(23) The World Adrift - Raymond Leslie Buell - p. 4.

were unwilling to reconstruct the world on a basis which would remove the underlying causes of war any more than they were willing to reconstruct internal economic systems. Governments which had not solved the social question could hardly solve the international question. This was perhaps the principal reason for the comparative failure of peace machinery during the reconstruction period" (24).

What was wrong with the prosperity of the post war decade was that Europe was living on borrowed money. Germany had borrowed £ 750 million from foreign investors between 1924 and 1928, money without which she could not finance her industries, the profits of which were to pay her debt according to the Reparation Plan. When in October 1929 the catastrophe happened, it hit the world in its two weakest spots : it hit the borrower and it hit prices : for Germany the heaviest debtor of all, it meant ruin, unless the Great Powers were ready to lighten the burden of Reparations.

Unhappily for the peace of the world, they were not inclined to do so; at last when they did it and wiped off their books the Reparations Account, it was too late. The great democracies were blind to the fact, that to ask for Reparations at this time of Germany most badly hit by the slump, was to add that fatal drop of water which will make the glass overflow.

(24) The World Adrift - Raymond Leslie Buell, p. 27.

P A R T II

THE PEACE THAT FAILED

CHAPTER I

Prologue to the Drama

European history and to some extent that of the entire world, has been dominated during most of the period which the present work deals with by one fact : the resurgence of German power under the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler - That Germany should once more reenter the European family of nations as a Great Power, free from the enslaving chains of Versailles, was almost a generally accepted axiom amid the victors of yesterday. And even France which in her anxious quest for security, was trying by all means to postpone this moment, had recognized the inevitability of such a recovery.

"But that this recovery should take place under the aegis of National Socialism, and thus restore, in a tenfold accentuated form the dangers which the world from 1914 to 1918 had fought to remove, came as a sudden and complete surprise to the most competent observers of the international situation" (25).

Even in 1929, Lord d'Abernon, the former British Ambassador in Berlin, had as the only reference to Hitler, a footnote in his book "An Ambassador of Peace" - quoted by Mr. Gathorne Hardy as follows :

"He (Hitler) was finally released after six months - bound over for the rest of his sentence thereafter fading into oblivion".

(25) A short history of International Affairs 1920-1939
G. M. Gathorne Hardy, p. 353.

As recently as 1932, Prof. Toyubee wrote that "many things might be obscure, but the one thing you could count on was that the Nazis were on the down-grade" (26). In the same year a German Dr. Arnold Wolfers, in an address given at Chatham House on October 18th, on "the Crisis of the Democratic Regime in Germany" said that it was to "the astonishment, not only of the Germans, but of the whole world", that the Hitlerite Party "which nobody had taken seriously into account", came into Parliament with 107 seats instead of the 12 it held before - He added further that "the threat of dictatorship by one party has been taken from Germany --- a country which is so divided, which in itself unites such fundamentally different groups, characters, tendencies, and ideals is certainly least fit for the exclusive rule of one party". And yet on January 30th, 1933, Herr Hitler became Chancellor of the German Reich proudly standing on the corpse of the German Republic sparsely covered with the shattered to pieces Weimar Constitution, serving as funeral flowers.

As a matter of fact, Germany was emerging consolidated from a six years period of economic reconstruction: her industry, though still borrowing foreign capitals, was on its feet again. She had become a member of the League of Nations, and had a permanent seat on the League Council, the Young Plan had gone some way in the path to alleviate the heavy burden of reparations and the last soldier of the Allied Forces of occupation

(26) International Affairs - May 1943, p. 343.

had finally left the Rhineland. "In other words, at the very moment when the worst features of the post-war system seemed to have been removed, when the tendency to treat Germany as a parish had been abandoned, and when the two intimately connected problems of disarmament and equality had come to occupy the very front of the European stage - it was at this moment that German opinion turned decisively away from the "policy of fulfilment" associated with the name of Stressemann and allowed itself to be lashed to frenzy by the unbalanced eloquence of Adolf Hitler and a small group of resolute and reckless fanatics" (27).

Why then, after such a period of constructive work and consolidation, did the change come about? There is a twofold cause which explains it: An internal and an external one. In other words, there is at the root of the coming to power of the Hitlerite regime, internally: a weakness inherent in the democratic regime of Germany; and externally the failure of the Allies to win over Germany to a policy of European cooperation based on equality and friendly relations.

Let us look, to begin with, briefly into the internal situation of Germany for a better understanding of the collapse of democracy there.

The Germany of Bismarck and of the Kaiser, and one may say the prestige and power of the Hohenzollern, were based on three pillars: The Army, economic prosperity, and the weakness and lack of homogeneity of the political parties. On November 11th, 1918, the Army had been defeated, economic life crippled -

(27) Britain and the Dictators - R. W. Seton Watson, p. 98.

with the industries dangerously injured - while the political parties - which were more than twenty at that time - were going to play a dominant part in the formation of Governments. The Social Democratic party took the lead with Ebert - with its programme of parliamentary democracy based on the votes of the whole community - against the Left and the extremists led by Karl Liebknecht alias Spartacus who wanted a Soviet Republic based on the direct rule of the working class. These latter were crushed and at the end of January 1919 a moderate and democratic Assembly was elected met at Weimar and drew in February a constitution for the new Germany, a constitution which was the most democratic the world had seen.

However, the strength of the Weimar Republic - its belief in freedom - was also its weakness.- The makers of the Constitution seemed to have believed "that man develops his own soul most fully, when most free from moral restrictions. They left him free to read, to publish, to speak, and to teach what he would ----. To moral freedom they added political freedom : they did not destroy their political enemies, they tolerated them, even encouraged them" (28). On the other hand, the Germans are the most disciplined of people, their ideals are Honour and Duty. The Weimar Republic was born in defeat, nurtured in deference to a humiliating peace; it knew no Honour. By allowing moral and political freedom, it left no room for Duty ----. So moral emancipation led to decadence and liberty to licence" (29). Mrs. Grove Haines, and Ross Hoffman,

(28) The Post-War World - Hampden Jackson, p. 62.

(29) Hampden Jackson in His Post War World, p. 63.

describing Germany in the same period, say that "the early years of the Weimar Republic saw black pessimism on the one hand and hedonistic frivolity on the other. The country was a spiritual void, open to every foreign influence from American jazz, music and business methods, to Bolshevik ideology and oriental mysticism. And from Germany came the strangest currents of thought and culture - Nudism the youth movement - all testifying the absolute loss of faith in traditional civilization. Weimar Germany was a main fountain-head of that intellectual nihilism and search for new horizons which ran through the Western World" (30).

So Germany was a ready prey for any wolf who would be bold enough to snatch her off, and rule her according to the law of the jungle - Hitler had his foot on the stirrup, the policy of the Allies helped him to the saddle.

As a matter of fact, it seemed for a while, as if the Prussian cast spirit had received at last the coup de grace it needed, and had given place to the "repentance and rebirth" - However, unless a political as well as an economic and social revolution accompanied this seemingly moral revolution, the fine clauses of the Weimar Constitution were doomed to remain empty words - In carrying out these three parallel revolutions, it would be, says Mr. Wilhelm Roske, "making an end of the Greater Prussian Reich and of the forces that were its support, and putting in its place a new Germany liberated from the hegemony of Prussia and from the pernicious influence of the

(30) The origin and background of the 2nd World War -
Grove Haines & Ross Hoffman, p. 206.

Prussian Junkers and the heavy industries" (31). Nothing was done and after a while, the Prussian militarist spirit, the Junkers and the heavy industries emerged once more and this time strengthened - "It was the neglect of these steps", says Mr. Ropke, "that ultimately wrecked the Weimar Republic and produced the 3rd Reich" (32). It seemed that with the coming of Hindenburg to the Presidency of the Republic - which meant the recovery by the Army of its pre-war social position - and of such men as Stinnes, Thyssen and Krupp in the industrial field, a neo-German spirit was emerging, much more conservative and nationalist, not as much believer in monarchy as in authority, & very keen in its quest for a strong grip, which will once more set Germany on the path of discipline, duty and honour, the principles which breed strength and force with glory.

Meanwhile and until such time come, Germany inwardly was getting decrepit. More men were thrown into the ranks of the unemployed which meant into the ranks of the enemies of the social Democratic Government of the Weimar Republic; the Communist Party grew steadily; all those who were disgusted with the moral laxity of life under the Weimar regime, joined and strengthened the Catholic Party; but more important were besides the Nationalists - the old conservatives faithful to the monarchy - the National Socialists, a new conservative party preaching the same old beloved doctrines of duty and

(31) The German Question - Wilhelm Ropke, p. 176

(32) " " " " " " , p. 176

honour, but with a strong emphasis on the necessity of abolishing the Peace Treaties of Versailles, to reestablish the equality of rights for the German people in its dealings with other nations, and with strong and attractive promises to the middle class people impoverished, almost completely by inflation. Here lies the explanation of the middle classes, generally so very conservative turning to a party which called itself socialist especially it explains why masses of the younger generation, who had lost the hope of a promising career, took shelter in the National Socialist Party. As a matter of fact, this party which was to have a very little envied notoriety rather than a world wide fame, as the Nazi party, lacked homogeneity, for it included very different elements, because they came among all kinds of discontented people : anti-semites and opponents of Marxism, accusing the Jews of having played a very important part in the plutocratic international financial world of big business on one hand, and the Marxists on the other hand to be at the root of the social upheavals in Germany; it included uprooted intellectuals ruined rentiers, unemployed workers, small business men and craftsmen driven into bankruptcy by the competition of the big enterprises; but especially a large class of indignant patriots who had fought and suffered - in vain - during four years of war. To all, Hitler asserted that those who were to be held responsible, were the democrats, the marxists and above all the Jews; to all, he promised work, the

abolition of social privileges and the resurgence of Germany; and all, discontented with the policy of the Weimar Government - which they held responsible for all the evils which they were suffering - voted for the Nazi Party. In 1928, this party got a million ballots and 12 deputies; in 1930, six millions and a half and 107 deputies; in 1932 for the election of the president of the Reich, Hitler scored 13 1/2 millions cast against 18 1/2 millions to Hindenburg while in the same year at the legislative elections 14 millions ballots were cast for and 230 deputies were elected from the Nazi Party, making it the biggest represented party in the Reichstag. Hindenburg overcoming his personal dislike of the man called Hitler to power and on January 30th, 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich.

So from the beginning, this democracy had its inner weakness, and I may say that its death was a suicide; for being a democracy, it carried toleration to fantastic limits, thus breeding the bacillus that was to kill her: "What can be said for a republic that allows its laws to be interpreted by monarchist judges", asks Mr. E. A. Mowrer, "its Government to be administered by old time functionaries brought up in fidelity to the old regime; that watches passively while reactionary school-teachers and professors teach its children to despise the present freedom in favour of a glorified feudal past; that permits and encourages the revival of the militarism that was chiefly responsible for the country's present humiliation"(33)

(33) Germany puts the Clock back - E. A. Mowrer.

In addition to these defects, one should point out that psychologically the Weimar regime was identified with defeat, political collapse, the diminution of prestige of a great nation - now on an inferior level with the other powers - and especially with economic and social upheavals. As long as this regime lived, it meant that Germany was to remain humiliated because impotent, on her knees because of the Versailles "Diktat". And so the Germans hated it, and with it hated the Allies because the regime to their minds seemed to be the outcome of foreign intrusion into German affairs.

Thus the restoration of peace in Europe depended to a great extent on the policy of the Allies towards Germany; unhappily they made big mistakes in their efforts - for there were many attempts to make the world once more safe from aggression and war - to live with Germany on friendly terms and good neighbours policy. It is unjust to remember the errors of the Germans and forget those of the victors. The Allies were for a short while it is true, the actual arbiters of Germany's destiny; if they did not reach that stable and mutual understanding that was to be the basis of the whole structure of European peace, it is because, as a whole, they did not have any clear conception of the nature of the German problem and still much less of its solution. As a matter of fact the heart of the problem was war reparations, and it was the business of the Allied Reparations Commission to devise the ways by which Germany was to pay them.

From the start there was one major mistake made by the Allies in the sense that there was no time limit set to the payment of reparations; so there was no inducement for the Germans to exert themselves: they thought that they will have to pay eternally. On the other hand it was not until April 1921 that the total obligation was reckoned up and the full reparations bill set at 132.000.000.000 gold marks or about \$ 33.000.000.000, a huge sum that even some of the Allies financial advisers had to admit as being too heavy. The German Government had no choice but to accept what was imposed on it. How sincere were its efforts to try to meet the partial payments is a very controversial problem. One fact remains, however, evident : Germany was unable to pay. Great Britain and the U.S.A. admitted it; France did not trust Germany's incapacity to pay. She believed that in Germany the country was rich though the Government may be poor, and that great industrialists - Hugo Stinnes for example - were building up huge combines in the industrial centers collecting large fortunes, but were evading taxation with the Government blessing. The French did not seem to realize that Germany had been impoverished through the cost of the war, and the loss of foreign markets - on the other hand it could hardly be expected that the tax payers - rich or poor - were ready to pay in order to meet the astronomical proportions of the Allied demands : they rightly assumed that the more they paid, the more they would have to pay - Now a strong Government might have forced all the classes of the German people

to shoulder a heavy tax burden. But to begin with the Government was weak: weak on one hand because on the whole, it lacked able statesmen until 1924, weak on the other because - for the reasons I have already given above in describing Germany internally - it lacked the support of large fractions of the German people. But above all, the Government had to be weak; otherwise the Allies would have objected to a strong one, "since a Government strong enough to make the Germans pay reparations taxes might well have been strong enough to defy the Allied demands" (34).

As a matter of fact, Germany was a republic with a very democratic constitution, its government depended upon the people for its existence; it needed popular vote for its election or re-election. Thus whatever strong it may be, "no democratic government can live, which assumes in the eyes of its own people the guise of a mere collecting agency for foreign creditors;----- The decline of the prestige of the republic within the Reich has been almost solely due to the fact that it has been condemned to stand before the German people asking them to assume burdens which in the eyes of these people must inevitably appear tribute" (35):

Now one factor which the Allied statesmen - though they were surrounded by financial experts, at and after the Peace Conference - seemed to have refused to face, was the

(34) The origin and background of the 2nd World War - Grove Haines & Ross Hoffman p. 158.

(35) Can Europe keep peace - Frank H. Simonds, p. 317.

possibility of inflation - Hardly had Germany started to meet her installments that her currency began to depreciate - Was it a German move to evade reparations, or was it the inevitable consequence of the huge demands imposed on her? This remains a disputed question. However, there is no doubt about what followed: the mark went down to zero, capital fled the country, and the German state and economy broke down completely. In July 1922, the German Government requested a moratorium on all cash reparations payments for the rest of 1922 and for the two following years. Great Britain favoured it, while the reactionary Poincaré refused the granting unless certain "productive guarantees" were given to France. Early in 1923 Germany was declared in default on her coal deliveries, by the Reparations Commission, and on January 11th, French and Belgian and Italian troops entered the Ruhr, heart of German industry, while Britain not only refused to have any share in the action, but qualified it as illegal and contrary to the Treaty of Versailles.

The occupation of the Ruhr is perhaps the most tragic episode in the said history of post-war Europe, for though it was a manoeuvre to collect reparations from Germany by force, in fact, it was meant to knock out Germany for a much longer period.

Nine months later Germany surrendered unconditionally. The French seemed to have scored a smashing victory. In fact it was a disaster of which the first to suffer was France itself. Germany's passive resistance "deprived France", says

Mr. Arnold Wolfers, "of most of the material advantages which she might otherwise have gained. It helped arouse public opinion in the world and heightened the isolation of France" (36). "As a political measure for promoting the dismemberment of Germany," says Mrs. Grove Haines and Ross Hoffman, "Poincaré's action was well designed. But as a means for making Germany pay reparations, it was a total failure" (37).

For Germany the Ruhr episode - and much more passive resistance than occupation - has been in many ways more disastrous than the World War itself, for it meant the destruction of the middle class through unemployment and hunger; the small businessmen and fund holders were utterly ruined, by the vertiginous fall in the value of the mark, and the savings of thousands of Germans evaporated like water under the influence of the sun. - While it is dangerously inaccurate and superficial to say that Hitler is simply a product of the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles one may adopt without exaggeration the theory that the Ruhr adventure, was the strongest manure that transformed Germany into the most fertile land in which the Hitlerite seeds were to grow up. The nationalists, the patriots swallowed the pill for the time being, but later even some who did not turn Nazis will be trying to justify what Hitler was doing, on the grounds that it was all to prevent a repetition of the Ruhr episode.

From another point of view, it had, may be, the most important effect on Franco-German Relations. "The policy of

(36) Britain and France between two Wars - Arnold Wolfers, p

(37) The origin and background of the 2nd World War -
Grove Haines and Ross Hoffman, p. 158.

enforcing the Treaty of Versailles by the use of military power was never to be used again", says Mr. Arnold Wolfers. "The first attempt" had ended in failure --- No Government in France after 1924 was prepared to risk independent military action. After the occupation of the Ruhr, Germany, despite her military inferiority, was therefore actually safe from direct military pressure except on the left bank of the Rhine" (38). No Government in France would dare to shoulder the risks of another adventure like the Ruhr occupation. And if France did not move to stop Germany from increasing her army and to remilitarise the Rhineland - 2 flagrant violations of the Treaty of Versailles - one should explain this passivity by the reason given above.

This being said, one may ask, why was France acting this way? Her policy was not only antagonizing more and more Germany, but was even splitting her "entente cordiale" with England and antagonizing U.S.A. too.

The answer rests on an economic motive dictated by the British attitude towards the inter-Allied debts. Drawn by Balfour, the programme aimed at abolishing both Reparations and war debts. This would have meant placing almost the whole cost of the war upon the shoulders of the American people. As far as it goes along the way of wiping off England and France's debt, it was so far a sound proposal. But when it came to abolish Reparations, France put a stop, for she was not seeking only to collect from Germany what she had to pay England and the

(38) Britain and France between two Wars - Arnold Wolfers, p.59.

U.S.A., but also a certain amount to repair what the Germans had destroyed. The result would have been that England and Germany as well, would have got out of the war at a very cheap cost. All that prompted Poincaré's determination to ask for some "productive guarantees" from Germany.

The inter Allied debts were to poison the atmosphere which yet had to be by all means favourable to the establishment of peace, until in 1931 President Hoover's Moratorium practically cancelled them with the largest part of Reparations.

Meanwhile the Dawes and the Young Plan had put Germany once more on her feet. The Ruhr had been evacuated and Germany was paying her reparations bill all right; but she was able to do so thanks to the flow of American invested money under the form of loans. The Allies getting the reparations bill paid transferred them to the credit of their account in their debt towards U.S.A. What was actually taking place was that the American investor was paying the Allied debts to his own Government. And all went well in the economic field until came the depression of 1929.

During the same period the political aspect of the Post-War European sky was almost always cloudy in spite of the sunshine of Locarno. As a matter of fact the Treaties of Locarno were only signed on December 1st, 1925 and the world at large took a deep breath of gratitude and relief. At last, France, Germany and Britain marched hand in hand : what was to endanger the peace of Western Europe once more ?

However, it was a false dawn and Locarno in spite of its beneficent rays was a failure; a failure not because it was based on wrong principles, but because it was not implemented by larger measures of conciliation. The whole problem of peace turned around one thing: how to win the average German to the new order. In fact what did Germany want? She wanted to regain the equality that the Treaty of Versailles had taken from her; throw off the burden of reparations; get the foreign troops out of the Rhineland; revise the treaty with reference to her eastern frontiers. The Allies from the outset could have given her satisfaction to the first point in letting her join the League. But she was not invited until September 10th 1926. As to Reparations we have already seen what a disastrous policy the Allies followed. The foreign troops did leave the Rhineland, and even five years before the normal fixed date. In fact Germany was treated at last as an equal, but by the time it was, it was too late: Hitler was on the way.

In truth no one could have expected to see the wounds of Germany quickly healed under the beneficent care of the nations of the World in a post-war period full of hate and resentment. But what was unforgivable was that each nation followed a national policy in function of its own immediate interests, and the various policies did not mix.

France, to start with, - and this is the most important and persistent single factor in European affairs following

1919 -- demanded security - Having failed to obtain it from her former Allies - England and U.S.A., who had however promised her treaties of Alliance against a German attack, worked feverishly to find some compensation in a system of Alliances : In 1920 she signed a treaty with Belgium and 1921 with Poland : in 1924 Czechoslovakia joined the French camp; Rumania and Yugoslavia linked with Czechoslovakia in the "Little Entente" became France's faithful satellites.

All these alliances, which in fact were nothing else than the old game of balance of power, made the Germans feel that they were being "encircled" by a ring of strong military states, determined to enforce the "Versailles Diktat", - a fact which indeed was not far from the truth. Who was to blame for this de facto "Einkreisung" - encirclement of Germany, which, in speaking real politics, was meant to keep her down ? Nobody could deny that this ring of alliances prevented any peaceful revision of Germany's eastern frontiers. Of this earliest mistakes of the post-war years, U.S.A. and England should bear the responsibility because of their failure to ratify the guarantee treaties with France.

So England, primarily busy with problems of empire, economic and labor troubles, kept out of Europe in the sense that she refused to commit herself in advance to any kind of action in European politics, until it was too late to save the League and the new order she had established in drafting the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles.

As for the U.S.A., having entered the War she withdrew from the peace, following a mere isolationist policy, in refusing to join the League or share in the building of a new order. The Versailles Treaty seemed a document quite foreign to her and with which, she had nothing to do.

Italy too had her problems. After a period of upheaval, her government was seized by the Fascists under the leadership of Mussolini who carried her on the road of militarism and conquest, using the League whenever it suited his purpose to do so. Lastly Soviet Russia, for a long time was excluded from the League and for that matter from all European affairs, while Japan like Italy pursued an opportunist course.

So the picture of the immediate post-war period, is one in which the Great Powers are very little inclined or willing to subordinate their own national interests to the broader international interests. They too were unable to agree on a common policy for peace. Moreover, when there was a dispute or a conflict between two nations, the League tried to mediate, but the peaceful solution it suggested was accepted as long as both parties to the dispute were willing to accept it. In case a strong party was unwilling then the League had to give way : Poland occupying Vilna, ^{Italy} Shelling Corfu - The situation remained the same, for the League lacked the force it could use to change it.

Add to all that the thorny problem of disarmament to which the Allies never succeeded to find a solution - except in the naval field at the Washington Naval Conference of 1922 -

because they did not want to, and one will have the sad picture of that "Low Period" of Post-War Europe.

As a matter of fact "no problem of the post-war world has been attacked more frequently or with less success than that of disarmament. Uniform failure has not, however, been due, as is so generally believed, to any lack of perception on the part of peoples of the waste and danger of military establishments maintained on the scale of Continental Europe..... Failure of all efforts to bring about an international adjustment of the problem of armaments has been due primarily to the fact, little perceived in Anglo-Saxon countries, that armaments are but a subordinate detail in the far larger question of peace "(39). However, disarmament depended on national policies, and as these remained irreconcilable, no agreement could be reached. France's security and that of her Allies rested upon the maintenance of the territorial and military clauses of the peace treaties. However, these latter meant to disarm Germany as a starting point in the general disarmament; as disarmament meant to France reduction in armies, she was not ready to cooperate, for it would serve the German policy of treaty revision to which France is totally opposed.

In 1921 the League Council appointed a Commission to study the question of reducing armaments. The Commission

(39) Can Europe keep peace . Frank H. Simonds, p. 285.

put rightly the horse before the cart, in deciding that security was to be given first to the nations, and disarmament would logically follow. And so it drafted in September 1923, the "Treaty of Mutual Assistance" binding every state to help any nation member of the League in case it is attacked, on the condition that the attacked nation had reduced its armaments consistently with the level the League will choose suitable to adopt. One may say without exaggeration, that had this treaty been adopted, the history of the world might have been different. Sixteen members, including France accepted it, but England and U.S.A. and some others, unwilling to bear the responsibilities it involved refused to adopt it. Here was a plan of international co-operation by which all disputes could be settled peacefully. No ! they preferred to wait until they were directly attacked. From this time the cause of disarmament looked pretty dark.

On August 27th, 1928, almost every country signed and adopted the famous Pact of Paris, the Briand-Kellogg Pact, which was to outlaw war "as an instrument of national policy". However, later, the signatory Powers came to realize that it did not close the gap to war. As an American writer has said :

"In fact the Kellogg-Briand Pact produced not peace, but a new kind of war - the undeclared war".

With so many instruments of peace, signed, the World had many reasons to congratulate itself. However, one may say that they were all but straws in the wind. General disarmament was far from having been realized ; the Treaty of

Mutual Assistance did not define the aggressor; the Briand-Kellogg Pact left open the door to "hostilities"; Reparations and the Inter Allied debt were still poisoning the atmosphere of international relations, France was still not feeling secure and Germany still feeling dissatisfied.

All the experiments in peace of the post-war years had then failed. "They have failed", says Mr. Frank H. Simonds, "because they were based upon the assumption that what existed was peace and that the task was to preserve it. But actually, peace did not exist ---. The vanquished refused to accept the terms which the victors had imposed upon them in the Paris settlement. As for the conquerors, they were resolved not to sacrifice the fruits of their triumph. Thus the struggle which had been interrupted by the Armistice of Rethondes, was resumed after the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles"⁽⁴⁰⁾ And Geneva was a battlefield, not the capital of world peace and tranquillity.

(40) Can Europe keep peace - Frank H. Simonds, p. 321.

CHAPTER 2Heil Hitler

On March 29th, 1930, Dr. Bruening became prime minister, and Dr. Curtius who had succeeded Stressemann in October 1929, kept the Foreign Office. In that year which opened very gloomily on Germany, they both tried to continue Stressemann "policy of fulfilment"; but they needed successes and needed them desperately, to balance the sacrifices this policy implied, and to save the very principles of democratic government, they stood for. The anti-Republican parties, especially the Communists and the National Socialists were growing stronger every day and were harassing the "hunger government" - as they called it - by their insidious attacks on its failure to lighten the economic burdens on the German people, and to satisfy the demands of the jingo-nationalists for an equality in armaments with the other nations. If only the Powers would give Germany a breathing space by giving up their Claim to Reparations, if only the Powers would grant Germany equality in armaments, either by a general disarmament or a rearmament of Germany ! Not only bankruptcy might be averted, but the government which represented a democratic regime would have been strengthened and the Weimar Republic saved. At the beginning of June 1931, the budget had a deficit of some £ 47 millions (41). Would the democracies of the West rescue the German Republic ?

(41) Figure given by Mr. John Wheeler-Benett in an address given at Chatham House on June 20th, 1932.

Section 1

Failure of the Economic Conference :

On June 9th 1931, Bruening was in London to ask for a moratorium. England was willing to give Germany a clean-out end to reparations, but France now financially strong, wavered, with the result that Bruening went back to Germany empty-handed. It is true, he was to stay in office until June 1932, but from June 1931, he knew he was virtually a defeated man, for there is no doubt that public opinion in Germany expected and believed that he would be back from England with the moratorium. His return to Berlin - having failed in his mission - was a signal for an attack on him by the great industrialists and business men. A press campaign was furiously launched at him and a famous cartoon appeared in a German newspaper in Berlin representing Michel (Germany) receiving Bruening at the station.

Michel : "What have you brought me"?

Bruening: "What we always bring you when we go on a trip : a silver 'nothing' and a gold 'wait' a little longer".

And Germany could not wait a little longer. As a matter of fact what saved the Bruening government from almost immediate defeat was the Hoover Moratorium issued on June 20th 1931, suspending for one year the payment of ^{war - debts} reparations. May be too, any definite action by the European Governments in this matter might have strengthened Dr. Bruening's position internally. But delay and modification did not save Germany's credit and

did not restore confidence which was the main purpose of the moratorium. Almost everyone, but the French, had realized that Mr. Hoover's moratorium meant the end of reparations. But in his fight, to preserve the German Republic, Bruening would have been greatly strengthened, if the Western democracies had acknowledged the fact - especially France which was convinced that Germany was exaggerating her distress - that Germany was really unable to pay, and had wiped reparations off their books. It seemed that the Powers were abandoning Germany to its fate. However, a Conference was scheduled to meet and discuss the subject in January 1932. But largely due to the French opposition, it was postponed until June. And in June, it was too late for Bruening was already out of office and the Nazis well on the way in. "Germany had been defeated for the last time", --- "she was escaping the clutch of the powers that had humiliated her. The world they had made was breaking up and in the break-up Germany would find her resurrection"(42).

So, as it appears, the question which is to be asked, should be not how much, but how little was done by Great Britain, France and the other European nations, towards a solution of Germany's economic crisis. In fact what should have been found, was much less a solution of the German almost desperate situation, than an international solution of the depression, in which the world was still struggling, and of which the German acute crisis was but one aspect - And towards it, indeed, the Powers did very little.

(42) The origins and background of the second World War -
Grove Haines & Ross Hoffmann, p. 274.

Their competition in the economic field, had caused the Great depression of 1929; but what aggravated the economic disequilibrium, was the frequency of the monetary crisis due to inflation on one hand with its results of the depreciation of the currency, the weakening of the credit, the rise in prices - and to the instability of exchanges on the other which by the difficulties it created to international trade, made it impossible to restore the economic equilibrium of the world at large. It is not surprising that this latter abandoned one of the most important general principles on which the economic business of the world may be done, namely the principle of the division of labour, and adopted that of economic nationalism, which meant in fact a divided world and a poor world.

As a matter of fact there was a movement towards international co-operation to avert economic breakdown and to restore international trade, embodied namely in the League : but it seemed that all efforts towards such a cooperation were insincere. As soon as one nation's interests were seen to be threatened, it led to the failure of any attempt made to deal with the economic crisis. Indeed it was very easy, in view of its constitution to block the way to the League which was trying to remove the obstacles to economic prosperity; add to that the insistence of public opinion upon national sovereignty and one may have the explanation as to why the League proved impotent in the world crisis.

Moreover in June 1933 the World Monetary and Economic Conference met in London under League auspices, to try to put an end to the fluctuation of currencies and the multiplication of tariffs which were almost wiping off international trade. It seemed as if it was about to achieve something very constructive. Unfortunately as usual, there had to be some kind of opposition - this time America's - which dissolved altogether the Conference. Roosevelt was letting the dollar drop in value, while he showed no intention whatsoever to agree to anything that might bring down prices in America. And he called to the Conference such words that shattered this international move of cooperation to pieces. "The sound internal economic system of a nation is a greater factor in its well-being than the price of its currency in changing terms of the currencies of other nations ----- the U.S. seeks the kind of dollar which a generation hence will have the same purchasing power and debt-paying power as the dollar we hope to attain in the near future -----". The Conference was dead.

Section 2

Failure of Disarmament :

It was the same way with Disarmament of which the last act of the drama was being played in the long-postponed Disarmament Conference which had finally met in Geneva in February 1932.

One may say that the Conference was doomed to failure from the start; on one hand, France and her allies, as before, were still insisting that security must come before disarmament; on the other the powers still refused to grant France guarantees of military aid in case of attack, the only kind of security she considered adequate. In fact, the tragic side of this conference - though it appears to be mainly the failure to achieve anything constructive which might have guided the whole world on the road to peace - was that this meeting was but another arena to serious disagreements between French and British.

Security, say the British, could be acquired only in proportion to the effective and proportional disarmament of all countries. Alone, the abolition of the race to armaments by this limitation of war potential could give security. And so they accused France to do everything she could, even detrimental to the European equilibrium, to keep an effective military superiority on Germany. (43).

The French, to whom war potential was much less a question of man power, than a question of mentality, and to whom the Germans are warlike by nature, could not accept England's thesis. If, they said, the League of Nations, had at its disposal a mighty force to make right prevail over might, then the problem of disarmament is solved. But when Mr. Tardieu, who was the French Prime Minister proposed such

(43) Albion perfide ou loyale - Geneviève Tabouis - p. 230.

an international force to be put at the disposal of the League, England refused to be a party to the plan.

It is not surprising therefore that Bruening went back to Germany once more empty-handed. He had come to Geneva, explained the situation to the British, American and Italian delegates, and won their consent in granting Germany equality in armaments in principle. He needed badly such a success in a question which was considered in Germany as an unbearable humiliation and a permanent offense to the German national feeling. But when he came to the French delegate, Mr. Tardieu pretended to be too ill to see him. And so Bruening went back, realizing as he went that his failure meant the end of his Government.

As a matter of fact Germany's argument in favour of equality of rights in armaments, appeared to be convincing to Italian, British and American opinion; to the French too, it had some value. But at the same time the French had the impression that while Germany was officially claiming equality in disarmament, its leaders not only did not believe in such a general disarmament, but seemed to hope that it would never happen, so that they would have some ground to rear.

- We believe that the French, having such impression and considering that a German rearmament would be a calamity not only to France but to the world at large, and being afraid of it, should have headed the general move to disarm. It would have kept Germany down - weak as she was, she was not a match for France even, if the latter would have cut down

relatively her armament - and it would have given the world a proof of France's good-will to abide by the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and to stretch a helping hand to her former enemy with a spirit devoid of rancour and grudge. How much could such attitude have gone towards smoothing the international atmosphere remains a matter of speculation. However, it would have undoubtedly strongly appealed to the British spirit of "fair play", and would have pushed unconditionally England into the French camp.

It seemed that the Powers considered the problem of Disarmament, as of little concern to them and thought - wrongly - that France should not take it so much at heart. As Daniel Halevy wrote : "This demand (the German) for equality of rights --- worries only France in an immediate and pressing way. The Americans far away, find it natural and approve it. The British absent-minded understand it. Facist Italy supports it" (44).

Indeed it was a thorny problem, but Europe missed its last chance to save the German Republic. Once more, a Franco-British quarrel, sharply separated the two peoples - and this time the divergencies over Disarmament were to leave in the French and British souls, indelible traces - and wrecked the whole structure of peace - The British put on France the whole responsibility of not having given Germany "her chance", and

(44) Daniel Halevy - Courrier d'Europe - Quoted by Geneviève Tabouis, p. 231.

the French saw in the British attitude a help to Germany, based on the old principle of Balance of Power.

Now, nobody can deny that the French attitude was blameworthy, and that therefore, France was to be held responsible for the ultimate breakdown of the Conference. But, how much could have remained of this attitude towards the problem of Disarmament if the Anglo Saxons had given France the guarantees she was asking for? Undoubtedly very little. But it seems that there was an inability on the part of the Anglo-Saxons to understand both the Germans and the French. They saw, on the one hand, in the German claim to equality a justified revendication based on Article 8 of the Covenant of the League, which made a general disarmament the corollary of Germany's own disarmament. And they saw on the other hand, that from Article 8, France was only willing to put into practice the clauses which deprived Germany of her war potential, and that, therefore, the only danger for the future of the peace, to public opinion and the Government of England as well, seemed to be the possibilities of development of the French military force on the Continent.

But they did not see that Germany's claim was much less intended to have equality in disarmament than equality in armament, and that her war potential meant a potential military aggression, a sword of Damocles hang over Europe. And they did not see that France's security was not a myth invented to keep Germany down, but a real fact, essential if any

structure of peace was to be built in Europe. In fact, France's security proved to be their own, but they did not realize at that time that the French force might serve their own interests. This having been said, one may ask what would have happened, if a satisfactory solution to the problem of Disarmament had been reached long before 1932. Undoubtedly if the nations had agreed to lower their war potential, Germany would have had no more ground on which to argue for her right to rearm, and to rearm in such a frightful manner as she did. But, here again we come back to the much debated question ; would a general disarmament bring security, or security should be first obtained, and a general disarmament will follow ? "May those who believe that they have indefinite time at their disposal", said Litvinov at Geneva in 1932, "not receive a rude shock one day" (45).

And so the Anglo-Saxons refused the guarantees, and France refused to disarm, and ---- Disarmament collapsed. Mr. Politis, the Vice President of the Conference, sums up and very objectively the failure of the Conference as follows :

"Neither London, nor Paris, understood that it would have been better to reach a limping and temporary agreement between the two countries, rather than give by their disagreement the pretext Germany sought to escape any control, continue her effort to rearm, withdraw from the Conference and quit the League of Nations" (46).

(45) Quoted by Frederick L. Schuman in his : "Soviet Politics at home and abroad, p. 230.

(46) Quoted by Geneviève Tabouis in : *Albion Perfide ou Loyale*, p. 235.

Disarmament was dead. But nothing showed in 1932, better the fearful consequences that this burial was to have, than a cartoon of the Evening Standard showing a man, on whose back is written the word "Civilization", digging a grave to bury "Disarmament", represented by a lady raising her head out of the coffin and addressing the men in these terms : "Better make it wide enough to hold yourself too, big boy".

Yes indeed the end of disarmament meant the end of civilization with the coming to power of the Nazis hordes.

What happened in Germany is easy to understand : by 1932 - and the Allies having failed by that time to do anything to save the democratic regime there - the Germans had reached the limit to what any people can endure : they had suffered four years of war ending in defeat, then Revolution Inflation, a little prosperity followed by bankruptcy and collapse. And the Germans revolted against the "Republic who had given them liberty instead of leadership, profiteers instead of prophets, chaos instead of content" (47). Which party was strong enough to overthrow the Republic and force a revision of the Treaty of Versailles ? The National Socialists with Hitler, from January 30th, 1933 onwards were to give the answer.

(47) The Post-War World - Hampden Jackson - p. 132.

The efforts of the World in Conference to solve the many problems which confronted it, had failed. Nothing was worked out to prevent one nation arming against another, or to promote a general or even a partial disarmament; it seemed that not a single nation was ready to ease the economic world crisis, by a spirit of international cooperation if this meant the sacrifice of its own individual interests : and international rates of exchange remaining fluctuating, international trade remained hampered and economic anarchy presided over the world.

How far as democracies the nations have failed to work out an international solution of the problems of the day, will be considered at the end of this study. Let us note however, here, that parliamentary democracy proved inadequate to deal with the emergency and as a consequence, there arose in nearly every nation a form of dictatorship - besides Italy, Germany and Austria in Poland with Pilsudksy from October 1929 and on; in Yugoslavia with King Alexander until his murder at Marseilles in October 1934; in Rumania with King Carol. In France and Great Britain, parliamentary democracy stood the strain, but how much have they departed of the essence of a democratic regime ?

CHAPTER 3

The Undermining of Collective Security

That the world had in 1933, a great opportunity for achieving political and economic stability, through Disarmament and the World Economic Conferences nobody can deny. And yet it seems that there was in Europe a Babel of voices which caused history to record only missed opportunities. Eight times, says Mr. Schuman, the aggressors posed to the Western Democracies a test of their willingness to organise and enforce peace : and eight times the Western Democracies evaded their responsibilities :

- (1) The Japanese Seizure of Manchuria in September 1931.
- (2) Hitler's repudiation of the disarmament clauses of Versailles on March 16th, 1935.
- (3) The Fascist invasion of Ethiopia on October 3rd, 1935.
- (4) Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland on March 7th, 1936.
- (5) The Fascist attack on the Spanish Republic through Franco's rebellion of July 18th, 1936.
- (6) The resumption of the Japanese attack on China in July 1937.
- (7) The Nazi seizure of Austria on March 12th, 1938.
- (8) The unleashing through propoganda, diplomacy and terrorism of the Nazi campaign against Prague in the summer of 1938 (48).

(48) Soviet Politics at home and abroad - Frederick L. Schuman.

Now some will support the idea that the League proved to be impotent in trying to maintain and enforce the law among the nations. But what is the League of Nations if not the Great Powers on which ultimately rested the power and the will to take decisions, permit coercive measures and keep vivid and burning that faith in collective security, which, after all is the key to keeping peace. Unfortunately, and one must say it from the start, in front of all these tests, the reaction of the Western Democracies was one of appeasement, and sometimes of blessing. Why? The answer obviously was that they were not prepared, separately or collectively, to face the risk of war then - But wasn't it perfectly obvious too, that the risk of breeding future wars - and their attitude, reactions, and foreign policies, were just doing that - was quite as serious?

Let us consider the first "acid test" of the whole system of collective security, that shook the foundations of the League and made it loose face throughout the world namely the Sino-Japanese conflict of September 18th, 1931 to March 27th, 1933.

S E C T I O N A

The Sino - Japanese Conflict

September 18th, 1931 - March 27th, 1933

The outbreak of Sino-Japanese conflict, and its international repercussions, cannot be understood, except in the light of some antecedents. Let me give them very briefly.

1 - The Case Itself

In 1905, by its victory over Russia, Japan came to possess some special rights and interests in Manchuria: the south Manchurian railway, Dairen a port, and valuable coal and iron ore-mines, which were concessioned to her.

Now the main line of contention between Japan and China, has been the extension of the time limit of the Japanese concessions in Manchuria by the treaties of 1915, known as the 21 demands. These demands, argues China, were imposed on her, at a time when she could do nothing but to accept them. Japan - 1st, as an ally of the Western Powers, and 2nd, because these latter were occupied on the Continent - was put in charge of the Far East. It is in this position that she came to occupy Chinese territory and to impose her will on China.

As a result, in 1922 at the Washington Conference, the Anglo-Saxon Powers obliged Japan by joint pressure, to give up her war-time gains in China and to subscribe to the doctrine of China's territorial integrity, embodied in the Nine Powers Treaty. In 1923 a disastrous earthquake further compelled Japan to renounce any immediate thought of military enterprise. The American Immigration Act of 1924 which virtually excluded Japanese settlers from the U.S.A. was felt as a grave insult, especially when American policy in this matter was followed by several of the British Dominions. In 1925 the decision of the British Government to carry out a big-standing project for a first class naval base at Singapore seemed like a further obstacle to Japanese ambitions. On the whole Japan felt that she was ill treated, and that the Great Powers jealously resisted the fulfilment of her legitimate aspirations.

However, it was not until September 1931 that she resumed the offensive which the Washington Conference had induced her to abandon. Precisely what circumstances decided the date of Japan's first act of aggression-- for there is no doubt that it was an aggression - is a matter for conjecture. There had long been rivalry in Japan between the civil and the military authorities. For nearly 10 years, the first were strong enough to restrain the army from action. But since 1927 the provocative attitude of China towards Japanese interests, and the economic crisis which between 1929 and 1931 cut considerably the value of Japan's foreign trade, threatened serious internal unrest.

In the summer of 1931 the murder of a Japanese Officer Captain Nekamura, in Manchuria by Chinese bandits was used to inflame public opinion; in September, the army took the matter into its own hands and on the 18th, Japanese troops occupied Mukden, the chief city of Manchuria, and other centers, in reprisal for an alleged attack on the southern Manchurian Railway, by Chinese troops, the day before.

Now Japan claimed from the outset, that it was a domestic affair, and that the matter should be settled between China and herself, alone. But from the outset also, this conflict was a world affair. To begin with it fell within the scope of the Covenant of the League, the Kellogg Pact and the Nine Powers Treaty "relating to principles and policies to be followed in matters concerning China". Thus it concerned not only the states member of the League, but non-members also, like the U.S.A. and Russia, both as signatories of the Kellogg Pact. Further this conflict was of world wide interest and importance because of "its practical aspect which was as an acid test of the whole system of collective security, which the Covenant and the Pact had intended to establish" (49).

How will the League handle the question ?

2 - The case before the League :

On September 21st, 1931, the Chinese member Dr. Alfred Sze, formally laid the facts before the Council under Article XI

(49) Survey of International Affairs - 1931 - Arnold J. Toynbee.

of the Covenant, requesting it to take immediate steps to prevent the further development of a situation which might endanger the peace of nations.

One must say from the start that when the Council met on September 22nd, to consider the question, it was less qualified for dealing with such delicate a matter, than it might have been. The influence exerted usually by the Foreign Ministers of the Great Powers, which have permanent seats in the Council, was lacking this time. The chairs were filled with substitutes and the president of the Council, Senor Leroux (Spain) was new to Geneva and entirely unfamiliar with the League's traditions and methods.

However, a feature which was prominent throughout, was the mutual determination of the Council of the League and the Government of the U.S.A. to work together. It must be added nevertheless that the collaboration between Mr. Hugh Wilson, United States Minister at Berne, and Council Members, though continuous and effective, there was no question of Mr. Wilson taking a seat at any formal Council Meeting.

Now the policy of the Council was to concentrate its effort, first and foremost on the task of stopping hostilities, and to refrain until this has been done, from dealing with the essence of the dispute. As a matter of fact the Council was endeavouring to avoid the necessity of bringing the question under Art. 15 of the Covenant as "a dispute likely to lead to rupture". It was felt that the military party in Japan had

got the upper hand, and any drastic measures the Council might take, would only strengthen the military party and weaken those members of the Government of Japan, who were trying to work with the League (50). At any rate this was what could be deduced from Mr. Moshizawa's - Japanese delegate - statement that the Council would do well not to intervene "prematurely".

And the Council held many inconclusive meetings, and took many resolutions, of which one could only say, that they failed to bring about the results which were expected by the Chinese Government - an attacked member of the League - and by the neutrals in the Council as well. Moreover, the situation, instead of being smoothed down, had been aggravated by Japanese army's further activities in Manchuria from which, the Japanese Government had formally assured, on a previous session, that the troops were being withdrawn. That is why on October 13th, the Council met, in extraordinary session, this time strengthened for it included now the Foreign Ministers of France, England, Italy and Germany, with Mr. ^{P.}Gilbert Fretiss, American Consul General at Geneva, acting as an observer and explaining that he was instructed to join with them in discussing only the bearing of the Kellogg Pact on the Manchuria situation, but he will not take part in the deliberations.

(50) Geneva 1931 - Wilson Harris.

Again resolutions were taken, though this time accomplishing a step forward : Japan was to withdraw her troops before the next meeting of the Council. But when this latter reassembled on November 16th at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, it found itself in a very humiliating position ; for two months now, it had done nothing, neither in stopping hostilities, nor in having Japan withdraw her troops. It was fighting by means of resolutions and recommendations to both parties, in a case and at a time where only firm and stiffened attitude, together with strong will to act, were needed to obtain a satisfactory solution by the fulfilment of the demands of the League. After all, this latter represented almost the whole world, and could not therefore, bend its neck, because one power, as big as it be, finds suitable to oppose its decisions, which happened not to be in accordance with its own personal interests and wishes. And the Chinese member, from that point of view addressed a strong letter to the Council saying :

"I will be forced to put the blame publicly where it belongs, namely, on the unwillingness of the Great Powers to lift a finger in defence of the League Covenant which they are solemnly pledged to defend".

On the morning of November 20th, a life-buoy was thrown to the League - how tragic - by the very one which it attempted to drown, namely, Japan : The Japanese Government would agree to an inquiry in Manchuria by a League

Commission. Consequently on December 10th, 1931, a resolution is adopted by a unanimous vote, appointing a Commission of five members, England, France, Italy, Germany and the U.S.A., who, under the British delegate the Earl of Bytton acting as Chairman, were to study on the spot and to report to the Council.

But all hopes were disappointed by the march of events in Shanghai : On January 29th 1932, Japanese aeroplanes bombed the Chinese quarters in that city, while Japanese marines were landed there in great number. On the same day Mr. Yen, the Chinese delegate, considering now that the dispute has now reached a stage when it is likely to lead to an immediate rupture between China and Japan, invoked the application of both Art. 10 and Art. 15 of the Covenant to the said dispute.

But all appeals to the "cessation of acts of violence" remained a dead letter - On February 18th a 48 hours Japanese ultimatum was presented to the Chinese forces in Shanghai, demanding their unconditional surrender, and while, on the request of the Chinese Government, the Council referred the Sino-Japanese dispute to the Assembly of the League, Manchuria declared itself independent of China and proclaimed its own statehood under the title of Manchuko.

This extraordinary session of March 3rd, 1932 was attended by delegations from 51 out of the 55 members of the League, and the general debate which ensued turned mainly on whether the Assembly should try to settle the dispute by conciliation -

were there still hopes for such a settlement, when the Japanese were already at Shanghai ? - or should use the whole Covenant. The representatives of the small states spoke for the whole Covenant; they wanted force to be deprived of profit in the Far East, because they desired the preservation of the collective system of security, for the simple reason that this was "the only form of security that stood between them and some lawless assault on the part of a great military power in the manner of Japan's assault upon China in September 1931" (51). Accordingly their attitude was determined less by any interest in the rights and wrongs of the dispute as such, than by their conviction that the future of the League was in danger.

But while the smaller countries were thus making their stand in defence of the integrity of the Covenant, the four Great Powers, France, Germany, Italy, lead by England, advocated conciliation only. "While we all firmly hold by the principles and ideals of the League", said Sir John Simon, British Foreign Secretary, "we sincerely wish to act in this matter as practical men. We must concern ourselves with realities" (52).

Mediation ! Conciliation ! when the Lytton Report had made Japan's aggression plain before the League Action ! this is what^{was} needed. Too much delay had already been granted, and the smaller states, as on previous occasions, associated themselves in their demand to support the Covenant and the Lytton

(51) Geneva 1931 - Wilson Harris.

(52) Quoted by Messrs. Haines & Hoffman in "Origin and background of the Second World War, p. 289.

Report". Let there be no mistake", said Mr. Connolly of the Irish Free State", if the moral force of the League is broken on this issue, then the League as at present constituted cannot survive, and the worst cynicism of the League's critics will have been justified" (53).

But the Great Powers showed a different attitude. "We must not abandon the procedure of mediation. We must concern ourselves with realities". Thus spoke Sir John Simon and the Great Powers echoed. In fact Sir John expressed sympathy with Japan's aspirations; after all he said - though he denied it later - China is only a "geographical expression". And on the whole he presented the Japanese case so ably, in quoting passages from the Lytton Report, critical of China, that Mr. Matsuoka declared that his British friend "had said in half an hour, in a few well chosen phrases, what he - the Japanese delegate - had been trying to say in his bad English for the last ten days" (54). What a huge responsibility should Sir John bear before history ! "He had a genius' for missing the point', continues Mr. Schuman, and "he always had a "bad press', and not without reason, for most enterprises to which he laid his hands ended in ruin" (55). The handling by the League of the Sino - Japanese conflict was to be no exception.

(53) Idem.

(54) Quoted by Frederick L. Schuman in "Europe on the Eve", p.32.

(55) Idem, p. 30.

As a result the tone of the Japanese speech became more defiant. "A number of serious thinkers in Japan", he said, "were now urging withdrawal from the League, because they were disgusted and exasperated that their case was not fully understood by the League ---- today "he continues "our nation is prepared to undergo even the severest sanctions under the Covenant of the League" (56).

And Japan meant it. When on February 24th, 1935, a report of a Committee of 19 - recommending Sino-Japanese negotiations under the League's auspices, for the withdrawal of the Japanese troops, and the establishment of an autonomous regime in Manchuria under Chinese sovereignty - was submitted to the Assembly and voted on by 42 members out of the 44 - Siam abstaining and Japan voting "NO", the Japanese delegation left the hall in a body. A month later on March 27th, Japan gave formal notice to terminate her membership of the League.

3 - The responsibility of the Great Powers

So, for practical purposes, ended the unheroic episode of the handling by the League of the first major challenge to its existence. Some voices (Sir Austen Chamberlain - Wilson Harris) spoke of the League's victory in the Manchurian affairs - though I must humbly confess that I do not see how - But the widespread opinion was that the Sino - Japanese conflict did strike a resounding blow at the League and the principles of

(56) Quoted by Messrs. Haines & Hoffman in : "The origin and Background of the Second World War, p. 290.

friendly cooperation for which it stood. A general feeling of scepticism swept all over the world about the efficiency of the League's work. One can even go to extreme and say : indeed the League has "gotten between the two parties" - As Sir Austen Chamberlain had stated in the House of Commons on March 6th, 1933 - but it seems that it has prevented them not from making war, but from making peace. On February 27th, 1933, Mr. Amery held the same view, in the House of Commons : "I believe," he said, "that had it not been for the League of Nations, Japan and China might long ago have come to some reasonable accommodation in Manchuria. The League of Nations has offered a chair for China to sit upon and has pulled it away. That is the situation which we have encouraged by our worship of unrealities at Geneva" (57).

As a matter of fact the year 1931, had seen the opening of the 12th Assembly of the League, in a mood of depression. The economic crisis was weighing heavily all over the world, and with it went a strong feeling that whatever could be done, must be done outside Geneva. This was due partly to the habit Prime Ministers had contracted of visiting one another's capital for brief personal conferences, instead of trying to meet all together in the League, and discuss of the world economic situation. It seemed that the great events of the world were out of the League's hands. It was profoundly discouraging, and it tended to create uncertainty and was obviously not to help a close cooperation between the Powers in the League.

(57) Quoted by Arnold J. Toynbee in : Survey of International Affairs 1933.

Now in handling the Sino-Japanese conflict, the League utterly failed to give it an adequate solution. Too much time was lost in seeking still to solve the dispute, by resolutions and recommendations all theoretical, at a moment when only action, by a united front of the members of the League, was needed to stop Japan from further attacks and further advance in Chinese territory. The League ought to have refused any further discussion on the subject before the withdrawal of the Japanese troops from Chinese territory. But nothing was done. The only help given to China throughout this period was the League's ---- whole hearted sympathy - and I must say that it didn't amount to much.

Further from the tone of the Lytton Report it was clear - though it never said it - that the Commission laid a great part of the responsibility of the Sino - Japanese conflict on Japan and that her attack could not be called by another term than aggression. The League adopted the Report, but it was careful to avoid any pronouncement, which might have entailed the application of sanctions under Art. 16 of the Covenant. It repeated the obligations of the Kellogg Pact and the Covenant of the League, but it abstained from drawing the conclusion - besides logical - that these obligations had been violated by Japan - To the League, it seems that Japan had not resorted to war, and therefore, she had not broken the Covenant and Art. 16 cannot be applied - Sanctions in fact, were never discussed.

After that it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the members of the League especially the Great Powers, were not prepared to resist an act of aggression committed by a powerful and well-armed state. What seemed to be lacking in Geneva, from the start, was undoubtedly the will of the Great Powers, to act, in common, and in time. In fact they held a common attitude towards the conflict, and their interests, usually so divergent, made for once, a common cause in the hurriedly accepted principle of non-intervention in the Sino - Japanese mix-up.

Yes, peace must be kept, but not bought by trying to appease, one big power showing its sharp teeth, at the expense of another - Chiefly when this shortsighted policy neither appeased the ogre, nor worked for the maintenance of peace in the long run - And England is to take the greatest blame.

To begin with, sympathy for Japanese action and pro-Japanese feelings, based on the traditional friendship with Japan since 1302, were dominant in the British community in China, and in various 'big business' in England. In the country at large, Japan's aggression was felt with much alarm, as a blow dealt to the principles the League stood for, and to British interests in particular. "However, it did not produce any precise or spontaneous demand for the imposition of sanctions, and it was clear that to the majority of Englishmen the maintenance of peace still meant primarily the avoidance of any policy that might lead to war" (58).

(58) British foreign policy since Versailles - W.N. Medlicott, p. 146.

In fact, England did not move, and the British Government did not display any firmness or energy, for the obvious reason that in case financial and economic relations with Japan were broken - as besides the Covenant demanded it - this would have meant an aggravation of the prevailing economic distress - Better avoid any open breach with the Japanese Government whose assurances regarding an open door in Manchuria give more satisfaction to British interest - What a heavy mistake, and how wrong an interpretation of facts, it was, the future showed it plainly, and at the expense of those British interests, which in fact, were at stake, ever since Japan got the upper hand in China. "To believe that Japanese action would stop short of the point at which British interests were threatened", was "to shut its eyes to the realities of the situation" (59). And yet Sir John Simon had said, "We must concern ourselves with realities".

Further, the British Navy was the only first class fleet possessed by a League member other than Japan. Should Japan reply to economic sanctions by attacking the possessions of Sanctionist Powers, the British navy was not ready to act alone - as she saw it, it was going to - in the name of collective action, and support the main burden of such an action.

(59) British foreign policy since Versailles - W.N. Medlicott, p. 152.

But here, one might say, that if England had taken the lead, the other powers would have followed - Every one knew that a world-wide boycott of Japan's exports would have crippled her power and perhaps rescued Manchuria from her grip. However, as I said before, there was no will to act - France, whose interests and military resources were strong enough, to bring pressure to bear upon Japan, evaded her responsibilities as a League member. Russia was also concerned by Japanese aggression, but although she made it clear that she will approve any action taken by the League against Japan, it was felt that, due to the difficulties she had encountered with China over the Eastern Railway in 1929 on one hand, and being not threatened in the short run by Japanese advance, and not forgetting that she was not a League Power - nothing but diplomatic pressure could be expected from her. And the U.S.? She was a party to both the Nine Power Treaty, and the Briand-Kellogg Pact both violated by Japan. Was she ready to help in restraining a patent act of aggression? It seemed from the outset that for once America could not be accused of indifference - she appointed her consul in Geneva to join in the League's deliberations; she sent strong protestations to the Japanese Government and when the Japanese warships bombarded Nanking, she sent to Shanghai the American Asiatic squadron and a regiment from the Philippines. Finally on February 11th, 1932, Secretary Stimson contacted Sir John Simon to urge a joint statement under the Nine Power Pact; until the

15th, he got no definite answer. "I finally became convinced" he wrote, "from his attitude in these conversations, that ---- the British Government felt reluctant to join in such a demarche" (60). As a matter of fact, one cannot help asking, inspite of such evidence of America's willingness to cooperate in collective action against Japan, how far would it have gone along that path? It is interesting in this connection to quote Mr. Lippman's, which one may take as the general American view, that "the Japanese army is, in a word, carrying on not 'a war' but an 'intervention', and that the world should not have" planned for an interpretation which brought Japan's intervention within the scope of the Kellogg-Briand Pact renouncing war" (61).

Taken in general, it seemed that there was a growing feeling among the big Powers, that this was an exceptional case which could not be treated as a precedent. Because the Covenant had broken down in the Far East, it does not follow that it would not prove an effective instrument nearer home. This consoling reflexion seems to have satisfied everyone except the Chinese delegate who remarked that China "cannot be expected to admit that the operations of treaties, Covenant and the accepted principles of international law, stop at the border of Manchuria".

(60) Quoted by Frederick L. Schuman in "Europe on the Eve", p. 51.

(61) " M. Gathorne-Hardy in : "A short history of International affairs, p. 320.

We are therefore, in front of the breakdown of the first test of the League action. The Covenant has been appealed to in vain; sanctions were not applied in a flagrant case of aggression; even arms embargo - applied for a while by England and unfortunately to both China and Japan - was withdrawn because no other power followed the example.

How can one reconcile this attitude of the Powers with the principle of collective security they were upholding? For after all collective security rests on the possible ultimate resort to force. It seems that they did not grasp the fact that inaction while avoiding danger at the moment, was bound to increase the perils of the future by encouraging aggression elsewhere. Indeed, after that death blow at all effort to reduce or limit armaments, this is what the policy of the Great Powers, led to. "The scope of this "tragedy" said Mr. Schuman", ---- transcended the failure of the Disarmament Conference ----- It led to the breakdown of collective security at Geneva. The lesson was not lost upon Mussolini or upon Hitler. The doom of Ethiopia, Austria, Spain, China, Czechoslovakia; the repudiation of the treaties of Versailles, Locarno, St. Germain, Trianon, and Neuilly; --- the reestablishment of a balance of power between armed coalitions --- all were implicit in it" (62). "The lull which followed the Great War was over", said Mr. G.P. Gooch, "The world was becoming safe for aggressors provided that the victim was weak, and neutrals greedy for orders, were only too ready to supply the munitions and materials needed for the success of a criminal enterprise" (63).

(62) Europe on the Eve - Frederick L. Schuman, p. 31 .

(63) Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft - G.P. Gooch, p. 189.

Section B

Increase of the Germany Army

The failure of the Disarmament Conference meant that Germany would rearm, and it seemed certain from the start that both England and France were not prepared to bring pressure to bear upon Germany by force of arms to make her keep to the clauses of the Versailles Treaty. The facts showed plainly that Hitler had shrewdly guessed that his attacks on the Versailles settlement, of which Germany's open rearmament was to be the first and foremost, were to be unhampered, and that no common action would be taken to stop him, as long as he will be bold enough to make his dreams come true.

Now, that the Western Powers could have stopped him, is almost certain; what was needed was a united front against a ruthless law breaker, who was yet just beginning. Compelled by a mere show of force, Hitler at that time would have gone back to his water-colours, and would have never thought of relapsing. But for nearly 20 years France and Britain's view of European affairs, their interests and their policies to preserve peace - which was their common aim - differed fundamentally. "Britain's coolness or resistance to the desires of France helped to defeat French policy, while France at

the same time blocked the path of Great Britain" (64).

As a matter of fact, Germany's rearmament is but another sad chapter in the history of missed opportunities, for Hitler twice offered the Western Democracies a chance to reduce armaments and, therefore, to limit Germany's : the first time was on 23rd March 1933, when Hitler proposed to keep the Germany Army down to its prescribed 100.000 men, provided that the other Powers lowered their armaments; the second time was on 17th April 1934, offering a 300.000 Reichswehr, on the basis of equality, and an air force equal to 50 per cent of the French force. What were the results ? In the first instance, Germany was denied equality of arms - a fact which made her withdraw from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations on 14th October 1933 -. To the second, Mr. Barthou said No ! How much sincere were Hitler's intentions, nobody can tell. One cannot speak positively of anybody's motives, and therefore, we have to dismiss the idea that the Powers refused the proposals because of a lack of honesty on the part of the Fuhrer. What one may say with certainty is that the offer was made, and that it was not accepted. Therefore, it seemed that the only way out for Germany, to redress what she considered to be her legitimate grievances, was to proceed by means, natural to her, but which were to the world at large, the most obvious violation of the whole edifice of V

(64) Britain and France between Two Wars - Arnold Wolfers, p. 201.

Versailles. On 16th March 1935, Hitler issued a proclamation, announcing the re-institution of compulsory military service for the German people, and prescribing an army of 500.000 men.

Europe could only accept the accomplished fact. At the Stresa Conference in April 1935, France, Italy and Britain drafted a resolution - condemning Germany's repudiation of the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles - which was unanimously carried by the League Council. But Germany got her 500.000 men, and an air parity with France and Britain, in spite of Stresa and the extraordinary session of the League in April 1935 - which besides emphasised only the helplessness of Europe - Criticisms were made, lip service was paid as to the measures which were to be taken and nothing was done. The resolution drafted by the League Council on April 17th 1935 said only that Germany had failed in its duty to respect the agreements it had contracted. And when it came to take position, the Council condemned, not the definite repudiation undertaken by Germany, but in a general way all "unilateral repudiation of international agreements" that will endanger the peace of Europe, i.e. in the future. Of the present German repudiation nothing was said.

It is interesting to note the reaction of the Conservative British press, to Hitler's move : the Sunday Observer said that the German act "need cause no surprise.... What we can't prevent we must reckon with.... We are now on the bed-rock of realism and that may prove to be the quickest and most reliable route

to peace" (65). The Sunday Express declared that "no compulsion of Germany should or would be attempted. Locarno was a mistake and ^{3rd} Eastern Locarno would be a still greater one" (66). Indeed it "need cause no surprise": had not Sir Arthur Balfour already declared in a speech reported in the Sheffield Daily Telegraph of October 24th, 1933 : "..... that I am almost persuaded that some day we shall have to let the Germans arm or we shall have to arm them. With the Russians armed to the teeth and the tremendous menace in the East, Germany unarmed in the middle, is always going to be a plum waiting for the Russians to take, and we should have to defend if the Germans could not defend themselves. One of the greatest menaces to peace in Europe today is the totally unarmed condition of Germany" (67).

Of course Hitler was delighted. To allay all fears, he will make it perfectly clear that most of Germany's army increase and military preparations, were directed against the Soviet Union.

Now, that the Communist Revolution remained an ever-present fear among many of the propertied classes in Europe, was very widely felt. But what seemed almost incredible was the influence it had in blinding the Western Powers to any possibility of including Russia in any peace grouping. Anti-German coalition, aimed at the infinitely greater

(65) Quoted by Frederick L. Schuman on p. 122 "Europe on the Eve".

(66) *Idem.*

(67) Quoted by Vigilantes in "Inquest on Peace" p. 68.

menace of Nazism. In fact Russia spurred on and frightened by the unconcealed Nazi dream of absorbing the Ukraine for its Lebensraum, was a ready made powerful ally to the Western Democracies. But powers, such as Poland and Rumania - two strong trumps in France's plan of peace and security by Alliances - who had profited territorially at Russia's expense, were not ready to accept the Soviet Union as a member in the family of the European nations. One should remember that it was not until 18th September 1934, that Russia was admitted into the League of Nations. And Hitler knowing all this very well, will exploit to the utmost this feeling of an Europe scared by the "red rat of Bolshevism gnawing its way to its bank cellars", by a world wide campaign against communism, which will distract Europe's attention from Germany's re- armaments. This Nazi propoganda of a Germany posing as a bul- work against Bolshevism, to save Europe from being plundered by the "Reds", too many unfortunately believed in, as being the expression of a literal truth.

So^o it appears, it was first a^o foremost the division of the Allies, which enabled Hitler to tear down one of the most important set of clauses of the Peace Treaty - Their policy in their dealing with Germany was certainly vacillating, uncoordinated and thus ineffective. On March 21st, France and Italy sent to Berlin two sharply worded protests against Hitler's move of March 16th : the German Government rejected

them the same day. Why ? The Fuhrer correctly assumed that words would not be followed by action. Indeed how could there be any common action against yet an evident breach in the peace structure, and how could there be any championing of peace and sanctity of treaties when protesting Italy, was preparing her lawless aggression against Ethiopia; when protesting France secretly bound to leave a free hand to Italy in Abyssinia, was cleverly sabotaging Geneva in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, the same Geneva to which she was appealing against Germany; and when - last, but by no means the least folly and incredible blindness - England not only seemed to condone Germany's repudiation of the Treaty by sending Sir John Simon on a friendly visit to Berlin - a separate action which showed fundamentally the lack of cooperation between France and England - but seemed to stretch a friendly and helpful hand to that Power France has outlawed, in signing with Germany on 18th June 1935, the Anglo-German Naval Pact, without consultation with Paris.

It seemed to France, that England, in acting in this way was concentrating primarily upon British interests, for the Pact was a flagrant violation of the commitments, the British Government had taken at Stresa, towards Paris and Rome; signed on the day anniversary of Waterloo, it looked to the French as being but one more convincing justification of the Slogan "Perfidious Albion".

Now, it may be a realistic conception by England of the situation. And speaking of the mistake France had made in refusing the German propositions limiting the Armaments of the Reich to 300.000 men, Mr. Eden will say to Mr. Laval : "You have missed the bus and no mistake is more serious. Your example has taught us a lesson. That is why in the naval field, we have decided to be realistic" (68). - I wonder which policy was indeed more onerous, if we consider how much did it cost England for her expensive naval armaments, and how much and how heavily did she pay her lack of prevision - It was obvious that 35% being the ratio, to every increase in the British Navy will correspond a proportionate increase in the Germany navy, and this is a one way profit: to Germany alone.

And so the Pact was greeted with deep consternation in Paris, and cynical anger - quite understandable - in Rome. One of the fundamental consequences was that "there was no more ground for the main criticism of Germany's treaty repudiation : for the very Government which condemned her for breaking the military clauses of Versailles now concluded within two months a separate bargain which involved a breach of the naval clauses of the same treaty. It was may be a proof of common sense, but it was also a proof of inconsiderate egotism". (69).

(68) *Perfide Albion* - Geneviève Tabouis - P. 242.

(69) *Britain and the Dictators* - Seton Watson - P. 243.

As a matter of fact taken from a certain angle, England's act may seem but an answer to the signing by Laval of a Franco-Soviet Pact on May 2nd, 1935, to which it seemed that never she could be a party. "It is the almost universal opinion on the Continent", says Mr. Robert Dell, "that the aims of British policy are to strengthen Germany, so as to counter-balance French and Russian influence, to avert German naval competition by giving Hitler a free hand in Eastern Europe..... and to encourage German aggressive designs against Soviet Russia "(70). But would that be something else than the failure to support the collective system not only in Europe but in the Far East as well ? There was no excuse, though Sir Samuel Hoare was to say in his speech in the House of Commons, on July 11th, 1935, "that the British Government took not only a wise course, but the only course that in the circumstances was open to them". What did he mean ? It seems he meant that, Germany being on her way to make England face an accomplished fact, in the field of naval armaments, there was nothing left but to yield to necessity. Wouldn't such argument be a forced confession of political failure crystallised around a policy of concessions and yielding to threats of force from German Fascism ?

Finally one could only see in this Agreement made in a spirit to promote disarmament, a further move not only to delay but to kill the cause of disarmament. In helping to

(70) Robert Dell, correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, quoted by Vigilantes from "Time and Tide" of July 15th, 1935, in "Inquest on Peace", p. 120.

destroy the Washington and London Naval Treaties - respectively of 1921 and 1930 - it gave an added impetus to a new naval race, not only in Europe, but in the Far East as well, to the Great satisfaction of Japan. Would anybody expect the U.S.A. to give its loud approval? On the contrary, in studying Anglo-American relations in this period, one could see in the Agreement, but a further step towards the process of embittering them, which had started with the "half-headed and half-hearted" handling by England of Japanese aggression on China.

As to its effect on Germany, the Agreement was welcomed in such a way by Dr. Goebbels, that any illusions England had as to the "assuaging" of Germany, by peaceful means, concessions and compromise - a doctrine of which she was the leading exponent throughout the post-war years - should have faded away - "We left the League of Nations", said Dr. Goebbels, "because we felt, we could not obtain our due; as we saw other Powers were unwilling to give us our rights we reverted to the age-old habit and took them. People have only respect for the strong. Great Britain concluded the naval pact with us only because we had become a sovereign nation. That we should again enter the League, I consider to be a delusion"(71).

By 1935 Nazi Germany had achieved one of the most essential part of its program : in repudiating the limiting

(71) Quoted from the "Sunday Times" of June 30th, 1935, by Vigilantes in "Inquest on Peace", p. 108.

clauses of Versailles, she had become free to rearm on that large scale which she needed to carry on her forcible expansion. This "German miracle" was made possible by the Allied failure to disarm on one hand, but especially by a policy which in its dealings with an offender, proved to be hesitating, and hovering between threats, concessions, weakness and rearmament. The lesson will not be lost on Fascist Italy; Mussolini's resolution to invade Ethiopia was strengthened, because he rightly assumed, that France and England will talk very much as usual about measures to be taken, then their action and decisions will counterbalance each other and the League will not function. "There can be no doubt whatever", says Mr. Seton Watson, "that in the Duce's calculation, the hesitating attitude of Britain and France in face of Germany and their fear of fresh complications increased the prospect of his 'getting away with' a colonial adventure" (72).

"The shadow of the Abyssinian crisis already hung over the landscape of Geneva and threw into high relief the madness of those who were ready to play for their own hands instead of always seeking the highest common factor of Anglo-French confidence and agreement. Meanwhile British neglect of French susceptibilities encouraged both Rome and Berlin in a forward policy in the belief that Anglo-French solidarity might very largely be discounted" (73).

(72) Britain and the Dictators - Seton Watson - p.237.

(73) Idem, P. 243.

Section C

The Italo - Abyssinian Conflict

1935 - 1936

The whole edifice of peace, if it were to be lasting was obviously to stand on two main pillars : Disarmament and Collective Security. The first as we have already seen it, had crumbled down. The second, though it had showed some dangerous cracks since the Sino-Japanese conflict, still held. The Powers in the League, and especially France, seemed ready to make any sacrifice to consolidate it. Obviously the shelter that Geneva offered was not as protective as before; yet, in front of a mystical Germany who had Mein Kampf as her Bible, and who indulged in boundless hopes, this shelter, as precarious as it were, was the only one.

In the summer of 1935, the attention of Europe and of the world was focussed upon the Italian Act of aggression against Abyssinia, an issue so vital to the peace, that it seemed that if the Western Democracies were to retreat once more and yield to threats of war and use of violence, they were abandoning their last stronghold in face of ruthless law-breakers, who were not concealing any more their desire of world conquest.

It was a patent aggression, much more definite than Japan's against China, in fact so patent that the League Council and Assembly were to agree unanimously to consider it as such. It was, as it were, the greatest opportunity to strengthen the League's prestige, and to give the principle of Collective Security a definite practical application, to make it a reality ; And yet Mussolini "got away" with his colonial adventure, and conquered Abyssinia, with the blessings, as it seemed, of England and France, upon which this colonial clash, was to have far reaching consequences, though unsuspected at the time.

(1) Origin and Causes of the Conflict :

There is nothing original in the idea that modern Italy should found a colonial Empire. However, until the Great War of 1914 she had not been fortunate in this respect; she was, as it were, a late comer in a field where three Great Powers were already busily engaged.

Now in Article 13 of the Treaty of London of 26th April 1915, which had drawn Italy on the side of the Allies in the War of 1914, it was stipulated that Italy would receive some "equitable" compensation in the event of France and England increasing their colonial territories in Africa at the expense of Germany. But when the time came for dividing the spoil, Italy was told that "equitable" was not synonymous with "equal", the result being that Italy's claims could

amount to no more than a right to demand a rectification in her favour of the frontiers of her African possessions. To claim that this settlement satisfied in any way Italian aspirations, would be absurd. There can be little doubt that if she had received more consideration then, the course of international events would have run on other lines.

Now Ethiopia was the only considerable area in Africa still independent; on the other hand without it and its strategic importance, the two provinces of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland were isolated and valueless. As a matter of fact, it was not the first attempt of Italy to settle there. Having failed to conquer it in 1896, and a period of direct personal influence having failed to give her the satisfaction she aspired to, Italy decided on another military conquest of Ethiopia.

On December 5th, 1934, a small body of Italian native troops under Italian officers, and a small Ethiopian force, clashed at the wells of Wal Wal, "on or near" the undelimited frontier between Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia.

This famous incident of Wal Wal, although it had been considered as the immediate cause of the conflict, was not so important in itself as to make war inevitable. Italy and Abyssinia were bound by three separate agreements restraining them from resorting to war: the Briand-Kellog Pact, of

which both parties were signatories; the Italo-Abyssinian Treaty of August 2nd, 1928, pledging both countries to the arbitration of any dispute without resorting to "the force of arms"; and the Covenant of the League of Nations. But for a period of eight months - until September 4th, 1935 - during which Italy, while in direct negotiations with Ethiopia, was openly making military preparations of which the whole world knew - the question of Italo-Abyssinian relations did not come before the Council of the League. Secondly, having on one hand signed an agreement with England in 1925, with reference to Italian claims on Ethiopia, and having reached another with Laval on January 7th, 1935, to the same end - two agreements which I shall deal with later - Mussolini thought that there was nothing in his way to carry an aggressive policy.

As a matter of fact, he started the critical year 1935, with everything in his favour. He knew that the French and British Government had both "written off" the Ethiopian affair, the reason being the rapid emergence of Germany in a state of violent reaction against the Versailles Treaty, and whose aggressiveness was threatening to upset the European balance of power. Hitler was now well on the saddle and the Powers were fully aware that a considerable part of his armaments had already been accomplished. Mussolini judged that France and England, though they might dislike to see Italy involved in a war of colonial conquest in Africa, would feel nevertheless

that her present diplomatic and eventual military support in Europe, was of great importance. And to have this support "they must resign themselves to give a free hand to Italy in Africa, which after all was neither a British nor a French possession" (74).

On the other hand, the Manchurian Affair taught Mussolini an important lesson : the impotence of the League in face of an open aggression, especially its weakness outside Europe, and the way the democratic Powers would react to an aggressive policy. Lastly it did not seem that Russia or the U.S.A. were likely to interest themselves actively in the affair.

That everything was combining to prevent the Ethiopian case from receiving any serious consideration, was clearly shown, when Italy, France and Great Britain met at Stresa on April 11th, 1935, to consider the new situation created by the reinforcement of the Reichswehr and its increase to 550.000 men : the Abyssinian question was not put on the agenda. By October, it seemed almost incredible that what had then become a major question, should have been completely ignored; but in April very few people had begun to take an interest in the subject, feeling with Sir John Simon that "the rights and integrity of a black country should not be allowed to confuse the serious considerations of European politics"..... !

Some months later the Stresa front was to be broken. Actually it was not the Ethiopian question which struck the first serious

(74) Survey of International Affairs - Vol. II 1935
Arnold J. Toynbee.

blow. Any real hope of European security based on the common action of France, Italy and England, was ruined by the speed with which, Great Britain entered into a Naval Pact with Germany on June 18th. The devastating effect of this action on Anglo-French relations was to Italy an additional incentive to push on with her colonial adventure. By the summer of 1935, England and France had lost that collective superiority which might have enabled them to coerce Italy to accept any settlement of the African question without resorting to conquest.

(2) The Policy of the Powers before the Conflict

(a) England

When Italy threatened to occupy Abyssinia, and especially Lake Tana which was considered as the indispensable reservoir of the Nile, it looked like another Marchend expedition threatening British interests there; and many expected England to react against Italy, as she did in 1898, against France. This time it looked even more dangerous, for it was a strategic spot situated on a promontory which commands the route to India, in front of this Indian Ocean, on which Great Britain had to remain the unchallenged mistress. On the other hand, England who controls Italy's lines of communications at Gibraltar and Suez, and whose navy militarily dominates the Mediterranean, was in a very strong position, not only to bring pressure to bear upon Italy, but to take the lead of a general action aimed at stopping Italy's aggression against a member of the League. And yet inspite of the threat on the route to India and on the

Nile, in spite of its faithfulness to the League, so queer as that may seem, the British lion hesitated ! Why ?

If England will speak plainly, there will be no war, it was said in foreign diplomatic circles. But England did speak very plainly through the Peace Ballot - that popular referendum meant to give British public opinion, a chance to express its point of view on the problem of peace organisation through collective security - and the results show that out of 11,540,066 - being those who answered the questions - 11,166,818 or 95.9% voted that Great Britain should remain a member of the League ; 10,086,626 or 86.8%, for joining economic sanctions against an aggressor ; and 6,833,803 or 58.7% for joining also, if necessary, in military sanctions against an aggressor (75). What gives these most remarkable results a peculiar significance, is the fact that this popular consultation took place in November 1934, that is to say, at a time where there was no question yet, of Ethiopia, and thus, no danger threatening British interests on the Nile and on the route to India. A government supported by such majorities in the electorate would rightly regard itself as holding an overwhelming popular mandate. In receiving these results on July 23rd, Mr. Baldwin declared openly : "The League of Nations remains the sheet-anchor of British Policy" (76). And yet when it came to action nothing will remain of this

(75) Numbers given by Paul Vaucher in : "L'opinion Britannique, la S.D.N. et la Guerre Italo-Ethiopienne, p. 44-46.

(76) Quoted by F.L. Schuman in "Europe on the Eve", p. 176.

assertion which - as it seemed - was but a fraudulent promise meant to win another election. Ethiopia and the League of Nations as well, will be immolated on the Fascist altar !

The handling by England of the Italian act of aggression against Abyssinia, is but another sad aspect of this blind policy stirred by one single principle : the fear of war, and subsequently aimed at one single achievement : the preservation of peace at all costs. At all costs in this particular issue, meant at the expense of Abyssinia ! Really, one wonders how able political leaders and diplomats could not see nor grasp the idea that what was at stake was much less the independence or interests of one country than the more fundamental issue of this preservation of peace, they were all striving for; however not that precarious preservation sought by appeasement of the aggressor - a policy which only delayed the expiration of the general settlement of accounts between an orderly Europe, and the "Have not" countries, which will try to disturb it, in order to fish in troubled waters - but by the faithfulness to the Covenant of League and the principle of collective security, the only possible policy the nations big and small, mighty and weak, white or black, should follow, to prevent, to stop, and to repulse aggression of any kind. Otherwise, any nation might become the Ethiopia of some stronger one ! And Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, and almost England were to feel - shall I say the merited chastisement, resulting of their policy of blinded folly.

As a matter of fact, the interests of England in this conflict were not absolute. "There are no vital British interests in Abyssinia" reads the Maffey Report" such as to necessitate British resistance to an Italian conquest of Abyssinia. Italian control of Abyssinia would on some grounds be advantageous..... In general as far as local British interests are concerned, it would be a matter of indifference whether Abyssinia remained independent or was absorbed by Italy..... an independent Abyssinia would be preferable, but the threat to British interests appears distant and would depend only on a war against Italy which for the moment appears improbable" (77). "Distant", "improbable" 1940, was to show that these two words were optimistic if not altogether false. However, it seemed that England followed the line traced by the Report, and thus its Government was ready minded to leave to Italy a free hand in Abyssinia.

One reason - which seems very serious at first hand - was that Japan had obtained from Ethiopia vast economic concessions, and was using it as an outlet for Japanese emigration. "Turn off your eyes from Abyssinia" wrote Frank Owen in the Daily Express, "do not keep busy with Hitler, let us watch Japan". To this end, it seems that England saw with evident pleasure, one more policeman (Italy) on the watchguard, on the door of Europe and on the route to India. As I said this reason

(77) Sir John Maffey Report, a secret document dated June 18th, 1935, which "through an indiscretion" had reached the Italian newspaper Giornale d'Italia; Extracts quoted by F. L. Schuman in : "Europe on the Eve", p. 174.

seems serious, but to anyone who has forgotten England's policy towards and handling of the Sino-Japanese conflict. Japan will not, said Sir John Simon, threaten British interests ! Therefore why should Italy be used as a bulwark against Japanese economic expansion in Abyssinia. Is it, by chance, because British commercial supremacy there was being at stake ? One would wonder, however, if an Italian Ethiopia would be safer.

In fact England could not, even if she wanted to, intervene on behalf of Ethiopia against Italy, because of her military weakness at the time. The sending of the British fleet into the Mediterranean, was much more a seeming demonstration of force, pretending to interfere to satisfy public opinion at home than a definite action meant to threaten war. As a matter of fact - as Mr. Dell, the Geneva correspondent of the Manchester Guardian pointed out on August 3rd, 1935 - the Italians never believed that the British Government would resort to war to prevent an Italian attack on Abyssinia. And then quoting an Italian Senator Forges Davanzati: "Look at the success that Japan and Germany have had by leaving the League of Nations. They have done what they pleased. We have only to follow their example and the British Government will offer us concessions to get us back to Geneva just as it has to Hitler" (78).

However, the most obvious reason which can give an important clue to explain British policy of mild and

(78) Quoted by Vigilantes in his pamphlet "Abyssinia", p.19.

uneffective disguised intervention in the present crisis, is the agreement reached in 1925 between the Duce and Sir Austen Chamberlain, Foreign Secretary in the Baldwin Government : the Italian Government was to support the British Government in securing from the Negus a concession for the construction of a barrage at Lake Tana, and a motor road linking the Lake with the Sudan. In exchange, the British Government pledged itself to support Italy in the construction of a railway joining the frontier of Eritrea to the frontiers of Italian Somaliland and "to recognize an exclusive Italian economic influence in the West of Abyssinia, and in the whole of the territory to be crossed by the above mentioned railway". Should any one of the two Governments obtain the desired concession, he would not "relax its wholehearted efforts to secure a corresponding satisfaction for the Government concerned" (79).

This agreement meant that the Foreign Office was giving Mussolini a free hand in a large portion of Abyssinia. "There is no doubt" explained the Daily Telegraph of June 27th, 1935, "that the approaching fulfilment of British aspirations in this part of Abyssinia - Lake Tana- has spurred the Italians to pursue their own plans". In other words the moment had now arrived when the Foreign Office - pledged by the 1925 agreement - was "to secure corresponding satisfaction" for

(79) Quoted by Vigilantes in Inquest on Peace - p. 163.

the Duce. And the British Government found itself in a very difficult position : it must uphold the authority of the League - much less because it stands for international order than to satisfy public opinion at home, which had expressed its will to support the Covenant, and had entrusted the Government to do so - while doing its best to satisfy Mussolini. It was Sir Samuel Hoare who found the way out. Knowing that to have binding force, the decisions of the League must be carried with unanimity, he stated on July 8th, 1935 "Our responsibility is collective and not individual". Three days later, he reiterated: "When I say collective responsibility, I mean collective responsibility".

Now the body with which this collective responsibility rested was the Council of the League, i.e. mainly the delegates of England, France, Italy and Russia. Italy could not join a scheme of collective responsibility, which in the actual case was directed against itself; Russia was bound to France by the Franco-Soviet Pact of May 1935. Hence the decision lay with the delegates of France and Great Britain. France, because of the Franco-Italian understanding of January 1935 (that we are coming to deal with in a moment) was unlikely to make proposals distasteful to Mussolini; England by her treaty of 1925 pledged herself not to oppose the Duce's scheme. Thus the principle of collective responsibility meant crudely that Mussolini had nothing to fear from the League Council.

Speaking frankly, the invoking of collective responsibility was a big "farce", especially if one remembers that in the summer of 1923, when Mussolini occupied Corfu, the British Government did not wait for the formation of any collective responsibility at Geneva. A British fleet gathered at Malta and the Duce evacuated Corfu. As a matter of fact in 1935 the British fleet was sent to the Mediterranean too; but Sir Samuel Hoare saw to it that it does not look a pressure brought to bear upon Italy. "Let Honourable members dismiss from their mind", he said on July 11th in the House of Commons "the rumours altogether without foundation that we have asked the French Government to join in a blockade of Italy and that we ourselves are preparing some isolated form of coercion". Mussolini could go to war if he pleases. The last chance of stopping him had gone !

(b) France

An Italian conquest of Ethiopia seemed to France as dangerous, even more so as to England from a colonial point of view. Djibouti keeps the door of the Red Sea to Indochina; it is the only maritime base that France has between Marseilles and India on the one hand and between Marseilles and Madagascar on the other. However, there were more important grounds on which France had to fear the conquest of Ethiopia. In attacking Ethiopia, Italy was repudiating the Covenant, i.e. she was striking at the whole edifice of peace which rested on collective

security which was the foundation of the whole French policy. Hence France, who had so eagerly upheld and defended this principle all through the years, should have been the first to stand for the defense of Ethiopia, all the more that serious doubts were being raised in Central and Eastern Europe as to the sincerity of French policy. The position taken by the French Government in the Sino-Japanese conflict, and the obstruction it had created at the Disarmament Conference, made these nations there to ask if collective security, as it was conceived by Paris, was not a one way policy aimed only at coming to the assistance of France if it is attacked; it seemed to them that France was asking for the right to receive help, and was much less prepared to carry its duty to assist the victim of an aggression. In brief, what was at stake was the question to know if the Covenant, of which France was the best defender, was aimed at only one thing : to defend France on the Rhine !

In this crucial year of 1935, France, whose prestige was badly threatened, but not yet diminished, could have strengthened her position all over Europe, but a firm stand on the principles of the League : As a matter of fact, defending Ethiopia, would have been much less to save this single country from losing its independence, than to serve France's security in the long run; Unhappily where France needed a Clemenceau, it had only a Pierre Laval !

Now Mussolini knew that any aggressive move against Abyssinia, presupposes a preliminary arrangement between Italy and France. To begin with, France had been Abyssinia's chief support since the days of Menelik. On the other hand two thirds of Abyssinia's foreign trade, passes over the French railroad from Adis Ababa to Djibouti, the capital of French Somaliland. However, the most obvious reason was that in 1925, France had refused its consent to any scheme advocating Italian influence in Abyssinia; therefore, the agreement between Italy and England could not become operative, since by a treaty in 1906, London, Paris and Rome, had constituted themselves guardians of Abyssinia, each one pledging itself not to take any action without the consent of the other two.

These being the facts, what a huge responsibility was Laval to bear before history, when on January 7th, 1935, he reached a complete agreement on that subject, with the Duce. At what price, had Mr. Laval, bought the "friendship" of Italy? There were some talks about the cession of some desertic territories, but Mussolini - he said it himself - was not a "collector" of deserts! On the French side, it was always declared that the territorial integrity of Abyssinia was respected, though it was admitted that in the part of the agreement regarding Ethiopia, France had disinterested itself economically in favour of Italy. However, what happened in the course of events, and especially the

Mr. Laval's policy at Geneva during the crisis caused by the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, induces one to believe that the counter-part of Mussolini's sudden friendship to France, should be sought in the assurances given by the French Premier, that France not only would not oppose Italy's action in Africa, but that it would even help it. General de Bono, who was kept informed by Mussolini of the various diplomatic phases, affirms that "the conversations with Mr. Laval led us to hope that so far as France was concerned no obstacles would be placed in our path in any eventual action we should take against Abyssinia" (80).

The diplomatic formula of "free hands", was to find a new application in Abyssinia. What looked to Mr. Laval now an excellent deal, made in a so called realistic mind - at the expense of a member of the League - proved to be in the long run the hardest blow struck at the League and the principles on which it stood. And as "For France" it was "the League or disaster" (81), one could see, now, at what a huge price was bought the friendship of Italy, which turned in the end to be a stab in the back.

Mr. Laval could shake hands with Sir John Simon their "realistic" mind were alike and their blunders too.

(80) Italian Foreign Policy - M. Macartney & L. Cremona, p.299.

(81) Title of a speech, made in 1935 by Jacques Kayser, Vice-President of the Radical Socialist Party at the French Radical Socialist Congress.

As a whole the policy of France in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, is one more sad aspect of the policy of the Western Democracies based on the fear of war and directed towards the keeping of peace. However, it gave it a peculiar twist, stirred as it were, by the fear of a resurgent Germany and aimed at security at all costs. At all costs meant to Laval the selling of Ethiopia to Italy. He thought - wrongly - that if Italy could be satisfied in the colonial field, it would be definitely detached from Hitler's arms, and would become a steady element of peace and cooperation in Europe. What he wanted was a strong Stresa front, and what he got was the Rome-Berlin axis !

As a matter of fact, France considered that any attempt to prevent a conquest, would be vain, for she will not act alone, and any understanding with England to promote close cooperation was not likely to be reached because of the Anglo-German naval agreement. On the other hand she feared to see Germany taking advantage of the departure of the Italian armies out of Europe. That is why Mr. Laval decided to prevent them to go in trying through diplomacy to give Italy all the part of Ethiopia which was of no concern to France. If he succeeded in his policy, he would avoid a war, thus affirming the love for peace of his country; he would remain the faithful subject of the League while he would have consolidated both the Italian friendship and the Stresa front. In other words, what was plainly the forsaking of Ethiopia to its doom, and the cheating, if not the betraying of the League, was so wrapped as to appear in the hands of Mr. Laval a masterpiece

of diplomacy, aimed at keeping the peace, and much more important, at satisfying France's quest for security, in bringing Italy to its side.

Given the results, one wonders who was fooling whom in this big tragicomedy worthy of the Great Molière ! !

As to Germany, "she did not have to play to win; she was to benefit anyhow, by keeping strictly neutral. If Italy is defeated, she will send her troops to the Brenner; if Italy is victorious, the door to ask for colonies would be open to her" (82).

Lastly the U.S.A. besides some humanitarian conceptions towards Ethiopia, seemed firmly decided, never again to be mixed up with extra-American conflict.

Thus, there was no great power which was inclined - even by interest if not by simple duty towards a member of the League - to defend the Ethiopian independence. The League of Nations, which was as it were, the emanation of the great capitals, was doomed to impotence. However, one of the great tragedies in the League story, was that its main supporters, France and England, never seemed enthusiastic for it at the same time. When France blew hot, Great Britain blew cold, and vice versa" (83).

(82) Jean Bastin - l'Affaire d'Ethiopie et les Diplomates. p. 20,
(83) Arnold Wolfers - Britain & France between two Wars.

(3) "Mise au point"

When England knew of the Franco-Italian agreement on Ethiopia, she did not express any opposition. Even at the time of Wal Wal, the Daily Express, writing about the eventuality of an Italian proterate on Ethiopia said : "England has no prejudice against it, no more than she has against the Italian colonization in Abyssinia.

And yet on September 11th, 1935, in the League Assembly, Sir Samuel Hoare, announced in a speech Britain's intention "to take the lead in steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression".

Seen through Italian eyes, this sudden change of attitude was the biggest "British hypocrisy". However, a "mise au point" is necessary to explain it. While England was ready to accept an exclusive Italian influence, a large colonization, even a partial conquest of Abyssinia, she would never grant - as it seemed - her consent to a complete conquest of Ethiopia. What frightened her was much less the conquest itself than the "imperialistic spirit" which animated Rome. Seen through British eyes, it was "a challenge launched by Italy against the international order established with the creation of the League"..... There was no quarrel", said London, "between England and Italy, but only between Italy and the League; and Great Britain as a signatory of the Covenant felt it her duty to defend the principles established by it" (84).

(84) M. Marcartney & P. Cremona - Italian foreign and colonial policy (1914-1937) , p. 178.

That it was indeed a "volte face", is clearly seen by the article in the Morning Post of September 18th, 1935, quoting "authoritative quarters" about "inconclusive conversations" with Mussolini :" In these conversations, ^(it was reported) Mr. Eden pointed out that the situation had developed to a point at which British policy was no longer founded upon considerations of British colonial interests, but upon such wider issues as maintenance of the peace in Europe and of the authority of the League of Nations" (85).

Wasn't it too late to speak of "international order" and "peace of Europe", when for months England had been dealing with the Duce on the basis of "considerations of British colonial interests" instead of on the basis of the Covenant of the League?

Why should Europe and especially France, believe in Great Britain's good faith, now? Wasn't it, as Rome said, that "once again 'perfidious Albion' wished to cover beneath the Covenant mask of moral principles and of the alleged violation of international engagement the defense of her exclusively imperial interests which she considered would be seriously threatened by the Italian possession of Abyssinia" (86). Mr. Frank H. Simonds seems strongly inclined to believe it.

(85) Quoted by Vigilantes in Inquest on Peace, p. 179.

(86) M. Marcatney & P. Cremona : Italian foreign and colonial policy (1914-1937), p. 177.

"In the actual crisis two imperialism, the British and the Italian are in shock..... the former is seeking to protect an empire created by conquest; the other is striving by conquest to create an empire. Under these circumstances the League of Nations and every other instrument designed to forward collective action to restrain aggression become automatically the weapon of the satisfied imperialism" (87).

(4) The Conflict Before the League

On October 3rd, 1935, at dawn, the Italian troops crossed the Abyssinian frontiers with no formal declaration of war and no notification of Italy's intentions to the other governments. This evident and brutal violation of the Covenant and of the Ethiopian frontiers by Italy, had an enormous effect at Geneva. The reaction was going to be so much the more violent, that since many years already, the League had not dared or had not been able to react efficiently against more or less concealed violations of frontiers. "This plain and brutal infraction had on it the effect of a slap on the face, succeeding to repeated but discreet pins punctures" (88). It was clearly felt at Geneva, that the attitude taken in the present case, will decide of the future of the League - only an energetic handling of the issue, could safeguard its prestige so seriously shaken.

Indeed a week after the beginning of hostilities, the League Assembly composed of 54 nations, members, almost

(87) Fascists defending Imperialism - Article by Frank H. Simonds.
(88) Jean Bastin (L'Affaire d'Ethiopie et les diplomates. p. 77)

unanimously voted that Italy "had resorted to war in disregard of her Covenants under Art. XII of the Covenant". There were three abstentions, Austria, Hungary and Albania, and Italy voted against it.

(a) Sanctions and their effects :

Almost immediately a Committee was set up to consider measures for coordinating the sanctions which each member of the League was bound to apply against Italy under article 16 of the Covenant, and five proposals were adopted imposing on Italy an embargo of arms and amunitions, rendering impossible all loans and credits to the Italian Government, prohibiting importation of all Italian goods, placing an embargo on key raw materials, and finally pledging the members to give each other mutual assistance. The Committee fixed November 15th as the date on which sanctions should go into effect.

Italy resented strongly the judgment passed by the League against her. Her case she said, was not different from that of Japan in the Manchurian business, and of Germany violating the Treaty of Versailles. Why, therefore, should she be treated differently? "Others could steal the hose from the field", said Rome, but Italy was to be hanged for looking over the hedge" (89).

Indeed it seemed that - though a little bit late - the principle of collective security was at last going to be strongly held to. For the first time in history, the great majority of nations have united to end a war of

(89) M. Marcotney & P. Cremona - Italian foreign and colonial policy (1914-1937), p. 317.

aggression and to teach any other would be aggressor a lesson as to what would happen to him, should he break the law.

However, from the start, one would have felt, in spite of the general readiness of all the nations to apply them, that the sanctions would be slow, cumbersome, ineffective and at best a means for saving the League's face" (90). For five months the battle raged within the ranks of the sanctionist states on one vital issue : the adding of oil to the list of key raw materials which Italy was to be prevented to get, and which was freely imported into Italy in large quantities. The Duce let it be understood, that he would regard the application of an oil sanction as "an unfriendly act", which would lead to war. It was sufficient to nip in the bud any scheme to that end. Great Britain alarmed at the vulnerability of her fleet in the Mediterranean, to air attack hesitated. France was totally hostile to it. Canada had disavowed its representative at Geneva, who had suggested to apply oil sanctions. As to the U.S.A. President Roosevelt issued an embargo under the new Neutrality Act on the exports of arms and amunitions, and warned U.S. citizens that all transactions carried with any of the belligerents will be at their own risks. "Just as the threat of sanctions did not prevent Mussolini from launching his attack on Abyssinia, their adoption did not stop the Italian war of conquest" (91).

(90) From a Geneva notebook - Article written for World by an observer in Geneva signing Ulysses.

(91) Macartney & Cremona - Italian foreign and colonial policy (1914-1937).

In fact, the whole enterprise was doomed to failure, because the French and the British Government both responsible leaders in the League, had at no time desired its success. They were worried as to how they could get through with as less damage as possible, and with no harm done to themselves first and foremost, to Italy and if possible to the League. Of Ethiopia there was no question : she was the one to pay all the expenses ! Might makes right. Moreover, they seemed to regret that the League, which had already twice failed to apply the measures its Covenant bade it to, could not find something, once more and prevent these cumbersome sanctions to be applied ! ! Wasn't it clear enough - and one wonders how the fact was not grasped at the time - that to feel this way was to force this institution which apparently meant so much to them, to show definitely once and for all its impotence to abide by its own law, and therefore, to crumble down, this time never to rise again, under the universal derision and contempt ?

As a matter of fact, their view took different form - Lord Londonderry, who by his speech at Southampton on July 27th, 1935, may be the best representative of this trend of thought declared that : "In the Government's view the League was not for the purpose of imposing its will upon any single nation by the exercise of physical force. It existed for the pacific settlement of international disputes,

not for the abolition of war by means of war" (92). In France with Mr. Laval they say almost the same thing : "Any idea to apply sanctions, should be resolutely put aside", wrote "L'Europe Nouvelle" in August 1935. And "La Republique" : "No European war at any cost and under no pretext". Others said - wittingly they thought - that the members of the League were not "incendiary firemen", to use Mussolini's own expression.

But how would they expect to bring back within the law, an openly defiant aggressor, or to reduce him, if not by uniting with all the other states bound together, if it is necessary, by their will to go to war against him ? And in the actual issue, there was no other alternative, all "conciliatory" efforts having shamefully failed. As a matter of fact, had the responsible Powers had that necessary will to make war to stop a war of aggression, they were in the most favourable conditions to wage it successfully. The Italian armies and implements of war were depending almost entirely upon supplies on the Red Sea route, which was completely in the hands of France and England; the whole of Italy's imports and exports by sea, could be almost completely controlled by Great Britain who held Gibraltar and Suez; lastly all the Italian war vehicles depended upon foreign oil supplies. The Suez Canal closed oil shipments out off, Italy effectively blockaded by all the sanctionist Powers, one would have hardly thought of Victor Emmanuel as Emperor of Ethiopia.

(92) Quoted by Vigilantes in his pamphlet : Abyssinia, p. 31.

And yet oil was never included in sanctions ! The canal was kept open at all times, even when the declared shipments of tons of poison gas went through it ! Why ? Because of the fear that Italy might wage a war of revenge against those who were trying to prevent her from fulfilling her aspirations. But how could Italy embark on a war of revenge, if she was forced to renounce a much easier one against Abyssinia ? No ! One should dismiss altogether from his mind, such an excuse, which seems to be in fact, but a pretense.

Italy had to "get away" with her colonial adventure, for she must be won to France's side against Germany; England had to pretend to stand for sanctions, because Baldwin Government, meant to win the coming elections; and lastly now that the whole machinery of sanctions had been mobilized - though with no effect what soever - it was meant to be but a general rehearsal for a future use against an eventual Nazi aggression. I wonder, how one could think otherwise; but I wonder too if those who were pulling the strings of all this puppet show, foresaw that Hitler would be the major beneficiary of their combined efforts.

(b) Anglo-French Conflicting Views

As a matter of fact, Britain and France's efforts had not always been combined, When as an answer to the provocative language of the Fascist press - there was an open talk in Italy of a possible attack against England -

a large British naval force was concentrated in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the garrisons in Egypt, Malta and Aden were re-inforced. And when Italy replied to these measures by re-inforcing in turn the garrison in Lybia and her naval and air bases in the Dodecanese, Sir George Clerk asked the French Government on October 14th, 1935, to give specific assurances of her naval support in the event of a Mediterranean clash between Italian and British ships. France alone, in backing British action could have altered the situation. However, not only did she delay her answer, but went for the time being, as far as suggesting the removal of British ships from the Mediterranean, as the best thing to do "to deflate the temper that had created the emergency". Deeply vexed the British Government decided to keep them. But Mussolini, fully aware that Great Britain did not want to be involved in a single-handed war with Italy, ignored the British threats. "The roar of the British lion, does not seem to have impressed the Roman eagle" (93). Indeed how could it impress the Duce, when officially, assurances were given by the British Ambassador in Rome and renewed later in a personal message from the British Foreign Secretary that "the movements of the British fleet and the reinforcements of men and material of the British garrisons in the Mediterranean were not intended to imply any aggressive intention on the part of his Majesty's Government"(94).

(93) M. Marcotney * P. Cremona, Italian Foreign & Colonial policy

p. 318

(94) " " " " " " " " " " " "

On October 18th, after an interview which Sir Eric Drummond, British Ambassador in Rome, had with Mussolini - a few days earlier Italian Ambassador Cerruti in Paris have had an interview with Laval - Rome issued a reassuring communique resulting at once in a great change. What has happened simply was that London assured both Paris and Rome that the British Government had no intention either of economically "blockading" Italy or of engaging in "military sanctions against her. Paris assured both London and Rome that it had neither of these intentions. And Rome assured London that it had "no intention, no interest and no desire" to attack British ships in the Mediterranean or British territory in North Africa. It didn't have to assure Paris of anything, Laval had already been won to its side by the Agreement of January 7th. The tension was relieved, and Laval promptly, on the same day - October 18th - sent to London a definite "yes" to the question asked by Sir George Clerk, four days before.

What prevented France from giving her support to England earlier? The answer is to be found in the misunderstanding which existed between them, and which reached its climax in 1935. In fact it is this misunderstanding which was the dominant factor in the Duce's calculations to carry out more or less undisturbed his Abyssinian campaign.

Now its basis is much more psychological than material, for England and France had no conflict of interests. It was merely a question of lack of confidence. The French were

exasperated, explains Prof. Toynbee at what appeared to them to be a "chef d'oeuvre" of the characteristic perversity of English behaviour. The British had declared that their foreign policy was solidly based upon the Covenant. But when did they do it? Most early in 1933 for instance, at Hitler's advent to power, but in the middle of 1935, after the French had reinforced their existing continental alliances by negotiating the Franco-Italian Pact of January 7th, and the Franco-Russian Treaty of May 2nd, 1935. On the other hand French minds found it difficult to believe that the true motive of British policy was only the defense of a League member; they considered that the suddenly manifested British enthusiasm for the League, really masked a selfish concern for local British Imperial interests" (95).

But, said Mr. Jacques Kayser in a speech delivered at a meeting of the Socialist Party, can't you see that even if Britain is acting selfishly, now that she is for Covenant, it is a "folly of estranging Britain"; the Entente Cordiale is badly hit.... but his voice for the time was but a whisper. It seemed that France could never forgive England, the conclusion of the Anglo-German naval agreement, especially coming as it did, after Stresa.

On the British minds an equally strong distrust existed about the true motives of the French. England was seeing France turning away from the principle of collective security at the

(95) Arnold J. Toynbee. Survey of International Affairs, 1935.

moment when she was turning towards it. This french indifference cast a doubt upon the sincerity of those professions of faith which France had made in the past. "We always suspected" said now the British francophobes, "that the professed zeal of the French for collective security was a sham, and that all the time they were nursing the Covenant as an instrument which in French designs was to be used against only one country namely Germany on behalf of only one country namely France" (96).

When sanctions were voted, and though the atmosphere had meanwhile been a little bit clarified between them, we find them still following two policies, not only distinct from one another, but even opposite. The one policy - British Government - was to concentrate attention and effort upon the application of sanctions. The other policy - French Government - was to concentrate attention and effort to prevent their application - behind the screen - in trying to settle the dispute through "conciliation". In fact, and given their policy in the League, and its results, one is inclined to say that though different in their form and object, their policies were alike at bottom: Mussolini was to have free hands in dealing with Ethiopia. At a moment when the policy of coercion had some chances to succeed, it was dropped, for the whole problem of sanctions was completely overshadowed by the peace proposals of the newly born Laval-Hoare Plan.

(96) Arnold Wolfers - Britain & France between two Wars.

(c) The Laval-Hoare Plan

From the point of view of England and France, this famous plan seems to mark the end of their divergent policies, and their conflicting views. The need for coming to terms was strongly felt between them. By the end of November 1935, England isolated was not in a position to interfere alone; the Stresa front was becoming more and more unsteady in favour of a Germano-Italian rapprochement and France wanted to tighten the loose Entente Cordiale. The whole edifice so laboriously built by English and French self-interested diplomacies, seemed very shaky.

However, they had to take the consent of the League to carry out negotiations with Italy - one more accomplice will do no harm - Mr. Van Zeeland, the Chairman accepted that they be entrusted with that mission. And the Laval-Hoare Plan, "the fruit of a year's intrigues" saw the light. Taken as a whole, the Plan was but the delivering of Abyssinia to Italy through "diplomacy", and "conciliation" instead of letting her have it through conquest. They would have stopped a war; the League's prestige would have been safe, and they would have reached their fundamental objectives. Thus they thought!

In fact, it was a premium to the aggressor, offered in disregard of all the principles the League stood for, not to speak of moral. "I wanted to avoid to Ethiopia the grave

disillusion that could have given her the deceived hope of being rescued by the League of Nations" (97). It was a "deceived hope" because Laval and Hoare were behind it. As to the argument that partial dismemberment was all the same better than a total conquest, it could satisfy every body except Ethiopia.

Hardly was the Plan known, that it aroused a storm of public indignation. The violence of the opposition all over Europe and especially in England was enormous. "Public opinion of the world took on it to tear up the document" (98). The world was stupefied to see that the scheme was intended to the cutting up of Ethiopia. It would be "a peace based on dishonour", wrote the Yorkshire Post in accusing the British Government. And an overwhelming majority of English people spontaneously rebelled against being made parties to a proposal "not because it endangered their own safety nor that of the Empire, but because their idea of public morality was outraged". Of course Abyssinia refused it indignantly. Her refusal sealed the doom of the Hoare-Laval Plan, which had lived six days only carrying in its fall, that of its authors. Sir Samuel Hoare was forced by an indignant public opinion to resign on December 19th, 1935 while Mr. Laval fell in January 1936. As to Mussolini, he was left a free hand to advance in Abyssinia, fully aware now that only arms will achieve his aims there. The sanctionist outburst

(97) Frederick L. Schuman - Europe on the Eve.

(98) Jean Bastin. ^{quoting M^r Baldwin} L'Affaire d'Ethiopie et les Diplomates.

that he feared for a while after having been worn-out during months of expectation and vain hopes, had broken itself as a dying sea wave, on the Laval-Hoare Plan.

(5) Sowing the Wind !

On May 5th, 1936, Ethiopia was formally annexed to Italy. Was the world ready to ratify this annexation which was a consequence of a war it had condemned ? And more directly what was going to be done with sanctions, which appeared to be now more of an obstacle to the general peace - thanks to England and France who had literally knifed the League - than its supporter ? They could not be of a primitive character. Hence once the evil done, there was no reason for their existence any more. Besides, like a boomerang the threat of an Italo-German coalition, was becoming more and more an actual fact. It was one more argument for the recalling of sanctions.

It was England who took the decisive step in this direction. The military conquest of Abyssinia being an accomplished fact, it is no use crying over spilt milk. As the Abyssinians are defeated, sanctions must go. Thus spoke England ! Mr. Neville Chamberlain frankly recognised that sanctions have failed : "we have tried to impose on the world a task far more beyond its forces". By that he meant may be the forces of England !

One after the other all the Governments decided to suppress sanctions and to recall their representatives from the Ethiopian capital. One prompt action was France's. In her name Mr. Laval a friend of fascism, had voted sanctions. In her name too, Mr. Blum, the enemy of fascism recalled them. Yes, the destiny of politicians has sometimes such ironics ! !

In July 1936, sanctions against Italy were formally raised by the League. The Italo-Abyssinian conflict had practically come to an end.

"The attempt to apply collective sanctions against a country singularly susceptible to economic pressure, failed, the manner of its failure being more serious than if it had never been attempted, for it failed coming very near success" (99). One could go even much further and say that the sanctions against Italy failed before they were applied. Indeed those who decided to apply them, did so in such a spirit that one can say that they were doomed to failure from the start. In other words, it was not sanctions which failed: "it was the will power to enforce them in a real and biting manner which failed" (100). And it is here where the responsibility of the Great Powers appears to be deeply engaged.

First of all because they adopted a double attitude towards the conflict. On one hand they had proclaimed and put into action, some coercitive measures which should have the result of stopping hostilities. On the other, they missed

(99) Stephen King Hall. Our own times (1913-1938), p. 845.

(100) Winston S. Churchill - Step by step (1936-1939), p.43;

no opportunity to seek for a settlement of the conflict, through conciliation. Either policy could be followed, but not both. Here lies the explanation to the mildness, hesitations, delays temporisations, lack of decision and firmness, with which sanctions were applied. And France, in this respect is the direct cause of their failure. Even before the breaking up of war, "Le Jour", had written : "the French people refuse to apply economic sanctions even the most benignant"; and "La Republique" : as sanctions mean, or might be , war : no sanctions at all !" "Le Populaire" tried in vain to show the real interest of France: "Italy will show no sign of gratitude whatsoever towards France". No ! Mr. Laval had decided that sanctions must not be given such an extension as to be an obstacle to any conciliation. So why sanctions at all, if Italy was not to be alienated? "It is really a pity, that this nation did not understand, that she could ruin the whole edifice of collective security, for the sake of simple immediate diplomatic interest" (101).

One year, day by day, in 1936, after Mr. Laval's visit to Rome, the "Roma Fascista" wrote: "If Europe today finds itself under the burden of a war, the fault is partially to England: the principal responsible is France". And it was thanks to France that Italy conquered undisturbed Abyssinia.

Another reason of the failure, was that to be effective, sanctions must imply collective action. But in all the common action against Italy, dominated an individualistic and static

(101) Jean Bastin (L'Affaire d'Ethiopie et les Diplomates, p.250.

tendency. Business men in sanctionist countries sent their goods through states which were abstaining; not to speak of countries which having voted to apply sanction, did not keep their word.

Lastly, proposal No. 5 referring to mutual assistance between the powers affected by the application of sanctions - not to speak of all the others - was a vast comedy. The most typical case was that of Yugoslavia. Suffering from a terrible internal crisis, since Italy had been her main client, she asked her best ally France, to help her. This latter after many hesitations decided to buy from her the incredible number of..... 11 horses !!

As to the League of Nations, it was strongly hit in its mission and in its very existence. "Let us quit the League of Nations" shouted Vladimir d'Ormessan in Le Figaro. "In its present state", said Mr. Neville Chamberlain, "the League is no more able to preserve the peace of the world, whatever it may become in the future" ! And in this too the responsibility of the Great Powers appears no less great. At first, England and France supported the Italian plan of excluding the League from the matter of all costs. "If the League of Nations is brought in, I do not appear", said Mussolini. And immediately the League was wiped out as an authority on peace and war, and negotiations were carried between the Powers, outside the League. "What are they discussing", asks Mr. Lloyd George how to prevent Italy from destroying the

independence of Abyssinia ? Not at all. They are discussing what measure of economic and strategic and political control can be given to Italy without war. How they can deliver Abyssinia on cheap to Italy" (102). When they saw that the Italian aims were aggressive, it was too late to prevent the breaking up of hostilities. And war broke out. As a matter of fact they always considered that the stopping of an Italo-Abyssinian war would be far easier than preventing it to break out. They succeeded in neither !

Thus in the six years after 1929, the policies of the Great Powers had resulted in sweeping away most of the achievements of the immediate post-war years. Reparations were dead and the German Republic too. Disarmament had given way to a new arms race. For all practical purposes collective security was no more. The Nine Powers Pact and the Kellogg-Briand Pact had become meaningless. The collective peace system the Powers had built had not only failed to preserve the peace, but to stop a war after it has started. With their egoistic, divergent, and generally vacillating "half-hearted" and half-headed" policies, the Western Democracies had sown the wind. With the nations once more taking their stand on the European chess^{board}, to face the coming storm they felt, from now and on, inevitable, and while the chimneys of the armament factories darkened the sky, it would not be long before they would reap the whirlwind.

Like outraged gods the disregarded principles were to take harshly their revenge !

(102) Reported in the News Chronicle of August 14, 1935.

Section D

The Death of Locarno March 7th, 1936.

Hardly had the Western Democracies recovered from the death blow dealt at Versailles on March 16th, 1935 - with the increase of the German Army - that they had to go on mourning again for two much dearer losses, which would leave them defenseless in front of lawless aggressive power politics : Locarno, the burial of which took place on March 7th, 1936, with the occupation by German troops of the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland, and to which we are coming presently, and Geneva, which passed away on July 4th, 1936, with the recall of sanctions - as we have already seen by anticipation for a better understanding of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict.

The remilitarization of the Rhineland, not only because it was a flagrant breach of one of the main foundations of the Peace in Europe, but coming as it did, at a time when the Powers were dealing with the Ethiopian muddle - precipitated the worst crisis Europe had to face may be since the World War. Never in the post war period, had Europe been nearer to war, than at this time, because it was the first time in the history of that period, that a definite clause of the Versailles and the Locarno Treaties,

was torn to pieces.

"Germany, reads article 42 of Versailles, is forbidden to maintain or construct any fortifications either on the left bank of the Rhine or on the right bank to the west of a line drawn 50 kilometers to the east of the Rhine".

"Article 43 : "In the area above, the maintenance and the assembly of armed forces, either permanently or temporarily..... are in the same way forbidden".

Articles 44 : "In case Germany violates in any manner whatever the provisions of Art. 42 & 43, she shall be regarded as committing a hostile act against the powers signatory of the present Treaty and as calculated to disturb the peace of the world". And the Locarno Pact says in its article IV, No. 3 :

"In case of a flagrant violation,.... or of a flagrant breach of Articles 42 or 43 of the Treaty of Versailles by one of the high contracting parties, each of the other parties hereby undertakes immediately to come to the help of the party against whom such a violation or breach has been directed as soon as the said Power has been able to satisfy itself that..... by reason.... of the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarized zone immediate action is necessary".

Now when Hitler, on March 7th, 1936, ordered his troops to march into the demilitarised zone, he committed this "flagrant breach", and "unprovoked act of aggression", against one of the contracting parties concerned, namely, France. The Franco-Soviet Pact of May 2nd, 1935, he alleged was incompatible with the Locarno Treaty; however, it was his personal opinion and it could in no way either invalidate the said Treaty, or justify legally his action. And France

therefore, was free to act and resist what was an obvious "hostile" act, the more so that England, Italy and Belgium, were all pledged by Locarno, to come at once to France's aid. Military action, would have not only gathered around France, a mighty coalition and thus would have strengthened the loose bonds with central Europe, and the Entente Cordiale, but would have forced Hitler to retreat, a fact which might have ruined his prestige in Germany and his regime altogether. Moreover, France had nothing to fear from Italy, still busy with her colonial venture and therefore in no measure capable of rendering any assistance to Germany. The only immediate and pressing danger was the remilitarization of the Rhineland. Not only Germany was once more on France's threshold, but should she build strong German fortifications there, it would become impossible for France to give any effective aid to Poland or any member of the Little Entente in case of a German aggression. "Immediate action", was the only course to follow, and strong reasons militated in its favour. If Hitler were allowed to get away with what he had done, there would be nothing left for France and England to do but to rearm as fast as possible and prepare for the unavoidable war. It was, as it seems, the final opportunity offered to France and England to check German ambition, especially that it was the time when they could have done it comparatively easily. And yet France hesitated and England was not ready to go to war, and..... Hitler gets away with it !

As a matter of fact France seemed apparently ready to resort to arms to make Germany withdraw from the Rhineland. On March 8th, Mr. Sarraut, French Premier, in a broadcast said : "We are not disposed to allow Strasbourg to come under the fire of German guns". And Mr. Flandin foreign minister firmly asserted that no negotiations will take place without evacuation, and that sanctions were to be applied if evacuation is not carried on. However, this strong talk did not last. It was becoming more and more clear that France was not prepared to advance. Yes, the spirit of Clemenceau and Poincaré was indeed dead. France was afraid. She was afraid first and foremost of war. "It may seem a humiliating confession to make, but it appears to be a fact that fear is today the real driving force in European relations. Fear, the meanest of human motives, is today the master of us all" (101). She preferred peace today at all cost. What of tomorrow ? No one knew. In fact the French military staff was not ready to order a partial mobilization, because no plans were made to that end, and it considered a general mobilization to be very expensive. It might cost several billion francs, and such a huge sum would mean devaluation. Was the franc to be saved and France sacrificed ? This seemed the reasoning followed all through this difficult period.

(101) Address given by General Smuts on 13th November 1934, at Chatham House.

And Flandin retreated. What made him retreat, ultimately however, was another fear: that of alienating England. The Entente Cordiale had been badly shaken over Ethiopia, and France could not take the chance of facing Germany alone. And France would have been alone for England was not ready to back her up.

When the headlines of the Parisian papers spread the news : "The German troops march into the Rhineland", people began to ask : "Then it is war" ? But what England was going to do, this worried them most. It seemed from the start that the British Government was not inclined to take any action. Public opinion in England considered that Germany was justified in what she had done, if not legally, at least morally. Was it possible to forbid Germany to occupy her own territory ? "There is no doubt", writes Professor E.H. Carr, "that the easy acquiescence of the status quo Powers in such action as the denunciation of the military clauses, the reoccupation of the Rhineland was due, not wholly to the fact that it was the line of least resistance but in part also to a consensus of opinion that these changes were in themselves reasonable and just" (102). It was again one of those awful provisions of Versailles, they seem to say, and Germany is but trying to redress one more "monstrous injustice". France has not yet been attacked; moreover, hadn't she the Maginot Line? "This helps to explain", says Mr. A. Wolfers, "why Great Britain was

(102) E. H. Carr. The Twenty Years' Crisis, p. 281.

so little disturbed by the remilitarization of the Rhineland. Since the new situation spelled no immediate danger for France, Britain could see no reasons for alarm about a change which at worst made it possible for Germany to act more freely in respect to Central Europe a region in which Great Britain still considered herself not vitally interested" (103).

A large section of the British Press, seemed even to rejoice : "The Locarno Pact is dead", writes the Sunday Dispatch on March 8th, 1936. It was a commitment in which the people of Britain never gave their sanction. It was made by the Government of the day without any mandate from the electorate. It goes unhonored, and unsung into the tomb of past political errors". And the Sunday Observer on the same day declared that "the first effect of Hitler is to put sanctions in their right place which is nowhere". That the British Government was not ready at all to join France in a show of force against Germany, was clearly shown on March 9th 1936, when Mr. Baldwin told the Commons, that : "We have no more desire than to keep calm, to keep our heads and to continue to try to bring France and Germany together in a friendship with ourselves" (104). And Mr. Eden to add : "No opportunity must be lost which offers any hope of amelioration". Amelioration, but of what ? The situation

(103) A. Wolfers. Britain and France between two Wars, p.96-97.

(104) ¹⁰⁴ Quoted by F.L. Schuman in Europe on the Eve. p. 217.

created by Hitler is like that category of problems in Algebra, which admit but one solution; if you find two or more the answer is wrong. The only solution in the present case was evacuation. To try to negotiate, with the German troops in the Rhineland is nothing else than discussions under threat, and Hitler under these circumstances was willing to negotiate forever. No, only force could meet threat on the same ground: but France and England weren't ready for that. And Europe faced with a *"fait accompli"*, swallowed once more the bitter pill !

Now, to say that England betrayed her pledges to France under Locarno, is somewhat exaggerated. She had promised to help France in case she is directly attacked, and England meant it. But the occupation of the Rhineland though in the long run might be a direct attack against the frontiers of France, did not constitute such an act for the time being. This explains largely Britain's attitude in the crisis. But where we blame England is that she interpreted so narrowly her commitments : the frontiers of France were only her concern, and not the whole problem of peace. That the re-militarization of the Rhineland was endangering the peace of Europe in the future, did not sound very convincing to the British Government. That Hitler had acted this way to protect his rear while busily engaged in Central and Eastern Europe, was one aspect of the problem - unfortunately the most important -

that England did not seem to have grasped, or if she grasped it, did not seem to have taken any interest in it.

And so unable to persuade Britain to join her to force Germany to withdraw, France demanded League sanctions instead. Here, however, the moral position of the French was very weak, for they had just been preventing the League from using effective sanctions against Italy. Mr. Flandin himself had had opposed oil sanction to be applied to Italy - the only sanction which could have had any efficacy -. On the whole, the Laval policy, continued by Flandin had been so cunningly directed against the League, that France could not morally ask anything from the League Council. On 14th March 1936, Mr. Flandin asked it only to take note of the breach committed by Germany. And that was all !

As to the Locarno Powers, the actual circumstances were scarcely favourable to permit them any coercitive measure against Germany. To begin with Italy was still the object of sanctions in March 1936. It would have been absurd in the name of collective security - or what was left of it - to recall sanctions against Italy, and to apply them to Germany with Italy's participation. Belgium, deeply disappointed by France's attitude in the Ethiopian business, was worried about her future. It seemed to her that France could not be relied upon and therefore, the wisest policy would be not to antagonize Germany in the actual crisis. And England deeply hostile to war was ready to compromise once more. The French accordingly were

caught in their own net.... and Germany once more got out safe and stronger, to the great surprise of her own leaders. Anything could be done in Europe : the Western Democracies seemed to have been reduced to mere spectators !

As a matter of fact, the crisis ought never to have been allowed to arrive, because the Governments had received many warnings to this end. "There is no place in international law", said General Smuts, "for second rate nations and least of all should Germany be kept in that position half a generation after the end of the Great War" (105). Indeed the demilitarization of the Rhineland could not be perpetually maintained without giving Germany some other form of "equality of rights". France's superiority could only be temporary, and, therefore, could offer no guarantee whatsoever for her future security.

On the other hand let us dismiss from our mind the idea that the occupation of the demilitarized zone took the French or the British Government by surprise. At various times, Germany had declared that if the negotiations for a Franco-Soviet Pact, were successful, the pact would be incompatible with Locarno. So it appears clearly that the German action was well known and foreseen. Therefore the French and British Government could have easily prevented it by diplomatic means. At any rate they could have prevented Germany from making them face an accomplished fact. If we condemn Germany for tearing up Locarno, what a responsibility should France and England bear - who knew of the crisis - to have taken no steps to prevent it !

(105) Address of 13th November 1934 at Chatham House.

On Monday morning March 9th, 1936, two days after Hitler's coup, the Times headlined its leading article with : "A chance to rebuild". The most appropriate headline, which I think can feature the whole situation after Hitler's getting away with it, should be : "The song is ended".

One after the other, the little states of the Continent bade goodbye to the League, seeking security in isolation, opportunistic compromise and policy of conciliation towards the strongest. Norway, Denmark and Sweden took the lead, followed by Holland. Poland squeezed between Russia and Germany had already chosen the latter and thrown in her lot with her by signing in January 1934 a non aggression pact, though she kept her military alliance with France. However, the weakening of France by the events of 1936, left to her very little illusions as to what might happen to her, should Germany resume her Drang nach Osten. But of special significance was the revolution produced in Belgian policy as a result of the Rhineland crisis. The remilitarization, said King Leopold in October 1936 had once more replaced Belgium in her pre-war situation. Therefore, Belgium reverts to "impartial" neutrality, and is no more a party to the Locarno Pact. She was right indeed—given the failure of the Democracies to deal with any crisis - to think that more danger than safety would follow from continued cooperation with the League and Alliance with France. France and England were to feel at

their own expenses, in 1939 and much more in 1940, what a stunning blow was this Belgian change of attitude. Yes indeed the song was ended. "The failure of the League and more particularly of France and Great Britain to halt the dictators in 1938 brought the whole structure of post-war international security crashing to the ground and left the world in a state of international anarchy far more complete than that which preceded the first World War" (106).

(106) Haines and Hoffman - The origins and background of the Second World War - p. 399.

CHAPTER 4

On The Rim of the Abyss

From 1936 to 1939, it was becoming very clear that Germany, Italy and Japan had definitely put in common their ambitions; the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis will be very strongly welded by the agreed upon sharing of the spoils of the Western Democracies: Berlin is heading through Austria and Czechoslovakia towards Central Europe, the Balkans and Russia; Rome to the Mediterranean, and Tokyo to China, Indochina and India.

However, if a large part of this program of lawless conquest, was relatively easily realized, France and England were to blame: their vacillating policy, their disunion, their misunderstandings aggravated by a lack of moral and material forces, put them in no position to halt or resist or prevent the Japanese, the Italian and the German forces, wherever they exerted themselves. In spite of all their unhappy experiences - disastrous is certainly the right adjective - it seemed still that they could not grasp that their forces should not be united only when their interests were at stake : the Rhine, Suez....., but also and chiefly whenever the interest of peace demands it for let us repeat it once more, peace is one and indivisible. Let us add rapidly - and we have seen it

all through that period - that even when their interests were at stake they did not seem to realize the danger. As long as they could get along without war, everything was all right. War ! this was the public enemy No. 1 of the Western Democracies. Avoid it at all cost ! this was their policy. Above all no war ! This was their frame of mind. They could not understand - and if they did, they are all the more blameworthy - that trying to avoid war by compromise conciliation and appeasement of an open aggressor, for the sake of keeping peace, was a policy full of explosives, which were bound to explode once the limit to which the Democracies could go in the way of giving satisfaction to the demands of a never satiated power, would be reached. In a sense, avoiding war could be synonymous with keeping peace; however, is that peace when all the nations small and big are spending millions on armaments ? Is that peace when there is an aggressor at every corner, waiting for the first weakening in the ranks of the Powers who stood for the maintenance of order and statu quo, to swoop over a defenseless prey in defiance of the law ? Is it peace when nations are living in fear ?

Stop it now ! This ought to have been the slogan of the Democracies, when Japan attacked Manchuria; when Germany tore up the Treaty of Versailles by rearming; when Mussolini attacked Abyssinia; when Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland. And yet nothing was done.

In fact to understand the disconcerting events of the decade 1930-1940 one should study them in the light of one very important element which had developed into a neurosis, in fact another fear : fear of communism. It seems really very odd, that so large a number of people took seriously Hitler's passionate speeches against Communism, not noticing that - leaving the question of doctrine aside - Communism and Nazism were rather competitors than real opponents; that Nazism was much more dangerous for the obvious reason that if Communism would hit them in their pockets, Nazism would hit them in their lives. And so British and French Conservatives supported respectively Baldwin and Laval's policy. In fact they supported Fascism since Mussolini "got away" with his conquest of Abyssinia. "Would you like to die for the Negus", wrote a French newspaper in 1935 ? Was it a question of dying for the Negus or of upholding the principle of collective security of which, for 15 years, France had unfurled the banner !

Hardly had the fire, burning in Abyssinia, been put out, that another act of this post-war tragedy, was played - this time very impressive, because on France's frontier - on the stage of Spain - Once more the Western Democracies were to show us that the lessons were lost upon them, and that past experiences did not teach them anything ! Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia the melody of Capitulations lingers on !

Section A

The Spanish Tragedy

On July 19th, 1936, a military rebellion under General Franco, broke out. His army composed largely of Moorish troops crossed into Spain and by November was threatening Madrid. At this point, this civil war, which from the start was an international event, degenerated into a conflict of ideologies in which the parties concerned - Republicans and Rebels - were but pawns on the European chess board. Germany and Italy openly intervened on the side of the rebels, in what they wanted to induce Europe to believe, to be a fight against Communism; Russia helped the Republican Government in what appeared to be a show down with the Fascist forces of aggression; and France and England stood aloof in adopting a policy of non-intervention. In fact their passive attitude which opened the blackest chapter in their record, was a very peculiar way of supporting Fascist aggression against Spanish Democracy, once more in disregard of their immediate and most important interests which were at stake.

Speaking in terms of Geo-politik, Gibraltar dominates the "life line" of the British Empire. But Ceuta on the African shore in Spanish Morocco if adequately fortified and in Fascist hands could either render Gibraltar useless, or prevent French and British ships to cross the straits

safely or at all. A hostile Spanish Morocco would cut French and British communications between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. On the other hand the Balearic Islands - which flank the most important seaway in the French colonial empire from North Africa to Southern France - if in Fascist hands, would enable the enemy to prevent the coming to France of her chief source of military reinforcement. Lastly control of the Pyrenees would immobilize France almost completely, now that the Rhineland had been remilitarized.

These were the considerations that determined Rome and Berlin's intervention in the Spanish muddle - "Saving Spain from Bolchevism" was but the façade. And yet France and England did not move, or if they did it was to hasten by their embargo on arms and ammunitions, the surrender of a sister Republic. Why? Why, when by international law, they had every right to sell arms and ammunitions to the friendly Spanish Government, did they voluntarily renounce their right to do so? "Non-Intervention", claimed both England and France, when their solidarity to a sister democracy, - besides their mighty interests involved - urged them to rescue Spain from the Fascist grip. In fact their "non-intervention" was actually an act of intervention, since by depriving the Government of the arms, it needed badly to defend its legitimate authority, it helped effectively the rebels - which were receiving an over-increasing flow of German bombers and airmen, and of Italian soldiers and ammunitions - to establish Franco's dictatorship.

To begin with and first and foremost, France and England acted this way for the sake of preserving European peace. A strong stand might involve them in a war for which they were not ready, especially at this time. France was passing through a period of great disorders : strikes and occupation of factories, and Blum and his cabinet were unable to smooth down the social disorders and to alleviate the panic among the capitalists. By the end of September, the Government was forced to devaluate which however, did not ease the situation. And with the economic atrophy which resulted, anxiety grew deeper, and deeper.

England too was passing through a difficult period. Edward VIII intended to get married with an American, twice divorced already, Mrs. Simpson. And under the pressure brought to bear upon him by Mr. Baldwin and the Archbishop of Canterbury, he renounced the Crown rather than his planned wedding. On December 12th, 1936, his younger brother, the Duke of York, was proclaimed King under the title of George VI. However, this constitutional crisis had deeply shaken England and the Empire.

And so they were not ready to go to war. However, it remains doubtful whether Germany and Italy meant to start a European war should England and France sell arms to the Spanish Government. In fact, one is inclined to take a quite

different view, if we consider that after the agreement reached at Nyon on September 14th 1936 - "to deal with the intolerable situation created by attacks recently illegally carried out against shipping in the Mediterranean"(107) submarine sinkings - which was in fact nothing but Italian piracy - stopped as by magic. What had happened is that nine Powers met and proclaimed their determination to resist and destroy by joint naval action these "unknown" sea pirates. For the first time the Democracies had shown firmness of will. Couldn't the same be done in stopping Fascist aid to Franco ? Or in sending arms to the Spanish Government ?

As a matter of fact, the French Popular Front Government's policy was forced to follow the British lead in "non-intervention". And Mr. Alexander Werth, Paris Correspondent of the Manchester Guardian gives the explanation as follows :

"About August 1st (1936) the British Government clearly intimated to the French Government that if, as a result of her competition with Italy and Germany in sending arms to Spain, France were attacked by the Fascist countries, Britain would not consider the attack an unprovoked one, and the Locarno guarantee would not come into operation"(108).

(107) Quoted by F. L. Schuman in Europe on the Eve, p. 292.

(108) Quoted by Vigilantes in Between Two Wars, p. 162.

And the French public was led to believe, that the policy followed was the only alternative to a general war, with the result that those who were shouting "Planes for Spain" bent resolutely on "Above all no war" policy, shrank in fear of war and left Spain in agony.

Meanwhile Italy and Germany were sending on an ever larger scale "volunteers", planes and arms to the rebels, showing that "non-intervention", born of lack of firmness, fear of war and compromise, was a farce from the start. Not a single principle of action was agreed upon, except that of no action at all. By following Britain's lead Blum had sacrificed French interests - in the long run - and collective security, as Laval had done the same in leaving a free hand to Italy in Abyssinia.

In fact, what caused England to adopt "non-intervention", was that it meant "not taking sides in the ideological conflict", or not interfering in Spanish internal affairs. Was it an internal affair? If it were a simple civil war the Spanish Government would have easily crushed the rebellion. But there were foreign interventions on the side of the rebels, resolutely decided to see that Franco and Fascism were firmly established in Spain. British vessels were attacked and sunk; British sailors lost their lives, and the British Government.... Kept silent. In fact an investigation was ordered, but it was carried out in such a way as to shed not light, but shame on those who ordered it. What was happening? Simply this:

appeasement was well in the saddle, with Mr. Neville Chamberlain - Baldwin's successor at the head of the Government - and Mr. Daladier - new French Premier - both disinclined to take the risks of a vigorous foreign policy, while Mr. Chamberlain was well known to be strongly in favour of sweeping compromises and concessions to keep peace. Was not the Gentlemen's Agreement signed between England and Italy on January 2nd, 1937, with reference to the equilibrium of forces in the Mediterranean, one aspect of this appeasement which offered - so it was thought - a way out of war? Was it not paradoxical to see England who had taken the lead in sanctions - and one must add in their recall too - now on good terms with Italy? It was a realistic policy, said the British Government as an excuse. But, said the Spanish Minister at the Council Meeting of May 1938: "Those who base their foreign policy on the speedy demise of the Spanish people are destined to suffer the same disillusionment as those who believed that the signing of certain 'realistic' agreements would coincide with the 'reality' of the entry of the Italian divisions into Barcelona".

Indeed if there were still any doubts cast on the presence of foreign troops on Spanish soil, the Italo-British agreement of April 16th, 1938 wiped them out for one of its clauses ran as follows: "If the evacuation is not terminated at the end of the Spanish Civil War, all Italian volunteers, as well as war implements will leave

Spain at this moment". The evacuation of Italian soldiers from Spain !..... but wasn't it an internal affair, a rebellion of Spaniards against Spaniards, a "conflict of ideologies"? How therefore, could such an agreement be compatible with the so cherished "non-intervention" ?

In March 1939, Franco entered Madrid and this sealed the doom of the Spanish Republic. Once more France and England had undergone another Sadowa, this time much more dangerous because dealt collectively by Germany and Italy who had put in common their interests and their aims in the Rome-Berlin Axis welded in October 1936, and which had extended to Tokyo on November 25th, 1936. The Antikomintern Pact was born. China, Abyssinia, Spain..... how many tragedies, was the comedy in London and Paris going to cause still ?

Section B

Goodbye To Geneva

(1) Death Over China.

If anybody still believed that collective security had survived the Ethiopian fiasco, he was definitely relieved of his illusions when Japan renewed her war on China in July 1937. Once more China appealed to the League and once more the League condemned the Japanese action. A second condemnation came from an international conference, which met in November 3rd in Brussels, and declared Japan to have violated the Nine Powers Treaty.

Once more, resolutions were passed and Japan was appealed to, to accept or participate in "mediation" - that Japan besides both refused - It seemed that no state was ready to act to help China. Yet the Covenant had not been amended : Art. 16 existed still, sanctions ! After all Japan was an aggressor, not once but twice, and a very vulnerable one to economic sanctions in particular. But no action was taken. What the League did, was to leave free its members to apply economic sanctions against Japan, if they wanted to ! -It was England who proposed that sanctions be regarded as optional. - And notably wanted to. Indeed what nation was ready to suffer in its trade with Japan - for it was after all a kind of penalizing itself - when others were not likely to do the same ? The French Government feared a Japanese attack against Indo-China, if China were to be helped in armaments.

This of course was a frank confession of bankruptcy on the part of the League. It seemed as if, in Litvinov's words, it said to Japan : "Take your plunder and peace be with you". And to China : "Love your aggressor, Resist not evil" (109).

The first who waved his hand, bidding goodbye to the parting ship of the whole idea of League sanctions and collective security, was Mr. Chamberlain. "The League as constituted today is unable to provide collective security for anybody" (110), and that it would be wrong to encourage small countries in the belief that they would be protected against aggression by the League of Nations. In other words, collective security could vanish on the horizon of lost causes ! In face of naked power politics, Mr. Chamberlain had coined a new currency to deal with it : appeasement on one side and compromise on the other. That this perpetual surrender, was in no way a contribution to peace England and France were soon to discover it. For in France too, where "peace at all cost", mentality, was making great progress, compromise with the aggressor, seemed the wisest policy to follow. In doing so, the leaders who held the Government in their hands, always succeeded in placing their country on the side of what seem to be the perpetual winners. Indeed ! but if the aggressive Powers were the winners, wasn't it because the Democracies were the losers ? In a

(109) Quoted by F.L. Schuman in Europe on the Eve, p. 295.

(110) In his reply to Mr. Eden in the House of Commons on Feb. 21st, 1938.

fight there should be always a loser and a winner. One can argue that England and France's aim being the keeping of peace, and peace being kept, it is not correct to say that the Democracies were the losers. The answer would be that, what may seem right in the short run, was utterly wrong in the long run. The Democracies went to war in the end. Why ? Because "conciliation", "mediation", "compromise", "realism" which was but a name to "appeasement", as policy to avert the threatened war, served only to whet the aggressor's appetite, convince him that the democracies were "decadent", and encourage him to demand more. "This surrender to black-mail", in the words of Undersecretary of State Viscount Crenborne, was the negation of law, the resignation beforehand to any future defeat ! And England and especially France, had already the face of a defeated nation !

(2) Exit Austria

With England and France almost paralyzed by threats from East and West, that their "generous mood" of appeasement had encourage, at the beginning of 1938, a new threat to international security developed in the form of Germany's ambition to incorporate Austria in the Reich and which ultimately resulted in the Anschluss.

Now this union, which was conceived by Germany and Austria, at the end of the war of 1914-1918, and was about to receive a very modest solution in 1931 in the form of

a customs union, seemed very natural. As it was very natural too, that France was not ready to see once more united these two remnants of the Holy Roman Empire, which had for a long time threatened her frontiers. Frustrated in 1931, Germany was waiting for a propitious moment to try it again. As the Ethiopian muddle created in Europe a favourable perturbation to the remilitarization of the Rhineland, the Spanish interlude created one favourable to the Anschluss. Hitler took advantage of the first; he was to do the same with the second: and on March 12th, 1938, German troops marched in and occupied Vienna.

Europe petrified watched intensely all the events of this hallucinating film..... and remained a passive spectator ! Not a step was taken to prevent Hitler from seizing Austria; not a step to force him to give up the fruits of his conquest. How France, England and Italy let Hitler "get away with it", when on September 27th 1934, and at Stresa in April 1935, they had declared and affirmed the necessity to safeguard the independence and integrity of Austria ? How could France and England have permitted such a catastrophe - for indeed it was one - to occur ? This union constituted the greatest danger to them, not only in strengthening Germany, but in encircling Czechoslovakia on three sides, threatening her very independence - that of an ally which constituted the cornerstone of France's postwar system of

security by alliance - That is why it had been forbidden in the peace treaties, and that is why even the customs union proposed in 1931 was opposed and turned down. France's intervention on behalf of Austria could therefore have been expected, for here was something much more dangerous than a customs union. And yet ;..... Even Mussolini in 1926 had declared that "Italy will never tolerate this patent violation of treaties which, the annexation of Austria by Germany, will constitute". Why then, wasn't Hitler stopped ?

To begin with, England and Italy had gone a long way from the days of the Stresa Front, and France was in the throes of a very acute ministerial crisis. As a matter of fact, one might have noticed from the start, that the nations involved, were not willing to act. One reason - it comes over and over again - was that any attempt to stop Hitler would have meant war, and war was to be avoided by all means. I wonder, however, what would have been the effect on the fait accompli, if some Italian divisions sent on the Brenner? Mussolini did it in July 1934, after Dolfuss' assassination and Hitler gave up his already planned Anschluss. Could it have been done now ?

It seemed - to one taking the point of view the most advantageous to the Democracies, to justify their stand in the actual crisis - that France and England expected that

the same cause would produce the same effects ; that the Anschluss would antagonize Italy and throw her to their side, as the seizure of Tunis, by France in 1882 - on which Italy had cast covetous eyes - antagonized Italy and threw her on the side of the Dual, thus becoming the Triple Alliance.

However, the analogy though striking was nevertheless dangerous as a basis of reasoning in politics. Moreover, the situation in 1938, had wholly changed. Italy had thrown in her lot with Berlin, and had formed the axis cemented later by Tokyo. Not only she was in no measure prepared to oppose Germany's move - weakened as she were by her Abyssinian conquest - but she was not willing at all to do it. Besides, she showed it very clearly ; when on March 13th, 1938, pressed by France and England to act in agreement with their declaration of September 27th, 1934, Mussolini gave his blunt refusal through a communiqué by the Stefani Agency : "The Fascist Government has declined the invitation sent to him by France to take part in a concerted action against Germany, because such action would have no basis and no object, but would make the international situation, yet more difficult". "It is difficult for me to think that Mussolini had abandoned France", said Mr. Ybarnégarey, a French deputy, as reported in the Journal Officiel of 25th February, 1938. Could he entertain still such illusion ? All the concessions the French and British policy had made to Italy, received once more their deserved reward !

Another reason which goes a long way to explain the easiness with which Hitler once more, was relatively undisturbed in his undisguised aggression, was a kind of "guilt complex", a "mea-culpa" trend of mind, "the loss of faith" that paralyzed the will of the Western Democracies", and without which, the pathetic succession of surrenders which culminated in the catastrophe of 1939-40, would never have been possible" (111). And when Hitler occupied Austria, he was condoned - as he had been before - "with a perfect frenzy of breast-beating" (112). The Austrians after all, were Germans and perhaps it was only right, that they should join their fellow Germans in the Reich !

However, the most obvious reason, seemed to be that France and England had "written off" Austria. Yet many voices in both countries shouted loudly, showing the right path. "To those faint-hearted and blind who go about saying, 'we will never mobilize for Austria'.... it is my duty, to reply, said Mr. Abarnegaray, 'it is not for Austria.... that we will mobilize, for it is on the shores of the Danube, at this very time, that the fate of the frontiers of our country is being decided". "I am for a policy of vigilance and firmness towards Germany, a policy of support for Austria...." (113). and Wladimir d'Ormesson wrote in *Le Figaro* of March 12th, 1938: "Enough of retreats. The hour has struck for a 'political Marne'".

(111) Etienne Mantoux - The Carthaginian Peace - p. 16-17.

(112) *idem.*

(113) Journal Officiel du 25 Fevrier 1938.

In England too, and not less than Mr. Eden foreign Secretary, speaking in the House of Commons on February 21st, 1938, said "I do not believe that we can make progress in European appeasement, more particularly in the light of events of the past few days, if we allow the impression to gain currency abroad that we yield to constant pressure".

Why, therefore, did not the French and the British Government^{ok}? There is something mysterious about it. What is known is that while Eden was discussing at Brussels the new situation created by Japan's renewed aggression against China, Lord Halifax was sent to Berlin on November 16th, 1937. He was to return on November 21st. However, when Mr. Eden was acquainted with Halifax's mission, he was about to resign. In fact on February 20th, he did resign. What made him do so? What had happened in Berlin between Hitler and Halifax? These two questions are intimately connected. Now Eden was well known for his policy of resistance to Germany. Obviously he could not carry out any scheme intended to come to terms with her unless the agreement was devoid of any "pressure" or threat, or accomplished fact. Therefore, someone else should be sent. And it seemed that Mr. Chamberlain took advantage of Eden's being away, to send Halifax to Berlin. What for?

What happened, nobody knows, since the Hitler-Halifax conversations, were not made public. However, taking into

consideration, the way the British and French Government - for Mr. Chautemp, French Premier and his foreign minister, Mr. Delbos had been requested to come to London to be acquainted with Lord Halifax conversations with Hitler - behaved during and after the Austrian crisis, one might say that Hitler had asked that England leave free hands to the Reich in Central Europe - Against what ? Against Germany's pledge not to raise the colonial question for a certain number of years. As if to affirm that the essence of the Halifax - Hitler conversations, was not very far from what was stated above, the Times on November 29th, 1937, asked the Government to consider Germany's claims in Central Europe. Halifax had said : "the door is open to friendly relations". However, when Mr. Chamberlain was asked in the House of Commons by Mr. Maeder - liberal - if the running rumours about the bargain struck at Berlin, were true, he received no answer. Nevertheless something had happened in Berlin, which could not be resistance to German claims, otherwise Eden would have kept his office. As a matter of fact he shed some light on the situation, in his speech in the House of Commons on February 21st, after he resigned : "I should not be frank with the House if I were to pretend that it is an isolated issue as between my Right Honourable friend the Prime Minister and myself. It is not. Within the last few weeks upon one of the most important decisions

of foreign policy, which did not concern Italy at all, the difference was fundamental". What could be the issue besides the agreement with Italy of April 16th, 1937, to which he was hostile, most important in England's foreign policy, if not Germany? The "difference was fundamental", he said; considering his attitude of resistance to Germany, what happened could be, but appeasement to Hitler, and this in letting his claims be satisfied. Where? Certainly not at England's expense, but in certain area which was of no concern to her. Considering how many times the British Government had specified that in Central Europe no British interests were involved, the conclusion could not be more conclusive.

And France? Unable to stand alone against a now powerful Germany, who had a strong army and had remilitarized the Rhineland she could but follow Mr. Chamberlain's lead of non opposing Germany's occupation of Austria. In fact Mr. Chamberlain's policy, based on the assumption that collective security within the frame of the League of Nations, had failed, left France in face of two roads to follow: either to follow Britain's policy of noncommitment in Central and Eastern Europe, or to take a firm stand against Pan-Germanism. As this latter meant to rely on Soviet assistance, it seemed that the French Government was reluctant to follow that path. Over and over again, fear of communism! This explains why Mr. Blum failed

to win the approval of the Chamber of Deputies for a Cabinet of national union. "Union with all the French classes, yes" ! said Mr. Fernand Laurent, a French Deputy. "Union with chiefs taking their orders from Moscow ? No ! Neither in peace, nor in war, nor above all in Government, the essential aim of which is to avoid war" (114).

However, it seemed that what France lacked most, was courage. Having stood firm, England, Poland, Czechoslovakia, even Italy - who was feeling now more and more that the only part she could play, was but a brilliant second, and not an equal partner - would have followed the French lead. It was of the interest of all parties concerned and of Europe in general - "If France had shown herself courageous", wrote De Kerillis in l'Epoque on March 15th 1938, she would have crystallized the resistance of a Europe which no longer has any delusions about the German menace".

France did nothing but protest. England too, and Germany..... kept Austria ! The Treaty of Versailles had become really a scrap of paper deeply buried in the past !

The era of conquests was open !

(114) Journal Officiel de la Chambre - March 22nd, 1938.

Section C

The Great Betrayal

Hardly had the emotion caused by the annexation of Austria by Germany, calmed down, that Europe felt once more the feverish anguish, that every acute international crisis produces.

As a matter of fact after the Anschluss, it was sufficient to glance at a map of Europe to see what was to be the next victim of the German ogre, and every consideration of strategy and politics clearly indicated that Czechoslovakia was next on the list. Not only the strong natural defensive Bohemian quadrilateral was to be rendered useless as a bastion preventing the long-cherished dream of the German "Drang nach Osten"; but once this acute appendicitis - as it were - removed from the Eastern European body, the Soviet Union would be cut off - for all practical purposes - from the Western Powers, and France's continental isolation, would be completed.

Besides if there were still some doubts as to Hitler's intentions concerning Czechoslovakia, they ought to have been dissipated on February 20th, 1938 by his speech at the Reichstag when he declared : "Two states only, situated on our frontiers, represent 10 million Germans. The Reich will protect the Germans oppressed on foreign lands". Clearly

these states were, Austria with 7 Million Germans - incorporated in the Reich a month later - and Czechoslovakia with 3 millions living in the Sudeten lands.

Now that Hitler would be satisfied with only improving the status of this German minority - which besides was the best-treated minority of eastern Europe - could be disregarded from the start. Hitler meant annexation and Austria was the best precedent created to support this view.

(1) The importance of the French guarantee :

On what, therefore, could Czechoslovakia rely, as a protection against this great danger ? Besides her excellent armaments and armies, first and foremost on international guarantees : an agreement with France signed at Locarno on October 16th, 1925, and a pact of mutual assistance with Russia, signed in Moscow on May 16th, 1935 - both documents guaranteeing definitely the territorial integrity and political independence of Czechoslovakia. It is true that Russia's intervention was subject to France's willingness to help Czechoslovakia - But France's pledge was so clear and definite that it would automatically bring in Russia.

"In case Czechoslovakia or France should suffer from a breach of international agreements signed today between Germany and themselves, to the end of maintaining general peace, France and reciprocally Czechoslovakia, acting in application of Art. 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, pledge to give each other help and assistance, in

the Treaty signed at Locarno October 16th, 1925, and the Pact signed at Moscow May 16th, 1935.

case such a breach is accompanied by resort to arms which would not have been provoked". Further "..... in case Czechoslovakia or France is attacked without having provoked it, France or reciprocally Czechoslovakia,..... will give immediately help and assistance " (115).

In other words, plainly stated, if Germany attacks Czechoslovakia, France was bound explicitly to stand by her. This being so, the U.S.S.R., - who had pledged their assistance "only in case France's assistance would have been given to the victim of aggression" - were bound to help Czechoslovakia.

On the other hand, England had no treaty obligation to defend Czechoslovakia. This part of Europe was of no concern to her and she specifically repeated it more than once. But she would go to war if France fought Germany. Mr. Chamberlain on March 24th, 1938, in the House of Commons though in veiled terms - defined England's policy as follows : "Peace is our aim. However, we will fight if France and Belgium were attacked.... eventually for the defense of a victim of aggression such as Czechoslovakia, yet this not implying our, being automatically forced to interfere militarily". If war broke out, he added, "the inexorable pressure of facts might prove more powerful than formal pronouncements....". The British Prime Minister was deeply convinced that England's interest bade her to defend France, should she be attacked, or should she go to war because of Czechoslovakia. That is why to avoid any misunderstanding

(115) Art. I of the Treaty signed at Locarno between France and Czechoslovakia on October 16th, 1926.

it seems, a Foreign Office communiqué made it very plain on September 25th, 1938, on the eve of the final meeting at Munich :

"If, in spite of all the efforts of the Prime Minister of England, Czechoslovakia was the object of a German attack, the immediate result would be that France would be forced to come to her help and that England and Russia would certainly be on France's sides".

France's attitude was, therefore, fundamental. From her depended definitely Czechoslovakia's fate ! From her depended Russia's intervention - bound by a treaty - and England's, bound by her interest ! On the other hand, for her own security, France, as she repeatedly declared, must be expected to intervene to defend the integrity of Czechoslovakia, a friendly democracy which kept faithful till the end, to France's post-war system of alliances, and which was the most important link in Franco-Soviet Cooperation. And yet instead of taking the lead - as she was entitled to for all the reasons already mentioned - against Germany who now was effectively threatening Czechoslovakia's territorial integrity, France followed in the wake of England. Instead of waving the mailed fist, France hoisted the white flag without a fight. Was it supposed to be the olive-tree branch of peace ? Mr. Georges Bonnet, French Foreign Minister in the newly formed Daladier Cabinet, naturally inclined to a policy of appeasement, thought so. It was too late according to him, to try to

oppose Germany with a policy of coercion and restrain - Germany was now much stronger than France militarily. Besides the Franco-Czechoslovakian^{of} of 1925, having been made in function of the Treaty of Locarno, he said, had no legal value any more, since Locarno had been denounced by the Reich in 1936.

In this frame of mind, he was won in advance to Mr. Chamberlain's policy of avoiding war at all cost through appeasement of the aggressor.

(2) The Great Appeaser

Now though the British Prime Minister was deeply convinced that England's interest was to defend France, he was not ready to let the situation become so tense, that he would have to be dragged into war. His policy of gaining time, some months more of peace could only be successful in the short run. However, sacrificing the present for a future which he stubbornly hoped would be better, was very risky; in fact given the men with whom he was dealing, and their antecedents, such a policy of concessions after concessions, not only was unlikely to lead to the expected result - peace - but was very dangerous, since it only sewed to what the appetite of the law-breakers.

In April 1938, speaking at Karlsbad, Herr Henlein, the leader of the Sudetan German Party - whom was in close and constant contact with Hitler - presented some demands to the Czechoslovakian Government, among which were stated full autonomy for the German areas, complete liberty to

profess German nationality and political philosophy, and a complete revision of Czech foreign policy - with reference to Russia. In May the crisis reached its climax with the reports that German troops were stationed on the Czech frontier, while a partial mobilization as a result, was ordered in Czechoslovakia. Though no clash occurred, it was felt that Europe was living under a tension unknown until then. In June Dr. Goebbels delivered a peculiar speech which charged the atmosphere still more with electricity: "We will not look on much longer", he said, "while 3,500,000 Germans are maltreated. We saw in Austria that one race cannot be separated into two countries and we shall soon see it somewhere else" (116).

It was here - as it were - where Mr. Chamberlain entered. That Czechoslovakia was one of the "monstrosities" created by Versailles, was not very far from the view held in circles close to the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax. Therefore, the Germans there had a good case. Mr. Chamberlain himself explained to the Press, during the May crisis, that he believed "a frontier revision might be desirable", to make a "smaller but sounder" Czechoslovakia" (117).

So as it appeared Chamberlain was ready to see to it, that Dr. Goebbels "somewhere else" - Czechoslovakia - at least the Sudetenland - become a part of the Reich. The most important

(116) Quoted by G.H. Gathorne - Hardy in : A short history of International Affairs 1920-1939, p. 464.

(117) Quoted by Messrs. Haines & Hoffman in : The Origins and Background of the Second World War; p. 506.

thing to him was that this "frontier revision" - which meant nothing else than annexation from the start - was to take place by peaceful means. Therefore, to begin with, he should prevent Germany from invading Czechoslovakia, to justify France's inaction. If the whole mechanism of Locarno was put in motion through the German attack, France would have inexorably gone to war, Russia would have followed and England would have become a party to this long-dreaded war, she was trying to avoid by all means.

Secondly she should bring pressure to bear upon Czechoslovakia, to make her accept the demands of Germany through diplomatic channels. To that end she must have France by his side who conjointly with England, would do the same with reference to Czechoslovakia. And British diplomacy was successful, as far as the above mentioned aims were concerned. How? Germany was to be persuaded that in case of aggression England would go to war. Hence all the declarations and communiqués stating it plainly. Indeed what, made Germany - who all the time in fact did not believe England would fight - hesitate, should have been the firm attitude taken by Sir Neville Henderson, British Ambassador in Berlin, when it seemed that Germany was after all mobilizing; he asked the German Government to put at his disposal some trains to take back home the British residents on German soil. Was it bluff? Did Sir Neville act on instructions from the Foreign Office? I don't know, but the result was the same. Germany - for some time at least - put off her aggressive designs.

Secondly Czechoslovakia was to be persuaded that in case of aggression, neither France nor England would fight for her. As to France with Georges Bonnet at the Quai d'Orsay, Chamberlain did not have to persuade her to adopt the attitude of non-going to war at all cost.

As a matter of fact this policy was full of apparent contradictions; however, it led to one result : the selling of Czechoslovakia at the cost of an ephemeral peace ! As they helped by their non-intervention, to destroy the Spanish democracy, France and England were going to engage actively in destroying the last bastion of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe !

(3)- The Runciman Mission :

The first act of this tragedy started in May 1938, when joint action was taken by the French and the British Government at Prague - To what end ? It was an action said a communiqué, "to assure a pacific and just solution of the problems arising in Central Europe". That it was a "pacific solution", nobody denies it - Yet it remained to demonstrate that this solution which in fact yielded under the threat of disguised ultimatum and to the German demands, could be "just".

The Franco-British pressure on the Prague Government took a peculiar form with the sending of Lord Runciman to act as a "mediator" between the Czechoslovakian Government and the Sudeten Germans. In fact he was instructed to make Prague accept the German demands, and to make a report including all

elements capable of justifying the cession to the Germans of the Sudetenland. How one could now escape this conclusion after having read Lord Runciman's recommendations in his letter to Mr. Chamberlain, dated September 21st 1938 : "When I undertook the task of mediation I was, of course, perfectly free.... and under no obligation to issue any kind of report". (Many unnecessary protests wasn't it ?) He adds further " A very large majority of the inhabitants of these predominantly German areas desire amalgamation with Germany. The inevitable delay involved in taking a plebiscite vote would only serve to excite popular feeling..... I consider therefore, that these frontier districts should at once be transferred from Czechoslovakia to Germany" (118). Mr. Chamberlain could congratulate himself : he had a report in hands which condoned the cession and concessions, which were to be made to Hitler.

However, there was something else in Lord Runciman's letter with reference to the end of negotiations between the Germans in the Sudetenland and the Czechs : "Responsibility for the final break", he wrote, "must in my opinion rest upon Herr Henlein... and upon those of his supporters in side and outside the country who were urging them to extreme and unconstitutional action" (119). Couldn't it be taken into account?

(118) Quoted by F.L. Schuman in :Europe on the Eve, p.386-389.

(119) " " " " " " " " p. 387.

Couldn't the successive concessions made by Prague - under Lord Runciman's pressure - until September 5th, which in fact embodied all the Carlsbad demands forwarded by Henlein - be taken into consideration as having satisfied Germany enough ? The fact that all these concessions were rejected, and that what Hitler aimed at was nothing else than the destruction of Czechoslovakian territorial integrity, was becoming obvious. Here the "pacific solution" ought to have stopped short, for it could no more be called "just" if it went further. And yet France and England went further on that shameful path of "appeasement".

Plainly considered, the situation offered the Democracies of the West a choice : either to stand with Czechoslovakia against Germany in a position which would cast no doubts as to their determination to make war if Hitler attacks; or to stand aside and leave Czechoslovakia, suffer the fate of China, Ethiopia, Spain and Austria. Should they chose the first cause, France and England could have counted on Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, would have strengthened the bonds of the Little Entente, and would have stiffened the resistance in China and Spain. The U.S.A. would have been whole-heartedly sympathetic to a war waged for a good cause and in defense of democratic principles and ideals. Should they chose the second, not only they would lose all these advantages, but when the inevitable clash - to which the Democracies seemed still blind - with Germany would come, they will find themselves in a state of mind, which by

having been shaped to thinking only in terms of peace, would be unable to adapt itself to a state of war, a war they will be forced to wage this time for the sake of their own existence !

Now, or never again will such a favourable opportunity arise ! Will the Democracies take it ? "However much we may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbour", said Mr. Chamberlain, "we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British Empire in war simply on her account. If we have to fight it must be on larger issues than that" (120). In other words Czechoslovakia could die : England would not raise a finger to save her. Now, as England had no commitments towards Czechoslovakia, it meant that Britain would force France to forsake the Czechs, to prevent her being "automatically" drawn into the war.

Yes, Chamberlain did chose, but what an unfortunate choice ! What a shortsighted, if not a reprehensible attitude !

(4) The Road To Munich :

The last days of September 1938, were reminiscent of July 1914, except that the pace was much more furious. It seemed that no concessions would have eased the situation and anxious Europe saw war stalking from the near horizon ! Something drastic may be needed, but what ?

(120) Radio broadcast by Mr. Chamberlain on September 27th, 1938 (quoted from the Times by Arnold Wolfers in Britain and France between Two Wars, p. 282.

The Times had suggested on September 7th, in a significant leading article, the cession of the Sudetenland to Germany, as the only remedy to the present unrest :

"..... it might be worth while for the Czechoslovak Government to consider whether it should exclude altogether the project which has found favour in some quarters, of making Czechoslovakia a more homogeneous state by the secession of that fringe of alien populations who are contiguous to the nation with which they are united by race..... the advantages to Czechoslovakia of becoming a homogeneous State might conceivably outweigh the obvious disadvantages of losing the Sudeten German districts of the borderland".

Can we assume, that it was speaking for the Foreign Office ? The British Government in face of the violent indignation - similar to that against the Hoare-Laval Plan in 1935 - made a statement declaring that the article did not represent its views. However, judging from the program of concessions, it conveyed to Prague on September 19th - that we shall see in a moment - one cannot help thinking that it was forced to retreat temporarily, in face of very strong opposition at home, and critical dismay in Paris. Besides, it was this cession of territory that Mr. Chamberlain was going to offer Hitler, without even having previously consulted the Czechoslovak Government.

(a) Berchtesgaden : On September 15th, 1938, as war - a disaster to the British Prime Minister - seemed inevitable, Mr. Chamberlain made his dramatic gesture and flew to meet

Hitler at Berchtesgaden. Above all no war ! Czechoslovakia is resisting the demands of Germany, she must yield ! And since the Government of Prague was not ready to, it was he, Chamberlain, who was going to satisfy Hitler in the name of Prague, without at all having any such mandate - cede to him what Prague did not want to cede, and force the Czechs to face an accomplished fact. Hitler had declared to me, he said later, as a justification to his policy, that "the Sudeten Germans must have the right of self determination..... If they could not achieve this by their own efforts, he would assist them to do so, and he declared categorically that rather than wait, he would be prepared to risk a world war" (121).

On September 16th, Mr. Chamberlain hurried back to London, to discuss with the Cabinet and the French Government, Hitler's proposals. And these were the recommendations which were conveyed to Prague : Given "that the maintenance of peace and the safety of Czechoslovakian vital interests cannot effectively be assured unless these - German - areas are now transferred to the Reich.... by direct transfer or as the result of a plebiscite..." it was proposed that the districts to be ceded should be those in which more than 50 per cent were Germans: Once this was done, Britain promised that she would "join in an international guarantee of the new boundaries, provided, however, that Czechoslovakia's

(121) Quoted by Bernard Newman in : The New Europe, p. 404.

existing military alliances should be abandoned" (122).

These were the unbelievable propositions, that Mr. Chamberlain and his Cabinet, in common agreement with Daladier and Georges Bonnet, forwarded to the Czechoslovak Government.

A truncated Czechoslovakia ! The denunciation of the Franco-Czech and Russo-Czech Pacts ! One can guess what "intolerable pressure" - I was about to say blackmail - was brought to bear upon Prague to force it to agree to the dismemberment of the country. Indeed not only by notes were the French and British Governments trying to influence Mr. Hodza's decisions - Premier of Czechoslovakia - but also through their accredited ministers at Prague - Until the end it seemed that the Czech Government and Mr. Benes who was very popular in France, could not believe that France would leave them in the lurch. On September 20th - one day before Prague yielded to the pressure of France and Britain - Mr. Lacroix, French Ambassador at Prague sent a letter to Mr. Bonnet asking definite and precise instructions as to what he should say to Mr. Hodza, who had asked from him a written confirmation of his oral declarations. "The Czechoslovak leaders need this 'couverture', he said, that France would not honour her obligations to accept the Franco-British propositions.... a conflict, said their Generals, alone against Germany would be a suicide. This said Mr. Hodza, "the only way to save peace".

(122) In Haines & Hoffman's : The Origins and Background of the Second World War, p. 511.

Mr. Georges Bonnet sent the confirmation - "Yield, otherwise you would suffer a total destruction, alone" ! Thus spoke France. The Czechs could not believe it. How one understands them ! On September 21st, the Czechoslovak Government gave way, explaining by a communiqué that :
"..... our friends advised us to buy order and peace by territorial concessions, because they could not come to our help...." "France and England, through their diplomatic representatives, let us know that they could give no assistance whatsoever to Czechoslovakia against a German attack, if Czechoslovakia did not give immediately her consent to the principle of the cession to Germany, of the territories of German population...." "We had nothing else to do but to yield because we were left alone..."⁽¹²²⁶⁾

(b) Communist bogey : The Russians took no part in these proposals. In fact they were not even consulted, as they should have been, because of their Pact of Mutual Assistance with Czechoslovakia. Mr. Litvinoff in his speech before the Assembly of the League of Nations on September 21st, 1938, made it very clear that Russia was ready to give "an immediate and effective assistance, in case France true to her obligations, would do the same"; and further :
..... we abstained from giving any advice to the Czechoslovak Government, judging inadmissible to ask it to make to the Germans, concessions at estimate incompatible with its national interests, simply to be released from the necessity to fulfil

1226 - With the precedent quotation, both in Cahiers d'Informations Françaises : La Crise Internationale de Sept. 1938

our obligations according to the Pact". What a huge responsibility should the French Government bear in denying its signature !

As a matter of fact, the fog of suspicion between Russia and the West was never deeper than at this time. "If you or anyone else", wrote Lord Rothe mere, owner of the Sunday Dispatch, to Wickham Steed, "are so foolish as to believe Great Britain and her dominions will fight for the Moscow-owned Prague Government, you are labouring under some strange delusion" (123).

In France, it seemed, to a large part of French public opinion, much more frightful to be defended by Soviet Russia, than to be defeated by Nazi Germany. Anticomunist agitation was very strong, and was headed by no less a person than Dr. Flaudin, former foreign minister. In fact this agitation which had become anti Russian had started long ago; but it reached its climax around the signature on May 2nd, 1935, of the Franco-Soviet Pact. "Soviet Russia was a doubtful and dangerous ally"; said Jacques Bainville, one of the most consistent opponents"; most important of all, France had no interest in fighting Germany to keep her from expanding in the East" (124). And Leon Bailley editor of Le Jour, wrote about, "Moscow's satanic plan of leading France into a war with Germany in order to precipitate the Communist revolution in Europe".... (125).

(123) Quoted by F.L. Schuman in : Europe on the Even, p.393.

(124) In Charles A. Michard : The French Right & Nazi Germany (1933-1939), p. 46.

(125) " " " " " " " " " " " "

However, wasn't it obvious that the Franco-Soviet Pact should have been welcomed as the logical answer to Germany's open ambitions ?

Mr. Paul Reynaud, Georges Mandel, Georges Bidault, with the famous newspapers commentator Pertinax, defended its necessity : "..... it is a question of establishing for the next few years", said Pertinax, "an order of priority between the German danger and the Bolchevist danger. We, for our part, are convinced that doubt is not admissible about their order of priority" (126). But it didn't seem that such an opinion had many followers. Public opinion at large was carried behind the echoes in the French Press of Hitler's declarations, such as this, on September 5th, 1938, at Nuremberg. "Party comrades ! More threatening than ever, the Bolchevist danger of the destruction of nations rises above the World ! "

From 1938 onwards, England and France's diplomatic action completely ignored Soviet Russia until the day, when driven by Germany to a war, their policy had failed to prevent, the two Western Democracies appealed to Moscow's military help. And they were indignant because this help was not given to them !

(c) Godesberg : It seemed more and more that France was not ready to honour her obligations. Afraid of Communism, afraid of war, simply afraid, pacifists, defeatists, the feelings of all this growing mass, were echoed in a formidable press campaign in pro-Nazi papers. They said: ..."

(126) 1'Europe Nouvelle of February 29th, 1936.

is not viable, not defensible.... the independence of the Czech state is not worth the life of one French soldier", wrote Mr. de Kerillis in l'Epoque quoting these papers. And Mr. Bailby - a defeatist - in Le Jour : "Occupied as Russia is at this moment shooting her leaders, she has other irons in the fire besides getting into war with Germany..... As for us we shall execute our pact of allegiance by invading the Rhineland. We will be then the ones that have declared war on the Reich. 'Unprovoked aggression'. England will immediately declare that she cannot join us. And Italy knowing that we are busy in the East, will start out by sending her troops on a Cook's tour through Nice and into Tunisia...." (127). Neo-pacifism was expressed by Gringoire in an article entitled : "Will you fight for Czechoslovakia".... an intellectual construction without geographic unity and without ethnic unity" (128). However, this anti-Czech campaign reached its climax with an article entitled : "Agonized Conscience", by Professor Joseph Barthelemy in Le Temps: "Is it necessary", he wrote, "that three million Frenchmen all the young people of our universities, our schools, our countryside and our factories, be sacrificed in order to maintain three million Germans under Czech sovereignty ? I reply with sorrow but with firmness: " No ! " (129), and he continues: "France is -----

(127) Quoted by Charles Micand in :The French Right-Nazi Germany, p. 149.

(128) " " " " " " " " p.149

(129) " " " " " " " " p.150-151.

not - legally - obliged to make war to keep the Sudetens in allegiance to Prague", because "the Covenant dead, the accessory of the Covenant is dead; Locarno dead, the accessory of Locarno is dead". And therefore, the Franco-Czech treaty of October 16th, 1925, did not bind any more France to Czechoslovakia.

Definitely, by September 1938, one could clearly see that France had no interest in Czechoslovakia. When a people becomes short-sighted, calamity lies ahead. To France as to England the easiest way out of the crisis was the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia.

On September 22nd 1938, Mr. Chamberlain flew to Godesberg carrying with him the Czech acceptation of such proposals which were - he thought - to satisfy Hitler completely. He had grounds on which to be proud of himself. It was his work, and he certainly expected congratulations and thanks from the Fuhrer. And yet, after he had set forth that all three the French, the British and the Czech Government had accepted the principle of cession to the Reich, nothing but a silence followed. Then suddenly Hitler declared that these propositions were no more acceptable and had to be replaced by new ones. "It was a terrible shock for me", said Mr. Chamberlain in his speech of September 28th in the House of Commons; as to Hitler he was greatly surprised: "He told me", continues Chamberlain, "that he did not expect at all that I might come back and announce to him that the principle was accepted".

Thus, Hitler himself expected at least a partial refusal, a conditional acceptance, a certain resistance ! And the Democracies yielded on the whole line. Since they accepted, they were even more decadent than he thought. On the other hand, since his claims were accepted, it meant that they were no hard enough, and that he could go further. Hence his Memorandum handed to Mr. Chamberlain, the terms of which were so drastic that the Prime Minister himself called it a "diktat".

The Memorandum demanded the cession "without any further delay". The map showed in red the areas to be ceded at once, and in green those to be subject to a plebiscite; "the totality of Czech forces must withdraw and Germany military occupation must follow without taking account as to whether in the plebiscite there may prove to be in this or that part of the Area a Czech majority"; the evacuated areas must be "handed over to Germany on October 1st", with all military economic and traffic establishments and materials intact; "the Czech Government must set free all political prisoners of German race and discharge all Sudeten German serving in the Czech Armies" (130).

It was however, this Memorandum, that Mr. Chamberlain agreed to transmit to Prague, yet without daring recommending it. On September 25th, the Czechs indignantly rejected it:

(130) Published in the Times of September 23rd, 1938, and reproduced in : Cahiers d'Informations Françaises, La Crise Internationale de Sept. 1938, p. 37 et 38.

it constituted, they said, a "de facto ultimatum" going "far beyond what we agreed to in the Anglo-French plan..... Hitler's demands in their present form are absolutely and unconditionally unacceptable. the Governments feel bound to make their utmost resistance, and we shall do so.... The nation of John Hus and Thomas Masaryk will not be a nation of slaves. We rely upon the two great Western Democracies whose wishes we have followed much against our own judgment, to stand by us in our hour of trial" (131).

French and British public opinion manifested loudly their indignation. As a result the French and British Governments stiffened their attitude - outwardly at least, judging from what happened afterwards - and the British fleet and the French army - partially - were mobilized. War seemed the only solution to the present conflict. The general mobilization of the German army was announced for the 28th September at 2 o'clock p.m., in case no satisfactory answer was given by the Czech Government.

However, the appeasers were still unwilling to meet the challenge. "If we were to involve ourselves in war", wrote the Times, "to preserve Czech sovereignty over these Germans, without first clearly ascertaining their wishes, we might well be fighting against the principle of self-determination" (132). And in France Le Matin exclaimed: "How can a war resolve the problem of a cohabitation that

(131) Note handed on September 25th, 1938, by the Czech Ambassador in London to the Foreign Office and reproduced in: *La Crise Internationale de Sept. 1938 - Cahiers d'Informations Françaises* - p. 41.

(132) Quoted by F. D. Schuman in: *Europe on the Eve*, p. 367.

has become impossible between two races ? Would it make the Czechs and Suieten Germans get on better tomorrow " (133)? "Down with war" ! "No war ! No ! No ! shouted Charles Maurras in l'Action Française on September 28th.

Much more important, along the same trend of mind were two declarations. The first by Mr. Flandin - former Foreign Minister - printed on a poster on September 27th, against mobilization : "French people", it read, "you are being deceived. You are being made to believe that an impassable moat separates the demands of Hitler from the concessions already agreed to. That is false". There must be no mobilization. "Let all those who want to save peace address their petition against war to the Chief of State" (134). The second was a most unfortunate radio address by Mr. Chamberlain on the night of September 27th: "How horrible, fantastic, unbelievable is the fact that we should dig here trenches because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing. It seems even more unimaginable, that a conflict, which has been already settled in principle, be the cause of a war....". If I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force, I should feel that it must be resisted"(135). Wasn't he yet convinced that Germany had made up her mind to

(133) Quoted by Charles Micaud in : The French Right and Nazi Germany, p. 164,

(134) " " " " " " " " p.172

(135) Mr. Chamberlain's radio broadcast on September 27th, 1938, quoted from the Times by Arnold Wolfers in : Britain and France between two wars, p. 282.

that end ? Anyhow, declarations like these, despite formal military preparations, clearly showed to Hitler, that he had indeed very little to fear from France and Britain under such circumstances. Much more important was the influence they had on the panic-stricken minds, by the imminence of war, in preparing them in both countries to accept almost with no resistance the shameful terms of the Capitulation of Munich !

(d) Munich : How was the Conference of Munich - which was to seal the doom of an independent state - decided ?

"I shall not lose the hope of a pacific solution", had said Mr. Chamberlain on the radio; I shall not hesitate to go on a third trip to Germany if it could be of any use". So he was ready for another meeting with Hitler. The first step towards it, when there was nothing to be said or done, but fight and for a good cause, was a letter sent by Mr. Chamberlain to the Fuhrer on September 28th - a few hours before the planned German mobilization - in which he wrote that "he remained convinced that Germany could obtain the satisfaction of her essential revendications, without having to resort to war", and that he would come to Berlin to discuss the matter with Hitler and the representatives of France and Italy.

The second step was Mr. Bonnet's instructions to the French ambassador in London to urge Lord Halifax to instruct Lord Perth, British Ambassador in Rome, to get in touch with Mussolini in order that this latter use his

personal influence with Hitler, to make him accept a meeting of the four Powers. And the Fuhrer agreed and it was Munich.

From the start it seemed that Chamberlain and Daladier had come to sign any document provided that it did not contain the word "war". The meeting took place on September 28th, and everything was ended by midnight September 30th. Discussion? Debates? There were none! "It was not a question of discussing procedure or of submitting counter-proposals", said Daladier, what an admission! "It was a question of saving peace.... I said "Yes", and I regret nothing" (135 bis). Czechoslovakia the victim and the principal interested was not invited, nor was Russia.

In its essence the agreement concluded at Munich differed from the Godesberg Memorandum, only in minor details. With the blessing of France and England, the principle of the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia was to receive a practical application. At dawn on October 1st 1938, German troops entered the Sudetenland; on October 2nd Polish troops entered Teschen; on October 7th, Slovakia seceded and proclaimed its independence. Six months later, in spite of all the assurances he gave at Munich, Hitler annexed purely and simply, what remained of Czechoslovakia to the Reich. Thus Mr. Daladier left Munich empty-handed, after having abandoned without any compensation whatsoever one of the last pillars on which rested the whole French security system. However, the anti-war party had so

(135 bis) Quoted by Alexander Werth in : The Twilight of France 1933-1940, p. 287.

cleverly made a wind of panic blow over France, that Daladier was received and greeted as if he were a conqueror who had utterly smashed his enemy. Was he dupe of this popular enthusiasm? It did not seem so. I remember having seen, like many others, in the news reel, his tired and depressed face: the humiliation he had felt at Munich could be easily detected!

Hysterical crowds greeted Mr. Chamberlain too, in England. "We thank you" shouted the crowds, addressing the Prime Minister, who symbolized to their eyes the triumph of peaceful negotiations. But for what? "I have brought back peace with honour" as Disraeli did after the Congress of Berlin. But here too and even to a greater degree Lord Salisbury's "We have bet on the wrong horse", proved to be true. I think "it is peace for our time" added Chamberlain. But for how long? At what price was this peace bought? What was it worth?

However, not everybody in Britain and France joined in the wave of rejoicing which swept over them. In England Alfred Duff Cooper, First Lord of the Admiralty, resigned in protest "I tried to swallow them", he said speaking of the Munich terms, "but they stuck in my throat.... I have ruined perhaps my political career, but..... can still walk about the world with my head erect" (136). Said Winston Churchill: "France and Britain had to choose between war and

(136) Speech in the House of Commons on October 3rd, 1938, quoted by F. Shuman in: Europe on the Eve, p.447.

dishonour. They chose dishonour. They will have war " (137). Even Mr. Keynes - who had been so sympathetic towards the Germans totally "starved and crippled" by the Versailles Diktat - shouted his indignation: "We and France, have only sacrificed our honour and our engagements to a civilized and faithful nation, and fraternized with what is vile" (138)/

In France Mr. de Kerillis, who with some communist deputies, had voted against the Munich Pact, voiced his "sorrowful protests" against Munich, which "annuls forever the benefits of the Victory of 1918" (139). In Russia, Le Journal de Moscow, on October 4th, 1938, wrote..... "The loss of its allies and isolation - this is the price which France will have to pay for capitulating before the aggressor".

Meditation : There were few who could avoid some feeling of shame. Whatever the right or wrong of the case, no one could doubt that the Czechs had been betrayed. Czechoslovakia is "that remote country of which we know so little....." had said Mr. Chamberlain. What short-sighted leadership ! Such statesmen who had proclaimed the sanctity of treaties and the common interests of democracies, forgot their high feelings in the overwhelming desire to avoid the horrors of war, a war which in fact was but delayed. It will be given to France in a peculiar form a subject of meditation and of deep regret when at the outbreak of war

(137) Quoted by F. Schuman in : Soviet Policy at home and abroad, p. 281.

(138) In the New Statesman and Nation of October 8th, 1938, Quoted by Etienne Mantoux in : The Carthaginian Peace, p.18.

(139) Journal officiel des Debats de la Chambre des Deputés, Right and Nazi Germany, p. 177.

in 1939, of the first four German tanks to be captured by the French Army, three were Czechs !!

Munich was not only a diplomatic but a moral triumph to Hitler : the Western Democracies brought on the verge of a war justified in the eyes of the world, looked into the abyss and retreated in dismay. Ruthlessness, and violence had proved stronger than the breastplate of a righteous cause. "The great democracies had all but lost World War II before it had begun. No comparable instance of folly and perfidy on the part of the responsible leaders of self-governing peoples is available in all the past records of human weakness, stupidity and crime" (140).

"We were not ready", shouted the pacifists. But would the Democracies of the West, be much better in six months or a year after ? The dismemberment of Czechoslovakia meant not only the ruin of France's security system by alliances, but the total crumbling down of the whole edifice of collective security. And what did the Democracies obtain in exchange of such relinquishment, of such humiliations ? Peace? Not at all. A delay; one could discuss the duration not the nature ! Indeed they had paid a very high price for a peace which did not even last a year !

Ethiopia, Spain, China, Austria, Czechoslovakia, each in turn had been sacrificed by the Democracies to the principle of appeasement until it was clear that the principle

(140) Frederick L. Schuman in : Soviet Policy at home and abroad, p. 282.

was bankrupt. "If we have to fight", had said Chamberlain, "it must be on larger issues than this"..... In France, England and even America, millions echoed this sentiment and Czechoslovakia was..... left alone to die. But "never send to know for whom the bell tolls : it tolls for thee...", had said John Donne, an English poet. For when Ethiopia, Spain, China, Austria and Czechoslovakia passed away, the bell indeed tolled for France and Britian, Belgium, and Denmark, Norway and even the U.S.A.

"Europe", said the late Ghandi", "had sold her soul for seven days of earthly existence" (141).

(141) Quoted by F.L. Schuman in : Europe on the eve , p. 449.

CHAPTER 5

Relapse into War

Speaking about the acquisition of the Sudetenland on September 26th, 1938, at the Sport Palast in Berlin, Hitler had said : "I have assured Mr. Chamberlain, and I emphasize it now, that when this problem is solved Germany has no more territorial problems in Europe. I shall not be interested in the Czech State any more and I can guarantee it" (142). And Mr. Chamberlain had returned after Munich joyfully ascertaining : "I believe it is peace for our time".

And yet six months later, on March 15th, 1938, in complete disregard of the Munich settlement and of Hitler's written assurance to Chamberlain, Germany occupied Prague, putting an end to Czechoslovakia's independence. France, England, Russia and even the U.S.A. sent strongly worded protests to Berlin which were all turned down. Hitler was sure that the Democracies would not move. Indeed there was no precedent in their favour, that they would do so. Besides hadn't Mr. Chamberlain admitted in the House of Commons on November 1st, 1938, in speaking of Eastern and Central Europe that : "So far as this country is concerned we have no wish to block Germany out of these countries" where geographically

(142) Quoted by E.H. Carr in : International Relations since the Peace Treaties, p. 271.

she" must occupy a dominating position" (143).

A week later, on March 22nd, Germany seized Memel from Lithuania, and on April 7th, Italy, not to be outdone, occupied Albania.

The Western Democracies were reaping the fruits of their policy of appeasement. However, it seemed that these violations, though confirming definitely the humiliation of the "Munichois" - and especially of Mr. Chamberlain - shocked and deeply offended public opinion both in France and England, this time in a peculiar way. It was widely felt that the two Governments at last had stiffened their attitude. Was appeasement breaking down? Was appeasement giving way to resistance? Many intimations lead that way. To begin with the two Governments confirmed publicly their intention to impose once and for all limits upon the aggressors. On March 31st, Mr. Chamberlain pledged England's definite assistance to Poland - who was clearly pointed at as the next victim of Nazi aggression - "In the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, H.M. Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power..... I must add that the French Government have authorised me to state clearly that they

(143) Quoted by Messrs. Haines & Hoffman in : the origins and background of the second World War, p. 519.

stand in the same position" (144). In May conscription was adopted in England, showing her earnest determination and in France the budget for military expenditures accused a huge increase.

Besides being measures for self-protection, these moves were intended to show the other nations, that the Democracies - at least - were firmly resolved to halt the aggressors. However, they did not sound very convincing, for the capital reason, that the same men who had retreated a while ago, the same appeasers, were now speaking with the sword. It could, may be, convince their own people, but would Hitler who had declared that he could not allow England to be ruled by Churchill, Eden or Duff Cooper, and "as long as men like Mr. Deladier and Mr. Bonnet remain in office, I am confident in friendly relations between our two countries" (145) - consider it more than harmless show of force? Could Mr. Chamberlain be trusted now that he had proclaimed the British Guarantee to Poland? Would this terribly late move, rehabilitate the man who had given the League its death blow in dismissing Eden, Was his late conversion to Collective Security, genuine? Wasn't he forced to adopt this new attitude under the pressure of strong public opinion, and a parliament ready to turn hostile, should Germany be once more allowed to humiliate England?

(144) Le Livre Jaune Français, Documents Diplomatiques-1938-1939, P. 121+122.

(145) In Alexander Werth : The Twilight of France, p. 298.

And the semi-official press which continued its campaign for peace at almost any price !

In France, similar suspicions were unfortunately justified. Not only Foreign Minister Bonnet continued to send secret messages to Berlin with de Brinon, and to Rome with Baudouin, without the knowledge of the regular ambassadors, but he continued to undermine the policy of resistance to the bitter end, his most outstanding anti-war move being his attempt to stop England from declaring war on September 3rd, 1939, in trying to favour another "Munich", with Mussolini's help.

A coalition of nations still independent, welded into a "Pace Front" could only have a bare chance to erect defensive barriers against aggression. But the indispensable link in the chain of resistance, Soviet Russia, was still held in suspicion by England and France. In fact suspicion was reciprocal and it was most unfortunate, since Russia was the only Great Power who could raise an effective bulwark in the East. This position was so much important that Hitler himself was not ready to fight should Russia be with the Democracies. "The opinion which prevails in the Wilhelmstrasse", wrote Mr. Coulandre, French Ambassador in Berlin, to Foreign Minister Bonnet on June 1st, 1939, "is that if Poland would not yield, Mr. Hitler's decision would be subject to the signature of the Anglo-Russian

agreement. They think that he will go to war if he has not to fight Russia, but if he knows that he would have Russia against him too, he would retreat rather than risk the loss of his country, his party and his own person" (146).

Subsequent events plainly confirmed the value of this opinion. There was a chance - a very weak one it is true - to stop Germany now: it was to strengthen the ties which united France and Russia - the Franco-Soviet Pact of May 2nd, 1935 had become very loose - and to come to an understanding between Britain and Russia, since their interest was common in their fight against common enemies : Germany and Japan. Men like Lloyd George and W. Churchill spoke in favour of such agreement : "If we are going in without the help of Russia", said Lloyd George, "we shall be walking into a trap" (147), and Churchill asserted that Soviet participation was "a matter of life or death". De Kerillis in France, urged in *l'Epoque*, as "the duty of the French bourgeois to rise above their ideological prejudice..... True enough the Russian alliance is not not ideal solution, but is the last resource....." (148). And yet France and England did not seem ready to commit themselves. "Neville Chamberlain, Halifax and John Simon do not want any agreement with Russia", wrote Lloyd George in an article to *Le Soir*. "The whole story is one of

(146) *Le Livre Jaune Français - Documents diplomatiques 1938-1939*
p. 181.

(147) Quoted by F. L. Schuman in : *Soviet Politics at home and abroad* - p. 366.

(148) Quoted by Charles Michard in : *The French Right and Nazi Germany*, p. 219.

muddle, bungle and blunder without parallel, and fits in well enough with the rest of the policy which has landed us over a period of five years from a position of absolute security into one of mortal peril" (148 bis). In fact what was needed actually was statesmanship and above all profound realism, virtues that men, like Chamberlain Daladier and to a very large extent Bonnet, lacked completely. It seemed more and more to Russia - given the attitude not only of Britain and France's Governments, but that of a large part of the British and the French press - that the Democracies of the West were willing to accept Soviet help in case they were attacked, but were not ready to pledge their support in reciprocity. Obviously this could not allay the fear and suspicion of Soviet leaders; such policy seemed to them but a new form of the attack of the West against the "Reds", since it was leading to the satisfaction of the long cherished hope : a German-Soviet war in which Nazism and Communism will destroy each other while the Western Democracies would stand aside.

"Stalin", wrote Walter Lippman, "did not join the Franco-British Alliance because..... he feared not without some justification that the Western Powers might be tempted to let the war become an anti-Communist crusade"(149).

The first bad omen was Mr. Litvinoff's resignation on May 3rd, 1939; he had been for years the champion of a

(148 bis) Quoted by Victor A. Yakhontoff in : U.S.S.R. Foreign Policy, p. 215,216.

(149) Quoted from the New York Herald Tribune by Victor Yakhontoff in : U.S.S.R. Foreign Policy, p. 216.

"rapprochement" with France and the faithful upholder of the League of Nations and the system of collective security. Mr. Molotof who took his place as Commissar for foreign affairs, did not wait long to show the Democracies, that his country "would not be dragged into a conflict, by war-mongers accustomed to let the others pull the chestnuts out of the fire, for them" (149 bis). And Russia drew away from the Democracies in proportion as the Democracies^{draw} away from her.

As a matter of fact, what prevented any Soviet proposal to organize resistance against aggression to materialise, was the reluctance and unwillingness of Rumania and Poland to commit their defense to the Russians, they both suspected and feared. In fact the Soviet Leaders did not forgive Poland for her aggressive attitude towards Czechoslovakie; they did not forgive France and Britain's attitude, either. However, Russia was less moved by hurt pride than by a realistic conception of the present international situation. She had an opportunity to obtain a very high price for her collaboration: a military aid in case she sided with the Democracies; neutrality in case she sided with Germany.

Indeed, and though Russia was still negotiating with the French and British representatives, it seemed more and more that the Soviet leaders were inclined to throw their sword in the German balance. The Baltic states refused the Russian

(149 bis) Quoted by F.L. Schuman : Soviet policy at home and abroad, p. 367.

guarantee; Poland refused to join in an openly declared move against Nazi Germany, not to spoil her relations with the Reich..... And France and Britain didn't press them - though they could have - to do so. On August 21st, 1939, a Soviet German Agreement was made public. It was a "bombshell" said Chamberlain. Was it? May be, but not in the sense he wanted to convey. It was to him "a very unpleasant surprise", not to see Russia signing such a pact, but, to see Germany who had posed as the bulwark in Europe against Communism, now in its arms on friendly terms; It was becoming obvious that what she could not obtain from the Democracies, as a price to her alliance, Russia was going to sell it to a higher bidder.

Of course, Anti-Soviet prejudice offered enough rational ground on which to defend this Russian realistic policy. However say Messrs. Haines and Hoffman, "it is impossible to escape the conclusion that by the Non-Aggression Pact the Soviet Union committed the most disastrous act of appeasement in the whole disreputable history of that policy..... A simple declaration of neutrality, preserving Russia's freedom to act in its own interest as occasion demanded..... would most certainly have given the Nazis reason to move with greater caution and thus with less effectiveness" (150). In fact the Soviet-German truce" - indeed this is what it was - made war inevitable. But we cannot escape too, the conclusion that France - who knew from Mr. Coulondre in Berlin that Hitler would not move

(150) Haines & Hoffman : The origins and background of the second World War - p. 543.

unless Russia is put aside in one way or the other - should have acted differently, all efforts bent to keep Russia to her side, or at least, to make her keep neutral. This would have prevented Hitler to move forward and peace would have been kept. It wouldn't have been through appeasement but a peace firmly set on force and readiness to fight. Unfortunately there was Bonnet the pacifist at all cost ! Chamberlain could no more keep company with him, not because he was a turncoat, but because, as we have seen, the Parliament would have never allowed him to "appease" any more the aggressor. And haunted by Munich, Bonnet engaged busily in trying to make a repetition of it.

Indeed, one has to keep in mind that appeasement did not disarm - in spite of all profession of faith to the contrary - and that what greatly retarded progress toward the "Peace Front", was the fact that "the baggage of appeasement" was "in the train of resistance" (151). On August 27th, Bonnet besought King Leopold through the Belgian Ambassador, to intervene personally with Mussolini, to urge him to repeat its brilliant acting at Munich, once more. On August 29th he begged for a truce of ten days, requesting the Spanish Ambassador to beseech Franco to intervene personally with Hitler. All this when Mr. Coulondre was writing from June and on, that he "was convinced that today more than yesterday, we should abstain from any initiative ,

(151) Idea. p. 527.

any attitude which might be interpreted here as a weakening of the Allies will to oppose force by force.... What we must eliminate this time at all cost, is the risk of war coming from a manoeuvre of intimidation" (151). But Bonnet turned a deaf ear. On August 24th again Coulongre : "Mr. Hitler is taking exactly the same position towards Poland, as that he adopted towards Czechoslovakia in the last days of September"(152). Well, seemed to say Bonnet; We let him swallow Czechoslovakia didn't we ? Why not do the same with Poland for the sake of Peace ? And on the same day he instructed Mr. Leon Noël French Ambassador in Warsaw, to urge the Polish Government", not to resort to any military reaction in the eventuality of the Senate of Dantzig proclaiming the rattachment of the Free City to the Reich.... "(153). However, Bonnet proved unsuccessful. When Germany will cross the Polish frontiers on September 1st, 1939, the French Cabinet, in spite of Bonnet will issue a communiqué: "France will keep her undertakings". Bonnet - like a moribond in his last jolts of agony - will try and succeed to delay the expiration of the French ultimatum to Germany until 5 o'clock of the afternoon of September 3rd - But this was his last move. England and France at last woke up ! His long dreaded war, had burst out . Nothing but the blunders of the Western Democracies, were to bear the huge

(151) Le Livre Jaune Français, Documents Diplomatiques 1938-1939
p. 194.

(152) " " " p. 298
(153) " " " p. 302.

responsibility of having failed to keep a sound peace. However, in the proportion as it is true to say that the British people imposed war on its government, it is as much true to say that the French Government forced war on the French people.

On September 3rd, 1939, the long armistice of 1919-1939 was definitely broken, and with this break we come to the end of our itinerary from "peace" to war !

C O N C L U S I O N

- - - - -

"Nothing is to be gained by any Government by anything which looks like doubt, hesitation or fear, while on the other hand, a bold firm course founded on right and supported by strength, is the safest way of arriving at a satisfactory and peaceful result".

Palmerston - June 28th, 1853.

"The affairs of the World can be set straight only by the firmest and most determined exhibition of the will to lead and make right prevail".

Woodrow Wilson - November 10th, 1923.

And so the peace was lost. Europe plunged once more into war, a war which was the climax, the most unfortunate, but the most logical ending of a whole era of irresponsibility. I said Europe once more plunged into war; I was tempted to say : Europe resumed hostilities, for it was obvious that the conflagration which burst out in 1939, was merely a resumption after a twenty years truce, of the old war of 1914-1918.

"We are faced not with the prospect of a new war", said Mr. Churchill, "but with something very like the possibility of a resumption of the war which ended in November 1918" (154). And Mr. E. H. Carr speaks of the "the contemporary war of which the first outbreak occurred in 1914 and the second in 1939" (155). As a matter of fact, what happened was that war became general in Europe in 1939, but the "peace" which was made in 1919, had been broken long ago, since Japan and China were at war already in 1931 and Italy and Ethiopia in 1935. No, Mr. Lloyd George should not have boasted prematurely in saying : "It is comparatively easy, to patch up a peace which will last for thirty years"(156); for neither was it a peace, nor did this mere suspension of arms, last so long. Why ? Because the victorious Allies "lost the peace". This paradox had puzzled me and in fact started me on writing the present thesis, in which I have attempted to show how as sad as this could be, the Western Democracies failed to maintain an enduring peace.

For twenty years the victors, France, England and even the U.S.A. remained helpless spectators, while Germany, who undoubtedly was defeated, recovered as a once more great and aggressive nation, and took the lead in Europe, politically and militarily. It seemed as if the Western Democracies had

(154) Quoted from : Arms and the Covenant, by Sir William Beveridge in : The Price of Peace, p. 14.

(155) E. H. Carr : Conditions of peace, p. 3.

(156) Quoted by Sir William Beveridge in : The Price of Peace, p. 19.

been asleep for twenty years on two soft pillows : security and peace, not understanding that neither could be the object of a policy. "A generation which makes peace and security its aim", writes E.H. Carr, "is doomed to frustration" (157).

Speaking before the Congress of the U.S.A. on December 26th, 1941, Mr. Churchill had declared: "Five or six years ago, it would have been very easy for the U.S.A. and Great Britain to obtain, without shedding a drop of blood, the fulfilment of the disarmament clauses of the Treaties signed by Germany after the Great War, and we would have had the opportunity to give the Germans the raw materials, we are pledging ourselves by the Atlantic Charter, to supply them with....." (158).

It was perfectly correct. The Democracies as we have already seen, could have prevented the coming to power of the Fascist Dictatorship. They could have - in intervening in time - prevented their law-breaking, opposed their military enterprises and their policy of aggression and conquest. Why wasn't it so ? Why were the Democracies once more at war ? This "war which was not necessary", to use Mr. Churchill's expression. The war of 1914-1918 was supposed to be the last war to kill war. And yet what ought to have become a reality remained just.... an expression !

(157) E.H. Carr : Conditions of Peace, Introduction, p. XXIII.

(158) Quoted by Louis Martio in : La Revolution d'hier, d'aujourd'hui et de demain, p. 115.

The mere enunciation of some of the events which characterized the period under study, is but an overwhelming public prosecution against the incomprehension, the egoism, the blunders and the incapacity of the Western Democracies in international affairs. Disunion among the victors ? Lack of cooperation of the U.S.A. ? Inherent defects in the League of Nations ? All these factors can be appealed to, to explain their failure to maintain peace. But in no way can these excuses absolve the Democracies for what they did, or rather did not do. It was very clear, that what was lacking was not an instrument to preserve peace, but the will to use it to that end. What ruined the League of Nations was not the plain aggression of Japan, Italy and Germany. Of course these nations had broken the Covenant. They were the aggressors and they played their part as such. But those who did not play theirs, were those members of the League who had always proclaimed their faith in international law, and had posed as the champions of law and order; the Western Democracies who instead of condemning, condoned the aggressors and let them "get away with it". It was not the League which failed, but its members those who were the most powerful, and hence the most blameworthy and criminal !

If war came it was indeed because of the bankruptcy of international solidarity. For reasons of prestige, and of self-interest, France and England, each one in turn did not want a powerful League of Nations. And thus collective

security was sacrificed on the altar of self-regarding national policy. In fact war practically started in 1931, when Japan invaded China : international solidarity broke down and international anarchy went ahead !

However, let us inquire more closely into the puzzling fact of two strong and dominant Democracies of the West in a state of obvious weakness in their dealings with the Dictators between 1933 - 1939. Why were they always retreating in face of an open aggression, when security, after which they were running so fast, commanded them to stand firm ? Why were they always hoisting the white flag without a fight even when they had right on their side ? Was it an inferiority complex ? Plainly, democracy proved very inferior to Dictatorship in the conduct of foreign affairs. What was the real nature of this inferiority ? Was it inherent to the democratic regime itself ? Let us try to see.

How far as democracies did the Great Powers of West fail in their object.

"There has been a bankruptcy of the mind", answers Mr. Van Zeeland. Indeed, but there has been a moral failure too. Modern democracy had to face not only those difficulties which had always confronted democracy - conflict between liberty and equality, conflict between individual liberties,.... but it had to deal with new problems, the gravity of which, it did not seem to understand, and to which therefore no adequate solution was ever given.

First and foremost, it did nothing to end the economic disequilibrium which had resulted from the war; had it done something about it, it would have been one way and the most efficient to prevent the discontented masses to follow bad shepherds. A stable German economy based on the cancellation of reparations would have strengthened Bruening's position, the Weimar republic and Nazism would have been buried before it was born. As a matter of fact, Europe at the end of the war was faced with a humiliated Germany and a discontented Italy. In both countries the economic disequilibrium reached a level unknown until then: Germany suffered heavily from a considerable stoppage of labour and Italy had nowhere to send to her surplus of population, now that the U.S.A. applied strict laws of immigration. Distress was great and fell not only on workers, but on released officers and graduate students all jobless.

What did Europe do? Nothing. Where was that international solidarity - fraternity is perhaps a better word - which is one pillar of democracy? Non-existent! A policy of ultra-protectionism swept over the Continent, and small states keen on keeping their political independence, surrounded themselves with a wall of high protective tariffs. It was a self strangulation, which would have been prevented by an economic federation between small states politically independent - Wouldn't this have prevented the Anschluss?

"Many among us", said Mr. Cordell Hull in a speech on July 23rd 1942, "are blind to the evils which have created cancers in the nations and between the nations - political suspicions and hatred, armament race, hidden first, then patent, economic nationalism and distress, with finally coming out from darkness, plunderers and bandits who took advantage of disorder and disaster" (159).

Secondly, it did not understand that under modern conditions of war, the doctrine of defensive and preventive war, has a practical value, in so far as it is based on the respect of international agreements and on a perfect solidarity between the nations. China, Abyssinia, Austria and Czechoslovakia were left to meet their doom alone, though Germany was the aggressor, and France and England were bound by interest, by treaties of guarantees, and in the name of collective security, to use force against the law-breaker.

The Great Western Powers, guardian of peace, did not show themselves up to their mission. For not only did they fail to preserve peace, but they stood passive spectators and did nothing to help and support democracy - which represented the supreme guarantee of peace - wherever it was in danger to lose its independence.

But however great was their responsibility, there were other factors which played a great part in their failure.

(159) Quoted by Louis Marlio in : La Revolution d'hier, d'aujourd'hui et de demain, p. 114.

To begin with the political weakness of democracy. The policy of a democracy is always milder, more wavering, half-hearted and slower than that of Dictatorship. And this comes from the nature of the regime itself, and more often of its deformations.

A democratic Government is the collective and temporary representation of the majority through elections. Thus it can neither free itself from the decisive influence of Parliament, nor go against a hostile public opinion. As elections are frequent and public opinion fluctuating, the policy of a democracy cannot have the continuity and consistency of a dictator's policy. And this is much clearer in France than in England, where democracy has realized a certain political stability. In France during the twenty years' truce, ministerial instability was more than any other, the cause of the final disaster.

As a matter of fact, the agony of England like the martyrdom of France, was in one sense self-inflicted. It came from a long series of tragic blunders and sometimes dishonesties on the part of inefficient political leaders, who were no longer able or willing to understand the world, and to cope with the new problems of the post-war period. From Sir John Simon and Laval's blessings - I was tempted to say ~~commence~~ with - the aggressor, to Flaminio Piccoli, Bonnet and Chamberlain's betrayal of Ethiopia, Spain, Austria and Czechoslovakia, it was but a sad picture of ignorant,

half-headed, half-hearted, short-sighted and certainly altogether inefficient leadership, when thoughtfulness and decision followed by quick action were needed during that long interval of crisis and international tension. That was the calamity that befell the Democracies. Mediocre leaders with no will to resist politicians rather than statesmen. The old tough aggressive French spirit so formidable in men like Clemenceau, Poincaré and Barthou, was no longer there, nor was there in England internationally minded leaders like Austen Chamberlain. They seemed afraid of themselves and of their public when it came to taking strong action. Those who saw them at work, during the successive crisis provoked by Hitler between 1933 and 1938, saw that they were men of words, clever words: but empty words and sometimes false words. They used face-saving formulas, but of action none! Of course there were strong men in both England and France who had enough courage to denounce the mildness of the unworthy leaders: their hesitations, abstentions and fear of entangling the country into a dreaded conflict, Briand, Churchill, Eden. But either they could not keep in power for a time long enough, or were not brought to power at all in time of emergency. Why? Because of a hostile majority in Parliament which in turn is but the expression of public opinion.

Indeed a democratic government can only work in so far as it is supported by public opinion. This practice,

which is excellent in peace time, is very dangerous in case of international tension during which public opinion cannot be kept properly informed of the daily negotiations. Thus either a government is pursuing a good foreign policy, but is prevented by internal issues, i.e. under the pressure of public opinion - pacifism or war weariness of the masses undoubtedly guided the policy of many a political leader - Or even when public opinion has expressed its point of view, the government, though outwardly at least paying lip service as to its faithfulness to the popular desires, follow a policy of its own, which it judges a good one and which unfortunately proves in the long run to be a catastrophe - I have in mind the Peace Ballot and Samuel Hoare and Laval's policy in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute.

In general, public opinion was widely fluctuating under the pressure of emotional and sometimes irrational factors; it was not highly educated and thus easily deceived. In fact it showed so many inconsistencies, that it cannot escape the part of responsibility that it should bear in the failure of its leaders. In England it had adopted such opposite attitudes from "Hang the Kaiser", to "peace at all cost" in passing by "stand for the League and Collective Security", and woke up in 1939, anti-nazi; in France it had shifted from make "the Germans pay a stick to the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles", to the meanest concessions to Nazi Germany in passing by the severest criticism, or the whole-hearted

welcome of the Franco-Russian alliance, and the agreement with Italy.

As a matter of fact public opinion as a whole did not take so active a part in foreign policy. Its attention was almost always directed on internal issues - devaluation, social reforms, political demands. The results were strikes or popular manifestations which coming as they did in time of international crisis, either handicapped the government in its foreign policy, or brought it down and affected the continuity of a sound policy. Let us keep clear in mind that no French Government, in the period under study, was overthrown in a question of foreign policy. And this led France to catastrophe. Thus the people's sovereignty is exerted only in a negative way - they do not want this or that: "No war above all". They disapproved of Jewish persecutions in Germany, Japanese cruelties in China, Italian inhuman conduct in Abyssinia; they were horrified with the massacre of thousands of children by air raids in Spain. But as soon as the offenders became assured that the people of the democracies would stop short of any action, such as effective economic measures, they went ahead undisturbed. And much of the contempt in which the Dictators indulged in regard to the Democracies, was based on the latter's impotent blaming of their successful activities.

For years, French opinion supported steadily the principle of collective security, and the small nations

gathered around her in advocating the application of sanctions against an aggressor. Yet a large part of French opinion and of the French press wavered and deserted when the time came to stop the Italian aggression of 1935. As a result, the small nations abandoned the French system of security.

The British people elected and supported a government which were the artisans of the Munich surrender and allowed the destruction of Spanish and Czechoslovakia democracy. As a result many British ships have been sunk since 1939.

No ! the mistakes and desertions of the leaders of the Western Democracies were largely their people's for official policies are only the expression of what most of the people will support !

This people's inertia have allowed special interests to triumph, twisting and diverting national policy from its essential aims, until it became a national catastrophe: Wall Street, Trade-Unions, political parties, the press, and the Comité des Forges and the private manufacture of arms. The idea of collective and national interest had served as a screen to hide the satisfaction of individual interests. The deformation of the democratic government appealed the day a group powerful because wealthy, numerous or influential noticed that to hold power directly, or indirectly through a government which is its mere tool, could fulfil its

aspiration and satisfy its interests as a group. A government however capable was always at the mercy of a minority vote in Parliament, engineered by a "coalition" among those who wanted power for themselves. And politics became a game of poker in which anyone had a chance of office, if he played his cards well. Baldwin's "national government" represented the Tory party's view of a rapprochement with Germany, of not entangling Japan lest England lose her markets in the Far East, of not antagonizing Italy lest the private manufacturers of arms lose their benefits. Blum's government represented the Popular Front's view of peace at all cost, Laval, Flandin, Daladier and Bonnet, followed the policy advocated by the French pro-Nazi Press.....

As a matter of fact the political parties by their internal opposition to the Government their discussions, and the influence they had upon the Government's policy, paralyzed the very life of the nation, and made for unstable and ineffective government. Not to speak of a party which opens the doors of his mother country, to a power in order to crush its adversaries that it hates much more than it hates the foreigner - The French Right, pro-Nazi, against the Communist Party in France. Was not thus national interest sacrificed on the altar of private profits and personal prestige ?

Political parties are of the essence of democracy. They are supposed to be the elite which enlightens and keeps well informed public opinion. Their degeneration leads to the degeneration of democracy itself. And in France they

have failed in their duty, much more than in England. All through this period the sympathies of the French, right with Germany and Italy were openly proclaimed, while their hatred of England was thinly veiled, with occasional outburst like Henri Bergson's". England must be reduced to slavery". Closely linked to Political Parties is the Press, through which their opinions are expressed and their policy outlined. It is through articles in the newspapers that the intellectual and most enlightened elite is supposed to educate public opinion. Unfortunately what it did during the period of international tension, was to impress on it the divergent views of different parties instead of showing it the truth as to where effectively rested the interest of the nation. If in England there was so to speak no Pro-Nazi press - though the Times and the Sunday Observer did very much to allay the fears of the British opinion whenever Hitler showed the teeth, and shape public opinion to let him "get away with it", without any detrimental reaction - in France a corrupted press - the venality of which was conspicuous to everybody - twisted the minds, preaching surrender, pacifism, defeatism, weakened the will to resist and thus paved the way psychologically for the final collapse of France and the regime of Vichy. An international crisis opened up a gold mine for worried editors and journalists in need. During the Manchurian and Abyssinian affairs, Japanese and Italian money was circulating freely in the ranks of the Paris Press. How many were

directly or indirectly in the pay of Herr Abetz, Ribbentrop's Agent in Paris, during the Munich crisis? A Fascist clique doubled by a Fifth Column - that only a democratic regime by allowing freedom of thought and of the Press, permitted them to preach undisturbed, their devastating and subversive theories - softened the people's attitude in playing on their feelings of war-weariness and that war settles nothing, and fear of communism. And papers like Gringoire, Candide, Je Suis Partout plainly Nazi sheets, delivered as it were, Czechoslovakia in Hitler's hands, while men like de Brinon, Doriot, Deat, preached defeatism and called men like Pertinax, de Kerillis, George Bidault, writing in l'Ordre, l'Epoque, and l'Aube of "warmongers", and their papers preaching the sound policy of "no surrender", and stop aggression before it is too late, of "Bellicist Papers".

Another very important cause of the weakness of the democracy in its dealings with dictatorship, is the publicity it gives to its military budget, and its program of armaments. What the enemy sees in the program is how strong a democracy is. What public opinion sees in the budget is the demand of new taxes, or devaluation. It does not clearly see - because ignorant - or does not want to see - because pacifist - the necessity of accepting to vote the large amounts which are asked because of an eventual danger. And so the program is insufficiently carried out and the nation is very badly prepared - as it was clearly and unfortunately the case for

France and England in 1939 - when war is forced upon it by a dictator. This latter knows that he is going to fight, against whom and when. Whereas a democracy does not want to fight, does not know if and when she is going to be attacked. The only solution to it, is to prevent the coming to power of a dictator, who ultimately will go to war, because it is a necessity to its regime. And to this the Democracies of the West were blind. It was intervening in the internal affairs of a nation they would say, forbidden by the principle of self-determination and idealism ! I would say, it would have been realism !

In this great war, the Democracies came very near a total defeat. Why ? As a result of an average refusal to foresee and prepare - an eloquent testimony to both the strength and weakness of democracy" (159 bis).

However, other factors played a role of first importance in the failure of the Western Democracies, in undermining their dynamism and their will to resist, of which first and foremost was Fear !

It seemed that in face of Hitler's adopted slogan from Denton ; "Boldness, boldness and always boldness!" the Democracies of the West found themselves paralyzed. Why ?

Perhaps the primary cause of it all - and more in France than in England - was the war weariness, which resulted from the fearful bloodbath of 1914 - 18. The thought of another

(159 bis) Sir Halford Mackinder : Democratic Ideals and Realities - Foreword, p. X.

war continued to fill the French hearts with profound dread. Hence the French quest for security, that Britain unfortunately was not ready to guarantee alone. And pacifism grew in France proportionately to the growth of Power in Nazi Germany, in fact so much that it almost overshadowed the old instinct of national self-preservation.

As a matter of fact, democracy in its essence desires peace between nations, because it is the necessary condition to its existence. But pacifism which consisted for a nation to declare in advance, that it will never go to war, was certainly a symptom of impotence if not of decadence. No nation can adopt for ever as the corner stone of its foreign policy, the principle of "peace at all costs". In England this doctrine, destructive and disastrous in its extreme form, was widely spread especially in highly educated centers in the name however of high and generous ideals. The best way of avoiding war, it seemed to them, was not to speak of war. Though in theory it is a fine doctrine, in practice it led to the famous theory of appeasement which is the greatest danger to peace. Appeasement - as we have seen - can save the peace, not establish the peace - That is to say, it can prevent for a certain time, relatively short, a conflagration to burst out, a war to break out, as one put out temporarily and imperfectly a fire which will burn once more an hour later. Whereas to establish the peace, is to prevent war to break out, according to a peace plan,

prepared beforehand, in being no more afraid of war, but after having disarmed those who might think of disturbing peace once more. At Munich in 1938, Daladier and Chamberlain saved the peace; we, who lived the war of 1939-46, know enough that they did not establish it. In 1918, the victors at Versailles could have established peace; Why? Because in 1914, they have accepted not to save it. And yet they failed to do so. It was quite illogical indeed to think for one moment that Nazi aggression could be stopped by peaceful means, by concessions, capitulations, and betrayal, for war was a necessity to the Hitlerite regime. It was a policy aimed at peace at any price, ~~///~~ that could be paid by other nations. Chamberlain and Daladier's attempt to preserve peace by such methods, nearly made an end to democracy in Europe by the discredit they brought upon it. For the policy of sacrificing the independence of weak and democratic countries, not only entailed the loss of the democracy's international prestige, but greatly weakened its vitality in those countries which put peace before liberty, the result being that "If a nation values anything more than freedom", says Somerset Maugham, "it will lose its freedom, and the irony of it, is that if it is comfort.... that it values more, it will lose that too" (159).

In adopting pacifism as a policy, the Western Democracies adopted its no less dangerous corollaries : anti-militarism and non-intervention, and to such an extent that they were left

(159) Quoted by James B. Reston in : Prelude to Victory.

far behind in the race of armaments which is the most conspicuous characteristic of the period 1933-1939 in Germany. Then advocating military inferiority and military unpreparedness, they decided on non-intervention in Spain and Czechoslovakia. However, wasn't the alarm struck since the coming of Hitler to Power? And when he increased the German Army, and when he remilitarized the Rhineland ! How could the Western Democracies indulge in such thought that militarist Germany could understand another language than military action and from the start ?

In 1936 Goebbels boasted with impunity : "If we had been in the position of the French, and they had put a Hitler in power we should have made war on them" (160). But no suggestion of a preventive war could have received the slightest support from the French and much less from the British people. And France failed to react to the German re-occupation of the Rhineland; with this lost unique opportunity to force Hitler to retreat, was ^{confirmed} France's loss of her old instinct of self-preservation. This does not excuse the utter blindness of the British Government and of British opinion to the significance of the Rhineland coup of March 1936 !

Another aspect of this Fear that froze the blood in the veins of the Democracies of the West, was the obsession of their people to lose their material possessions, their

(160) Quoted by Alexander Werth in : The Twilight of France, p. 362.

accumulated wealth, their position, their titles, should a revolution break out. This was the Fear of Communism that a very skillful Nazi propaganda had adopted as its catchword. The Nazi threat was overshadowed by the "Red" menace. And private interests once more, in the hands of some wealthy bourgeois, Banque de France, Comité des Forges, Wall Street, and French Fascist La Rocque's Croix de Feu and Cagoulaards, hypnotized as it were by this fear, closed their eyes on Nazi aggression, prevented their governments to take any action, that their very national security demanded, and killed the dynamism of the people, badly needed in time of danger. When war came, it was to all a "phony war." The Parisians of 1940 were apparently less resolute than the Parisians of 1870 and 1914. No government could pursue a national policy designed to meet the Nazi danger, because the nation itself was split : Right and Left. The downfall of their country was less important than that they were defeating the "Reds". In London too, a smaller, but equally short-sighted, Tory clique was blinded to national issues by partisanship. Men like Lord Rothermere, the Marquess of Londonderry, J. L. Garvin, in England, Laval, Doriot, Dfat, in France, bear a huge responsibility for bringing their country to defeat partial to England total to France.

No ! What was conspicuous was that the Western Democracies had lost faith, in themselves and in their principles. Though this moral crisis was undoubtedly the result of Nazi propaganda - which for years led the public

to be entertained by such delusions as the refusal of the Democracies to make at Versailles a generous and just peace; that Germany was crushed, impoverished and has become a nation among the "have not" - it was to a large extent the result of some other delusions entertained within the Democracies themselves, that "war doesn't pay", "settles nothing" and in the end there is no victor; that all these horrors, concentration camps, mass murders, wholesale deportations, simply "could not be done". This "guilt-complex, this loss of faith paralyzed their will and gave birth to a wave of "Mescalpism" (161) which reached its zenith at Munich, without which the pathetic succession of concessions and surrenders, and betrayal could not have been possible. Mescalpa ! Mescalpa ! Everyone of Hitler's demands - aggression is the right word - was met with a perfect frenzy, of breast-beating. Versailles, you see !

It was only natural that on the morrow of the great bloodbath in 1918, sounded the shouting "Down with war". But it was quite illogical even for the sake of peace, to grow pro-German of the worst kind, in being ready to satisfy the demands of the non yet repented authors of war, and in wanting reconciliation with them at all cost. It was as if a doctor was trying to close a wound before having washed and disinfected it. With the help of England,

(161) Used by Etienne Mantoux in : The Carthaginian Peace.

Germany in the post-war period slowly came out of the abyss, as a sunk ship filled with compressed air, slowly emerges above the waters. In 1939, to show its gratitude this ship has pointed its guns to the British fleet ! Tu l'as voulu Georges Dandin !

A more complete failure, the history of European diplomacy has never recorded ! "We cannot escape war by running away from it ;;;." said Lord Cecil because "there is no escape from blackmail by submission" (162).

We all know the old story and its moral : how a kingdom was lost, "and all for the want of a nail". Here one should say : How peace was lost and all for the want of collective security ! With the result that when war broke out in 1939, the Western Democracies fought for self-preservation !

Thanks to the heroism and sacrifice of countless millions, humanity today, in the words of Lord Beveridge, is given a "second chance" to achieve world peace and international security. How ? Obviously through international cooperation. However, let the Great Powers who are in charge today of ensuring lasting peace, show the world that they have learned sufficiently from the lessons of the past.

Victors of today ! Beware ! The maintenance of the peace is no easy matter because successful international cooperation is no easy task. The more so that the present international situation rests on conflicts of imperialism between a small number of great nations.

(162) Quoted by F.L. Schuman in : "International Politics", p.610.

As a matter of fact, besides the chief problem of what to do with Germany, there is the much more important one of how to provide for a solid basis for an alliance between Russia and the west. Unless these two problems are solved, healthy young Germans, French poilus, English Tommies and American and Russian soldiers will continue killing one another every 20 years or so.

Unfortunately the world of today is once more not engaged on the path that leads to lasting peace. The organisation of the U.N.O. is repeating the same mistakes of the League of Nations, because it rested once more on the disastrous principle of sovereign nations. "As long as there are sovereign nations possessing great power," said Einstein, "war is inevitable". And Mr. Bevin in July 1945 added : "The world will burst out, if a super-state is not immediately constituted". In other words the first thing to do to establish peace, should be to destroy the myth of national sovereignty. "Peace", said Sir William Beveridge, "like all other things worth having can be had only at a price. Lasting peace today is worth a much higher price than ever it was before, because the alternative of war is so much more dreadful" (163). This price should be national sovereignty. The citizens of the different states, must accept to become the citizens of the world. Yes international citizen, before whom the destructive force of nationalism, which is the appanage - I should say the egoism - of a collectivity, should vanish before a new

(163) Sir William Beveridge - The Price of Peace, p.11

Both Einstein + Bevin's quotation from : L'Orient, Nov. 1945.

humanism ! Some feel may be a little bit sceptic about it: let them bear their culpa, for it was this scepticism that killed the League of Nations and that will kill tomorrow all attempt aimed at the organization of peace !

On the other hand the world today is sharply divided into two distinct blocs, which oppose each other systematically on all points : the Anglo-Saxon bloc and the Russian. How can therefore, one speak of international security, and international organization ? Wouldn't it be simpler to ask oneself what are the chances of an eventual conflict between these two blocs.

The short run answer is simple : there will be no war because the U.S.A., pacific as they are would not declare war unless they are provoked, and because Russia today fears war that she considers to be a national suicide under the present circumstances. Yet Russia does not want peace, the real peace which would diminish the chances of success of her propazanda.

The sad conclusion, which imposes itself is that on the morrow of this war, as it was on the morrow of the last war, we are still living a mediocre and precarious armistice. Will it end by a war or will it turn into a stable peace ? Let us hope that, force which for a long time has served the purpose of war, will now be used in the interest of peace. For actually, the question is no more to know if the world will live in peace: it is simply to know if it will live ! !

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