The Foreign Secretaryship of Sir Samuel Hoare

(Later Lord Templewood)

Lois M. Vallely

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, McGill University, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dept. of History,
McGill University,
Montreal.

April, 1962.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

In an analysis of British foreign policy, it may be possible to attempt a consideration of every aspect of the foreign relations of the United Kingdom, during the term of office of an individual Foreign Secretary. Such an approach, however, while it may force new data to the surface, will render difficult any attempt to draw the most significant issues into sharp focus. Therefore, it has been decided to concentrate on the two main problems, which confronted Sir Samuel Hoare as British Foreign Secretary - the proposal for a naval agreement with Germany, and the Ethiopian crisis. In this way, an attempt has been made to draw out the governing features of British policy which determined the course of action on these two questions. Owing to the far-reaching consequences of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, this dispute has received greater attention than the Anglo-German Naval Agreement.

The main difficulty, with regard to source material, is that the Second Series of Documents on British Foreign Policy,[1] which is, as yet, incomplete, does not include the documents which pertain to the period when Hoare was Foreign Secretary (June 7 - December 18, 1935).

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor H. Noel Fieldhouse for his valuable suggestions and general assistance in the preparation of this thesis.

---

1. Documents on British Foreign Policy (1919-39), edited by E.L. Woodward and Rohan Butler.

CHAPTER I

THE ANGLO-GERMAN NAVAL AGREEMENT

> "The very first paper of importance that I found on my Foreign Office tray was the draft of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. Ribbentrop was already in London awaiting its signature."[1]

The signing of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement by Sir Samuel Hoare on June 18, 1935, after only ten days as Foreign Secretary, was really an outcome of negotiations begun by his predecessor, Sir John Simon. Nevertheless, the agreement was sanctioned during the Foreign Office of Hoare and therefore must be examined in some detail within the scope of this thesis.

The agreement was signed at the conclusion of talks which began in London on June 4, 1935, under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon. The proposal to hold naval talks in London was first made by Simon during the course of his visit to Berlin, in March of the same year. The agreement represented an attempt to control naval armaments and, therefore, a brief glance at the problem of disarmament is a necessary preface to its study.

In 1935, German naval construction, as well as German armaments on land and in the air, was restricted, in theory at least, by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. According to Article 181 of that treaty,[2] German naval forces were to be limited to six battleships, six light cruisers, twelve destroyers, twelve torpedo

---

1. Templewood, Viscount - Nine Troubled Years, p.139

2. H C Cmd. 153 of 1919, 86, LIII, 203.

boats. In addition, Germany was prohibited from maintaining submarines.

The disarmament of Germany was to have been a preface to world disarmament. The need for general disarmament as a preface to world peace was expressed by the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, at the Peace Conference at Versailles:

> "If the League of Nations is to be practical, the delegates must make up their minds as soon as possible regarding the question of disarmament .... It was evident that a league of nations would be a sham if there is no disarmament."[1]

At the Conference, a similar sentiment was evident in a memorandum from Prime Minister Lloyd George to Clemenceau, head of the French delegation:

> "... the first thing to do is that the leading members of the League of Nations should arrive at an understanding between themselves in regard to armaments."[2]

It was in keeping with these sentiments that the British Government embarked on a policy of national disarmament. The policy rested partly on a lingering faith in pacifism and partly on the desire to curtail government expenditure on armaments. It was with one eye on the budget that the War Cabinet in 1919 decided that service departments should frame their estimates on the assumption that:

> "... the British Empire will not be engaged in any great war during the next ten years, and that no expeditionary force will be required."[3]

---

1. Quoted in Chaput, Rolland - Disarmament in British Foreign Policy, p.253.

2. Ibid, p.266

3. Quoted in Churchill, W.S. - The Gathering Storm, p.50-51.

This "ten-year rule" remained in effect until 1932, when it was abandoned. The disarmament programme, however, was not reversed until 1934, when it was no longer possible to base defence estimates on assumptions such as that of the British ambassador in Berlin in 1923, who reported that Germany was disarmed:

> "... far beyond the point where any danger need be feared by England from the undue military or naval strength of Germany."[1]

The policy of national disarmament in Britain was coupled with a desire to see Germany restored to a position of equality with the great nations of the world. This was a programme which found favour with both the moralists who felt that the injustice done to Germany by the Versailles Treaty must be rectified, and with the traditionalists who wanted to see a restoration of the Balance of Power in Europe. The German Government naturally resented the perpetuation of the armament restrictions imposed by the Versailles Treaty. As early as 1924, Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of the Labour Government, spoke in tones sympathetic to the German position:

> "The Preamble to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles implies ... that the disarmament of Germany is to be a preliminary step to a general limitation of the armaments of all nations. His Majesty's Government have always associated the two things."[2]

Similarly, Sir John Simon, while Foreign Secretary in the National Government from 1931-35, frequently expressed the need for recognition of the right of Germany to equality in armaments. He

---

1. Quoted in Wolfers, Arnold - Britain and France Between Two Wars, p.243

2. Quoted in Chaput, Op.cit., p.234.

agreed with MacDonald that:

> "... the Treaty of Versailles ... contemplates a general limitation of armaments, which would be generally applied ..."[1]

The Labour Party, in particular, proved unquestioning in its faith in disarmament as a prerequisite to world peace. Accordingly, in 1932, the Labour Conference at Leicester passed a resolution condemning:

> "... the doctrine that armaments give security, and declares its unqualified hostility to the rearming of any country in any circumstances."[2]

The policy of the Liberal Party has been summarized by Sir Herbert Samuel, who was Leader of the Liberal opposition in the Commons from 1933-35:

> "Ever since Versailles, the policy advocated by the Liberal party had been to maintain peace through, first, Collective Security; second, a general disarmament at lower levels; third, the use by the League of Nations of sanctions, economic and military, against any state which should defy its authority and engage in aggression."[3]

Prior to the advent of Hitler to power in Germany, in 1933, we see a peculiar alignment of forces in Britain in favour of disarmament and a conciliatory policy toward Germany. A period of relative calm on the continent made possible a policy of disarmament which appealed both to the traditionalists and the collectivists. The traditional policy of maintaining a Balance of Power on the

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 265, May 13, 1932, col. 2326.

2. Quoted in Hogg, Quinton - The Left Was Never Right, p.46

3. Samuel, Viscount - Memoirs, p.269.

continent required the restoration of Germany as a Great Power. The collectivists, on the other hand, put their faith in the League and in collective security and regarded the maintenance of national armaments as a cause of war. In addition, they favoured concessions to Germany to redress the wrongs of the Versailles Treaty.

Arnold Wolfers interprets British policy prior to 1933 in this way:

> "The fundamental difference between the starting points taken by Britain and France ... can be accounted for mainly by the fact that Britain, because of her insular position, had for a longer period of years no reason for concern about a rise of German power. So remote was any German menace to the British Isles or the Empire that the fears of others were hardly understood, and the change when it came had to assume major proportions before it was fully realized."[1]

At the World Disarmament Conference, convened at Geneva on February 2, 1932, the German delegation was most anxious to press its claim for equality. When the other conference delegates proved tardy in making a practical policy of the accepted principle of equality, German objections grew increasingly emphatic. Finally, on October 14, 1933, in a broadcast speech to the nation, Hitler announced the withdrawal of Germany from the Disarmament Conference. In the same address, the Chancellor gave notice of the intention of the German Government to resign its membership in the League of Nations.

Official notification of withdrawal was given to the Disarmament Conference by Von Neurath, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs:

---

1. Wolfers, Op.cit., p.243.

> "... it is now clear that the Disarmament Conference will not fulfill what is its sole object, namely, general disarmament. It is also clear that this failure of the Conference is due solely to the unwillingness on the part of the highly armed states to carry out their contractual obligation to disarm. This renders impossible the satisfaction of Germany's claim to equality of rights .... The German Government is accordingly compelled to leave the Disarmament Conference."[1]

Simon now saw the central issue as:

> "... how to reconcile Germany's demand for equality with France's desire for security. It is a terrible problem charged with the most potent and persistent of all historic influences which divide nations .... the whole British policy has been directed ... to promote reconciliation between them and to meet the supreme need of the world for peace by turning the minds of both from the past and inviting their co-operation in the future."[2]

An agreement on disarmament was difficult to achieve with Germany in the Disarmament Conference; with her out of the Conference it was impossible. Stanley Baldwin, Lord President of the Council, saw dangers in this situation:

> "You may have a disarmament of all countries to the level of existing German armaments; you may have a limitation of armaments at a point which excludes all offensive weapons .... In that event you would have the heavily armed nations disarming to a point. You would have Germany in time rearming to that point. The third alternative is competition in armaments. Those are three possibilities. What I say is that in no circumstances must the third alternative be reached."[3]

The advent of Hitler to power had brought the period of unreality to an end. Gradually the forces, in Britain, which had been

---

1. Quoted in Survey of International Affairs, 1933, p.306
2. Quoted in Simon, Sir John - Retrospect, p.186
3. Quoted in Survey, 1935, Vol. I, p.13

almost unanimous in their support of disarmament began to divide. The areas of division fell, generally speaking, along party lines. The Labour Party, on the whole, remained faithful to the League ideal, and to the policy of disarmament as a preface to world peace. Conservatives, on the other hand, moved slowly in the direction of rearmament. The country as a whole remained pacifist. The results of a by-election held in East Fulham on October 25, 1933, were generally accepted as a clear proof that the country opposed rearmament. The Labour Party, in the by-election, based its campaign on an appeal to pacificism. George Lansbury led the campaign:

> "I am asking for votes for peace and disarmament; my opponent demands armaments and preparations for war."
>
> "I would close every recruiting station, disband the army and dismiss the air force. I would abolish the whole dreadful equipment of war and say to the world: 'Do your worst'."[1]

The result of the by-election was the defeat of the National Government's candidate by 4,840 votes. The Labour victory was all the more marked in view of the fact that the seat had previously been held by a Conservative with a majority of 14,521. Therefore, the election results were generally interpreted as a vote for pacificism. Any rearmament proposals subsequently made by the National Government, therefore, tended to be extremely cautious.

In November, 1933, Simon warned the House of Commons that some rearmament was necessary to national security:

---

1. Quoted in Templewood, Op.Cit., p.126-7.

> "... the conditions for isolation have disappeared and cannot exist. We shall not increase our influence for peace by declaring that it does not matter to us what our neighbours in Europe do or do not do."[1]

In a similar vein, Lord Londonderry, Secretary of State for Air, urged on the House of Lords that:

> "... we must, however reluctantly, abandon the policy of unilateral disarmament which in the present unfortunate state of affairs is manifestly not only useless, but even dangerous for us to pursue further."[2]

Despite a reversal of its policy on national disarmament, however, the Government continued to press for a recognition of Germany's rights. The practical necessity of recognising Germany's claim to equality was emphasized in a memorandum of January 29, 1934, which the British Government communicated to the Governments represented at the Disarmament Conference. The memorandum stated:

> "... that an international agreement based on the admitted principle of rights in a regime of security necessarily involved that the situation must be reached in which arms of a kind permitted to one state cannot be denied to another."[3]

The reply of the French Government to the note serves to underline the different view of security held across the channel:

> "... the French Government could accept no proposal which would render more serious the disarmament of France, while granting, on the other hand, to Germany an immediate legalization, which could only be limited with difficulty, of a rearmament already realized in violation of the treaties."[4]

---

1. Quoted in Wolfers, Op.cit., p.254.
2. Quoted in Chaput, Op.cit., p.357
3. H C Cmd. 4498 of 1933-4, 4, XXVII, 1106.
4. Quoted in Survey, 1935, Vol. I, p.23

Nevertheless, Sir John Simon continued to plead for the recognition of the right of Germany to equality:

> "... Germany's claim to equality of rights in the matter of armaments cannot be resisted and ought not to be resisted ... you will have to face some rearmament by Germany."[1]

Wolfers sees the change in policy of the British Government after 1933 in this way:

> "... the British Government did not drop the idea that Germany's advance might come to a halt of its own accord if justice were done to Germany's claim and if radical revision of the treaties in the East was achieved through negotiation; but it was not willing any longer to run the risk of remaining unprepared in case its expectations were disappointed .... The policy of appeasement was therefore now accompanied by feverish British rearmament and closer military understanding with the French .... Conciliation moves were now interpreted by the Germans as only a device to gain time until rearmament should put Britain in a position where she could dictate her own terms."[2]

In 1934, the National Government introduced its first feeble measures for rearmament. The programme called for forty-one new air squadrons for Home Defence. Both Baldwin and Simon were now convinced that Britain could no longer pursue the course of unilateral disarmament. In their view, this course had actually weakened Britain's position in disarmament negotiations with other nations. In defending the proposed increases in the House of Commons on July 30, 1934, Baldwin pointed out that:

> "It is even possible that had our own scale of armaments been higher we should have been better able to influence the course of the Disarmament Conference."

---

1. Quoted in Chaput, Op.cit., p.242

2. Wolfers, Op.cit., p.243.

> "The old frontiers are gone. When you think of the defence of England, you can no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover, you think of the Rhine. That is where our frontier lies .... I am confident that I am asking the House to-day to approve not only what is absolutely necessary but what is the least that I think we ought to ask the House to give assent to ..."[1]

Simon agreed that the British position at the Disarmament Conference had been weak:

> "No doubt our record of unilateral disarmament in advance of corresponding action by other Powers had given us a strong moral position, but after all a sense of rectitude is not always the best attitude for persuading others to repent ..."[2]

Members of the Labour Party, along with a number of Liberals, expressed their opposition to the Government's rearmament proposals by moving a vote of censure regretting that:

> "His Majesty's Government should enter upon a policy of rearmament neither necessitated by any new commitment nor calculated to add to the security of the nation, but certain to jeopardize the prospects of international disarmament and to encourage a revival of dangerous and wasteful competition in preparation for war."[3]

Clement Attlee supported the motion of censure by denying:

> "... the need for increased air arms .... We deny the proposition that an increased British Air Force will make for the peace of the world, and we reject altogether the claim of parity. This Government by endeavoring to persuade the people that they are going to get some sort of defence by this addition to air armaments is really deceiving them."[4]

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 273, July 30, 1934, col. 2332-9.
2. Ibid, col. 2438
3. Ibid, col. 2325
4. Ibid, col. 2349.

Another Labour M.P., Sir Stafford Cripps, agreed that rearmament was dangerous:

> "It is a fallacy, if one is examining the methods by which security can be attained, to start upon the assumption that we get security by increase of air armaments or an increase of any form of armaments ..."
>
> "... disarmament is the essential feature in the safety and security of the world."[1]

Labour opposition to rearmament was coupled with its faith in collective security as a system which would eliminate war. Their faith in the League and in the necessity of eliminating national armaments had true religious fervor. One of their main tenets was the belief that the mass of the common people throughout the world were internationally-minded and could be appealed to on the basis of reason and justice to support the League and thus eliminate war.

As long as the need for security was not of paramount importance to Britain, a policy which equated collective security with unilateral disarmament did not appear too contradictory. When, however, Britain's position in Europe was not secure, i.e. once Hitler had appeared on the scene, the notion of supporting the League while remaining disarmed seemed to the traditionalists to be paradoxical.

Faith in the efficacy of collective security was also partly based on belief in the ability of economic sanctions to deter an aggressor. Clement Attlee, therefore, when he supported the above motion of censure, emphasized that the existence of the League eliminated the necessity of national armaments:

---

1. Ibid, col. 2425.

> "The League of Nations does not say that you must keep a force of this or that size. The League of Nations was founded on the idea of the reduction of armaments and not the increase of armaments.
>
> "We are standing on the principle of collective security under the obligations which have been taken up by Governments of all parties ..."[1]

The Disarmament Conference had collapsed largely owing to the conflicting demands of Germany and France. The conflict between the German claim for equality and the French demand for security was never settled. The British continued to recognise the validity of both claims, but found no solution to the dilemma.

In February of 1935, when British and French ministers conferred in London, the British Government seemed to support the French view at least to the extent of denying the right of unilateral denunciation of treaties. A joint communiqué, issued on February 3, stated that the two Governments:

> "... are agreed that neither Germany nor any other Power whose armaments have been defined by the Peace Treaties is entitled by unilateral action to modify these obligations."[2]

The communiqué went on to suggest an air pact of the Locarno powers. This suggestion provided the German Government with an opportunity to initiate discussions with the British Government in Berlin. Accordingly, an invitation was issued, as a result of which arrangements were made for Sir John Simon to visit Berlin in March. Before accepting the invitation, Simon received the assurance of the German Government

---

1. Ibid, col. 2344.

2. H C Cmd. 4798 of 1934-5, 2-3, XXIV, 90-91.

that the object of the meeting would be to discuss all the matters referred to in the communiqué of February 3.[1]

Simon's Berlin visit was scheduled for March 7. On the sixth, it was announced that the visit had been postponed at the request of the German Government. Simon explained in the House of Commons that the visit had been postponed because the German Chancellor had caught a cold.

Most observers felt that the real reason for the postponement was the publication on March 4 of the British White Paper on Defence.[2] The laying of the Paper had been greeted by loud protests in the German press.[3] This White Paper is of interest not merely because its publication resulted in the postponement of the Berlin meeting, but because the Paper, itself, and the debates in the House of Commons on the Paper, clearly reveal the main problems in defence which faced the British Government in 1935. The purpose of the Paper was to provide justification for an increase in Defence Estimates. It was clearly stated that the British policy of unilateral disarmament had not led the world to disarmament:

> "We ... are approaching a point when we are not possessed of the necessary means of defending ourselves against an aggressor."

German rearmament, in particular, necessitated counter-measures by Britain:

> "Germany was not only rearming openly on a large scale, despite the provisions of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles .... All the large Powers except the United Kingdom were adding to their armed forces."

---

1. H C Cmd. 5143 of 1935-6, 19, XXVII, 77

2. H C Cmd. 4827 of 1934-35, XIII, 803-812

3. Reported in The Times (London), March 6 and 7.

> "This rearmament, if continued at its present rate, unabated and uncontrolled, will aggravate the existing anxieties of the neighbours of Germany, and may consequently produce a situation where peace will be in peril."[1]

The White Paper serves to reveal the serious weakness of British defences in 1935. The apologetic tone of the Paper shows that the Government anticipated country-wide hostility to any proposals for increased expenditure on armaments. A full awareness of the deficiencies of British defences is essential to the understanding of the policies pursued by the British Government, both in the acceptance of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, and in the handling of the Ethiopian crisis.

The basic problems confronting Britain in 1935 were those which faced her throughout the 1930's. Generally speaking, there was great faith among the British public in the League of Nations ideal. This faith was not shared in France where the League was regarded as valuable only to the degree that it provided protection for France from Germany. The divergence in policy between the British and French Governments became more obvious after the advent of Hitler to power in Germany in 1933.

France was unwilling at any time between the two wars to regard Germany as other than a hostile power. British policy vacillated between recognition of Germany as a potential enemy and recognition of her as a possible ally. By 1935, it was becoming increasingly difficult to consider Germany as other than a potential foe. The policy of the British Government, however, was not to treat Germany as an overt enemy but to

---

1. HC Cmd. 4827 of 1934-35, 5-6, XIII, 807-8.

pursue faithfully any policy which might prevent a real cleavage between the United Kingdom and Germany.

At the same time, by 1935, the British Government realized a real need to consolidate its position in the event of a crisis with Germany. Hence we witness the reluctance of the Government to alienate Mussolini over the Ethiopian war. Perhaps the chief difficulty facing the Government was the problem of reconciling a policy of consolidation of strength with a policy of loyalty to the League. On occasion, public support of the League and faith in disarmament as a panacea for war put the Government in a position where its public avowals of support of the League appeared hypocritical in the light of actual policies pursued.

The attitude of the Press and Parliament to the White Paper on Defence serves to illustrate the opposition to rearmament in the country at large. Many of the most ardent supporters of collective security relentlessly argued against rearmament. Such was the line taken by the Executive Committee of the League of Nations Union which adopted the following condemnation of the Government:

> "... His Majesty's Government have abandoned the policy of extending and reinforcing the collective system of defence, have fallen back on the assumption that national armaments alone can provide security, and have weakened in their determination to work for a general reduction of armaments by international agreement."[1]

The attitude of the Daily Herald was even more critical:

---

1. Quoted in The Times (London), Mar. 9, 1935.

> "Let us hope the effects will not be catastrophic .... Germany is repeatedly accused of breaking the treaty ... aggravating the situation ... bringing about a situation which imperils peace .... The White Book is not only an insult to Germany ... it is also the rejection of the entire system of collective security. But let the world understand - it is important that the world understands - that this is not the voice of the British people."[1]

In the debate in the House of Commons on March 11, considerable opposition to the Paper was expressed. Speaking for the Labour Party, Clement Attlee urged that:

> "... there be no mistake about this White Paper. It marks a complete change of policy. We are back in a pre-war atmosphere. We are back in the system of alliances and rivalries and an armaments race."[2]

Sir Herbert Samuel agreed:

> "Every nation ... has an obligation for the sake of the Covenant, not to arm, but to disarm."[3]

A defence of the Government's policy was made by Stanley Baldwin:

> "What we ask ... is that those forces which we have, and with which we are satisfied, if the call should come either to repel an aggressor or to fulfill our obligations under pacts or under the Covenant - that those forces shall be as well equipped for the purpose they have in view as it is possible to equip them ..."[4]

Among many supporters of the Covenant and of collective security there was a firm faith that collective security made

---

1. Quoted in Hogg, Quinton, Op.cit., p.137.
2. H. of C. Deb., 5S., Vol. 299, March 11, 1935, col. 43.
3. Ibid, col. 61
4. Ibid, col. 48.

rearmament unnecessary and that rearmament rendered collective security impossible. Those who adhered to this view maintained an almost incessant attack on the foreign policy of the British Government throughout 1935.

On the same day that the debate on the White Paper was held in the House of Commons, the Times reported that the German Government had renewed the invitation for talks in Berlin to take place between March 24 and 28. Once again the Berlin visit was almost cancelled, when on March 16, the German Government decreed its conscription law providing for a peace-time army of thirty-six divisions.[1] This law clearly represented a repudiation of the disarmament terms of the Versailles Treaty, and, therefore, the British Government issued a protest on March 18, claiming that:

> "... such a declaration is a further example of unilateral action, which ... is calculated seriously to increase uneasiness in Europe."

The note, however, went on to say that:

> "His Majesty's Government are most unwilling to abandon any opportunity which the arranged visit might afford of promoting general understanding ..."[2]

The determination of the British Government to proceed with the talks despite the announcement of the conscription law emphatically reveals the anxiety of the British to have Germany return to the diplomatic circle of Europe. That this anxiety was known in Germany

---

1. For text, see Survey, 1935, Vol. I, p.141

2. H C Cmd. 4848 of 1934-5, 2-3, XXIV, 132-3

is revealed in a memorandum of the German Ambassador in London to the German Foreign Ministry:

> "... we hold certain trump cards, the best of which is Britain's aversion to a breach with Germany ..."[1]

Accompanied by Anthony Eden, Sir John Simon held talks with Hitler, in Berlin, on March 25 and 26. During the talks, Hitler clarified his demands for rearmament. Germany required thirty-six divisions on land. Hitler asserted that Germany now had all types of arms possessed by other countries. As to the navy, Germany claimed a tonnage equal to thirty-five percent of the British tonnage, and in the air, parity with Great Britain.[2]

Further details of the talks are provided in a memorandum of the German Government to their Ambassador in London.[3] According to this note, the representatives of the Government of the United Kingdom expressed a desire to have Germany participate in the Naval Conference to be held at the end of the year. As a prelude to the Conference, the British representatives suggested informal conversations between Germany and Britain in London at some future date. At the same time, Simon expressed a reluctance to accept the ratio system as a basis for agreement. The British Government, along with the American and Japanese, Simon maintained, would prefer an agreement on naval construction programmes for a given number of years. Hitler, however, expressed faith in the ratio system. Simon also expressed the view that the

---

1. Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series C, Vol. 3, No. 542, p.1021

2. Announced by Sir John Simon in H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 300, Apr. 9, 1935, col. 986.

3. Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series C, Vol. 3, No. 555, p.1043-80.

demand for a fleet equal to thirty-five percent of the strength of the British fleet was so large as to make a general agreement almost impossible.

The main outcome of the talks in Berlin was a clear statement of Germany's rearmament claims and Simon's invitation to Germany to participate in naval talks in London. In Germany, the talks were followed by an acceleration of the naval construction programme.

Some criticism has been levelled at the British Government for presenting the London naval talks with Germany as a preliminary to the general Naval Conference. The critics maintain that Germany was not to be one of the conference members and that therefore preliminary talks would not be in order. This attack, however, cannot stand up in the light of the German documents which authenticate Simon's statements as to the purpose of the London conversations.

In Britain, prior to the talks, there was considerable support for a conciliatory policy toward Germany. The Liberal leader in the Lords, Lord Lothian, in particular, had for some time supported Germany's claim to equality, as in his letter to the Times on January 31, 1935:

> "The central fact is that Germany does not want war and is prepared to renounce it absolutely as a method of settling her disputes with her neighbours, provided she is given real equality ..."

The Times, itself, supported friendship with Germany as in its editorial of April 10:

> "... if much more time passes it may be impossible to bring Germany into a collective system on any terms and the chance of any sort of limitation may be lost for a generation."

Sir Herbert Samuel, on April 10, addressing a meeting of the National Liberal Club, urged revision of the Treaty of Versailles to end:

> "... Germany's one-sided disarmament which we indignantly rejected for ourselves."[1]

The official policy of the British Government remained one of opposition to the unilateral repudiation of treaties. This policy was clearly stated in the joint Resolution issued by the United Kingdom, France, and Italy at the conclusion of the Stresa Conference (April 11 – 14):

> "The three Powers ... find themselves in complete agreement in opposing ... any unilateral repudiation of treaties which may endanger the peace of Europe ..."[2]

A similar line was taken at the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations, which had been convened at Geneva on April 16, at the request of the French Government owing to their anxiety at German rearmament. A resolution was passed by the Council which:

> "... condemns any unilateral repudiation of international obligations."[3]

At both these meetings, the British Government stood firmly behind France in condemning unilateral repudiation of treaties. Meanwhile, German naval construction proceeded. At the same time, plans continued for the naval talks which were scheduled for the first week of May.

---

1. Quoted in The Times (London), Apr. 11, 1935.
2. H C Cmd. 4880 of 1934-5, 4, XXIV, 710
3. League of Nations Journal, May 1935, p.551.

On May 1, however, Hitler suggested postponement of the talks until May 15 when he planned to make a detailed reply to the resolution of the League Council.[1] When the speech was actually made in the Reichstag on May 21, Hitler claimed that it was not Germany which:

> "... unilaterally violated the Versailles Treaty but the other Powers who violated by failing to disarm. It was impossible for the German Government to return to the League of Nations until she had been granted equality of status."

The Chancellor went on to reassert German naval claims and assure the British that Germany did not intend to rival the British fleet:

> "The limitation of the German navy to thirty-five percent of the British navy is still fifteen percent below the total tonnage of the French fleet ... the German Government declare definitely that this is Germany's final and fixed demand."
>
> "The German Government voluntarily recognise the supreme vital importance, and thus the justification, for a dominating protection of the British world Empire at sea ..."[2]

Meanwhile, plans for the naval talks in London continued. The British Government maintained that the talks to begin June 4 were to be of a purely informal nature.

The talks themselves were spread over two periods - June 4-8, and June 14-18. During the course of the talks the British Cabinet shuffle took place.[3] On June 7, Stanley Baldwin replaced Ramsay MacDonald

---

1. Reported in The Times (London), May 1, 1935.
2. H C Cmd. 5143 of 1935-6, 32-3, XXVII, 90-91.
3. Reported in The Times (London), June 8, 1935.

as Prime Minister, and Sir Samuel Hoare came to the Foreign Office to take the place of Sir John Simon, who became Home Secretary. In addition, a new post was created for Anthony Eden, who was to be Minister in charge of League of Nations' Affairs.

The British delegation at the naval talks was headed by Foreign Office representative Robert Craigie, who was assisted by Admirals Riddle and Monsell. Joachim von Ribbentrop headed the German delegation, Admiral Roeder being his chief technical advisor. The first meeting was presided over by Sir John Simon.

The first issue which arose at the conference was the question of accepting the ratio system as a basis for agreement. The British wished to postpone discussion of this point until communication with other Governments (i.e. France, United States, Japan, and Italy) had been completed. German tactics, however, rendered this approach impossible. Ribbentrop insisted on settlement of the ratio question as a necessary preliminary to any detailed negotiations. In his memoirs, Ribbentrop has described his thinking:

> "I ... considered it necessary to conclude a binding agreement with Britain immediately, for otherwise I foresaw the most serious difficulties. Clearly even if Britain was prepared to accept Germany's demand, she was bound to encounter energetic opposition if she consulted Paris in accordance with her alliance with France."[1]

This strategy proved successful largely because of the extreme anxiety of the British not to lose the opportunity to come to an agreement which might limit German naval reconstruction.

---

1. Von Ribbentrop, Joachim - The Ribbentrop Memoirs, p.40.

The failure of the British Government to communicate adequately with the French prior to signing the naval agreement has been one of the main criticisms levelled at the British Cabinet. Again there is an appearance of anxiety and haste on the part of the British Government to formalize any kind of agreement with Germany.

On June 12, it was reported in The Times that summaries of the conversations in London had been communicated to the Powers who had signed the Versailles Treaty. Almost immediately, the American and Japanese Governments communicated their approvals to the British Government.[1] The Italian Government did not reply until June 17, and then its position was not clearly stated. Rome complained that the British memorandum was lacking in detail, particularly with regard to the proposed German building programme.[2]

On June 14, the Times Correspondent reported from Paris that the French Government was working on a reply to the British memorandum. The French Government were seeking further detail on the rate of German construction. They also wondered whether or not the ratio to the strength of the British fleet would be maintained regardless of construction by other countries.

The formal reply of the French Government was received in London on June 17. The text of the reply has not been published but it has been noted that the tone of the reply was unfavourable to acceptance of the proposed naval agreement.

---

1. Reported in The Times (London), June 14, 1935.
2. Ibid, June 18, 1935.

The Paris correspondent of the Times reported:

> "... the French Government take the attitude that Great Britain is not authorized to accept a percentage from Germany which is contrary to the stipulation of the Peace Treaty."[1]

The following day, the Anglo-German Naval Agreement was signed on behalf of the British Government by Sir Samuel Hoare. In the agreement,[2] the British Government accepted the German proposal for a navy in the ratio of 35 : 100 to the total strength in tonnage of the combined fleet of the British Commonwealth of Nations. In the event of any:

> "... abnormal and exceptional construction by other Powers ..."

Germany was to consult with the British Government. It was further agreed that Germany should have the right to a submarine tonnage equal to forty-five percent of the total submarine tonnage of the British Commonwealth of Nations. In special circumstances, Germany might bring her submarine tonnage up to one hundred percent, after discussions with the British Government.

The conclusion of the agreement met with varied reactions throughout the world. The German Press welcomed the agreement. Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung regarded the agreement as:

> "Germany's first freely negotiated armaments agreement."[3]

The German News Agency reported that:

---

1. The Times (London), June 18, 1935.
2. See Appendix p.153
3. Quoted in The Times, (London), June 19, 1935.

> "The agreement settled once and for all Anglo-German naval relations. All competition between the fleets of the two Powers is in future ruled out. A new chapter has opened in the history of the two countries, and a basis has been laid for friendship between England and Germany."[1]

Ribbentrop reports that Hitler called this the happiest day of his life. Ribbentrop, naturally enough, emphasizes the importance of the agreement in this passage from his memoirs:

> "It was significant that it meant the repeal of the disarmament provisions of the Versailles Treaty, officially agreed to by Britain. Incomparably more important, however, appeared to be the understanding which had been reached on naval matters."[2]

The reaction in Paris, as might be expected, was not a favourable one. The initial impact on Paris was reported in the Times on June 19. The French view was that the signature of the agreement represented a complete departure from the principle of Franco-British collaboration as laid down in the communiqué of February 3 and again at Stresa. The bitterest criticism in Paris was levelled at the fact that the comments of the French Government on the proposed agreement had reached London on the seventeenth and the agreement was signed on the eighteenth. The obvious conclusion was that the British had not given due consideration to the views of the French.

Some observers in Paris feared the conclusion of a similar agreement between the United Kingdom and Germany on aviation. Such a development would leave the French alone to negotiate, unsupported,

---

1. Quoted in Ibid, June 19, 1935.

2. Von Ribbentrop, Op.cit., p.40.

on the question of land armaments, which were of vital concern to her. The most extreme pessimists in Paris feared that Britain, having secured a measure of armament control on the sea, and later in the air, would reward Germany by leaving her a free hand in Eastern Europe. Less extreme was the prediction that the French navy, although it would have a fifteen percent superiority over the German navy, would, by 1940, be an inferior force to a newly constructed German fleet.

In order to prevent a dangerous rift in Anglo-French relations, the British Government sent Anthony Eden to Paris, on June 20, for talks with Laval. Eden's task was to explain the British acceptance of the agreement and subsequently to visit Rome for similar talks with Mussolini. The attitude of Pierre Laval, the French Premier, proved more conciliatory than that of the Paris Press and Eden seems to have achieved a measure of success in his mission.

Less favourable was the attitude of M. Pietri, the French Minister of Marine, speaking at Brest on June 27:

> "What has surprised us in the Anglo-German agreement is decidedly not the fresh rearmament on Germany's part .... What has surprised us is the precipitate adhesion of England to this German act - and this in conditions which might make us doubtful, not indeed of England's friendship, but of her traditional prudence ..."[1]

The British Press, on the other hand, was generally favourable to the agreement. On June 20, the Times found it:

> "... quite impossible to see how the acceptance by Germany of a level lower than that of France or Italy can be disadvantageous to those two countries. The British Government were emphatically right to seize the opportunity which was offered ... for making ... a point of departure for a general limitation of European sea armaments."

---

1. Quoted in Survey, 1935, Vol. I, p.187.

The Economist took a highly optimistic view of the agreement, seeing it as:

> "... a happy augury for ... Sir Samuel Hoare, that the first important document to which he has put his name as Foreign Secretary should be one that lays the ghost of Anglo-German naval competition and may prove to be the first step in a voluntary and freely negotiated peace."
>
> "... we may hereafter be able to look back on this week's announcement as the first step in the negotiation of an agreed peace."[1]

Nevertheless, a considerable amount of criticism of the agreement was expressed in the House of Commons. On June 26, F.S. Cocks, a Labour member, asked if the Foreign Minister was:

> "... aware that the treaty obligations of Germany cannot be cancelled by one country alone ..."[2]

Lengthy debates on the agreement were held in the House of Commons on July 11 and July 22. On the eleventh, Sir Samuel Hoare defended the agreement and pointed out the precedent for treating naval disarmament separately from the question of land and air disarmament:

> "The naval question has always been treated apart, and it was always the intention, so far as I know, of the naval Powers to treat it apart."
>
> "We came to the view that there was a chance of making an agreement that seemed on naval grounds manifestly to the advantage of the other naval Powers .... In the opinion of our naval experts, we were advised to accept the agreement as a safe agreement for the British Empire .... We saw a chance that might not recur of eliminating one of the causes that chiefly led to the embitterment before the Great War - the race of German naval arms."[3]

---

1. The Economist, Naval Agreement, Vol. 120, June 22, 1935.
2. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 303, June 26, 1935, col. 1074.
3. Ibid, Vol. 304, July 11, 1935, col. 511-12

Speaking for the Liberal Party, Sir Herbert Samuel supported the agreement because:

> "... it was essential that Herr Hitler's offer should be taken at its face value, accepted and clinched at once."
>
> "If the offer had been rejected ... the German navy would have been built, but, ... it would have been constructed without any limitation at all ..."
>
> "We should realize that the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles are dead ..."

Nevertheless, Samuel noted that:

> "... the matter was not perhaps very happily handled diplomatically."[1]

On the other hand, the attitude of the Labour Party, as voiced in Clement Attlee's speech, was very critical:

> "He (Hoare) welcomed it as a great step towards disarmament - the rearmament of Germany as a great step towards disarmament. We say it is nothing but a steady progress towards rearmament and towards competition in armaments again."[2]

For different reasons, Winston Churchill levelled severe criticism at the naval agreement, seeing it as condoning a programme of construction at maximum activity in Germany:

> "We have condoned and even praised the German treaty breaking in fleet building .... We have ... nullified ... the League of Nations' condemnation of Treaty breaking in respect of armaments."[3]

At the conclusion of the debate, Eden defended the position of the Government:

---

1. Ibid, col. 528-9.
2. Ibid, col. 538.
3. Ibid, col. 543.

> "There has been no question ... of our making it possible for Germany to do something she would not otherwise have done. On the contrary, the purpose of this step has been to circumscribe, by agreement with Germany, the ultimate consequences of the unilateral decision to which Germany had already begun to give effect."
>
> "We regard the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as an essential preparatory step and a direct contribution to the conclusion of agreements regarding armaments generally."[1]

In the House of Commons on July 22, Sir Bolton Eyres Monsell, the First Lord of the Admiralty, was assigned the task of explaining the advantages of the agreement for the Admiralty. He defended the terms of the agreement as necessary to provide some limitation and restriction to naval construction:

> "After December 1936, all the naval agreements under which we have been working for sixteen years come to an end, and unless we can put something in the place of these treaties and agreements, all navies for the future will be entirely unrestricted and unlimited.
>
> "... the Admiralty welcomed the proposition of a great country like Germany to fix her navy forever at a point which we could view without undue anxiety.
>
> "... Germany has laid down this programme ... the ships are on the stocks."[2]

On this occasion, Churchill again attacked the Government's policy and expressed sympathy with the attitude of the French:

> "The entire navy of France, except the latest vessels, will require to be reconstructed. The new German navy, although somewhat behind the French in the matter of percentages, would undoubtedly be overwhelmingly superior from the point of view of matériel."

---

1. Ibid, col. 616.

2. Ibid, July 22, 1935, col. 1538-41.

> "I regret that we have condoned this flagrant breach of the Treaty. It would have been better ... to have carried these matters forward to the League of Nations and endeavoured to use this further breach of the Treaty of Germany as a means of gathering forces for a policy of collective security among the nations of the world."[1]

George Lansbury, Pacifist leader of the Labour Opposition, regarded the agreement as a repudiation of the League of Nations:

> "To-day proves conclusively that so far as the League of Nations is concerned, the Government have given up all faith in the League, all faith in sanctions of any kind, all belief in the validity of that scrap of paper."[2]

Leaving aside criticism of the agreement from a technical point of view, the worst feature of the agreement was that it represented a diplomatic victory for Germany. By signing this agreement, the British Government gave recognition, if not approval, to Germany's rearmament programme despite violation of the Versailles Treaty. It may be argued that the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles were a dead letter in 1935. This is undoubtedly true, but nevertheless, the British Government had been manoeuvred into a position where it did an apparent "about-face" from the line adopted in the communiqué of February 3, and at the Stresa Conference.

The most obvious immediate consequence of the agreement was growing discontent in Paris with the vacillating foreign policy of the British Government. In 1935, because of the Ethiopian crisis, France was faced with a choice between the British navy and the Italian

---

1. Ibid, col. 1553-4.

2. Ibid, col. 1558.

army. After the naval agreement had been signed, the choice became more difficult. For the French, the British navy might now not be as strategically valuable as the Italian army. The conclusion of the agreement certainly did nothing to consolidate an Anglo-French front in the Ethiopian question.

Why then did the British Government sign this agreement which clearly did not represent a politically wise move? The answer must be fear. Throughout all the negotiations there was a great sense of urgency on the part of the British Government. Even prior to Simon's Berlin visit there was an impression of anxiety in his unwillingness to cancel the conversations despite the announcement of Germany's "conscription law". Anxiety was again revealed in the reluctant acceptance of the ratio system by the British delegation in London. The British Cabinet:

> "... agreed that no question of procedure should block the discussion ..."[1]

Considerable pressure to sign the agreement came from the Naval Staff, who:

> "... regarded the offer as supremely important ... it ensured us a superiority over the German Fleet twice as great as we had in 1914, and avoided a race for naval armaments that would beggar the British Treasury."[2]

Pressure from the Admiralty is also mentioned in the memoirs of Lord Vansittart, permanent under-secretary for the Foreign Office:

> "... our Admiralty was painfully interested in limiting the Germans ..."[3]

---

1. Templewood, Op.cit., p.140
2. Ibid, p.141
3. Vansittart, Lord - The Mist Procession, p.525.

The greatest impression of urgency was created by the failure of the British Government to consult, adequately, the French Government prior to signing the agreement. The French had every reason to feel that their communiqué of the seventeenth had been given little consideration in London.

The anxiety of the British Government and the pressure from the Admiralty can be explained only by reference to the weakness of British defences in 1935. This weakness was emphasized in the White Paper issued on March 4. The apologetic tone adopted by the Government, in justifying increased expenditure on defence, is a clear indication of the extreme reluctance of the British public to support any measure of rearmament in 1935.

The Government was faced with the reality of German naval construction and a realisation of the inadequacy of British defences. This inadequacy was, of course, not limited to the navy but was equally the case in the other services. In concluding the naval agreement, the British Government adopted a desperation measure to secure any measure of control over German rearmament and to gain time for an improvement of British defences.

Only with these circumstances in mind can we explain the haste with which the British Government concluded the agreement, and the signature of the agreement despite the fact that it represented a diplomatic victory for Germany and a weakening of Anglo-French solidarity.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND TO THE ETHIOPIAN CRISIS (EVENTS PRIOR TO JUNE 7, 1935)

The Italo-Ethiopian war which began on October 3, 1935, had its origins, technically at least, in an incident which took place at Walwal on December 5, 1934. On December 14, Herouy Walde Sellaisie, the Abyssinian Foreign Minister, sent a note[1] to the Secretary General of the League of Nations drawing the Council's attention to an attack by Italian troops on an Abyssinian detachment on December 5. The Abyssinian troops had been accompanying an Anglo-Abyssinian Commission which was investigating pasture lands in the Abyssinian province of Ogaden. The note pointed out that two protests had been made to the Italian Government and a request made for arbitration under Article 5 of the Italo-Abyssinian Treaty of 1928.[2] The Italian reply, the note said, had been a demand for an indemnity and moral reparation, and a statement that the Italian Government did not see how the incident could be the subject of arbitration.

The Italian Government telegraphed a reply to this note to the Secretary General of the League on December 16. The communiqué pointed out that:

> "The Anglo-Abyssinian Commission ... appeared, on November 23rd, before Walwal, a place which belongs to Italian Somaliland and which has been occupied by Italian troops for some years .... The Abyssinian Commission maintained that Walwal belonged to Abyssinia and that consequently the Abyssinian troops had the right to proceed. The officer commanding the Italian post replied that ... the possession of Walwal was for the two governments to discuss."

---

1. LNOJ, Feb., 1935, p.274

2. See appendix p.153

As a result of this exchange, the Italian letter went on, the Anglo-Abyssinian Commission had left the zone, while the Abyssinian troops remained in front of the post. In the note the Italian Government denied that Italian troops had initiated the attack on December 5:

> "On December 5th, the Abyssinian troops made a sudden attack in force on our post without any provocation.
>
> "The Italian Government accordingly protested to the Addis Ababa Government against the sudden attack, reserving the right to state what reparation it considered due ...
>
> "The Italian Government considered the incident occurred in such clear circumstances that arbitration was not necessary."[1]

That the incident had not taken place in very "clear circumstances" soon became apparent. In a letter of December 15 to the Secretary General,[2] Herouy pointed out that the dispute arose out of a difference in interpretation of the Italo-Abyssinian Treaty of 1908, which had laid down the boundary between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland. Arbitration was therefore deemed necessary to facilitate interpretation of the treaty. In this communication, the Abyssinian Government made a specific appeal to the League Council to examine the present situation under Article 11, paragraph 2 of the League Covenant.[3] During the month of December further charges and counter-charges of acts of aggression near Walwal were made by both Governments.

---

1. LNOJ, Feb., 1935. p.248-9

2. Ibid, p.258

3. See appendix p.154

On January 3, 1935, the Abyssinian Government renewed its request for measures by the League in accordance with Article 11 of the Covenant.[1] At the regular meeting of the League Council, on January 19, the Abyssinian request was placed on the agenda. On this occasion, the Secretary General read letters from the Ethiopian and Italian Governments. The Italian Government, being anxious to withhold the dispute from the jurisdiction of the League, pointed out that:

> "The settlement of the incident might be advantageously pursued in accordance with Article 5 of the Treaty of 1928 between Italy and Abyssinia ..."[2]

The Abyssinian Government accordingly agreed to the postponement of its request to the next session of the Council.

The Council meeting in January witnessed the beginning of a policy of pursuit of a negotiated settlement in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. The British Government favoured a peaceful settlement of the conflict and during the early months of 1935 supported no other policy. This policy was heartily endorsed by the French Government. Indeed, considerable pressure in favour of a negotiated settlement came from Paris and, in particular, from Laval who had concluded successful talks with the Italian Prime Minister, Benito Mussolini, in Rome on January 7, 1935. The purpose of the talks had been to settle any remaining questions concerning the promises made to Italy in the London Agreement of 1915. The failure of the allies to grant territorial concessions to Italy, in accordance with the agreement of 1915, had been a source

---

1. LNOJ, Feb., 1935. p.252.

2. Ibid, p.162.

of grievance in Italy since the Peace Conference of 1919. The chief results of the January conversations[1] were certain territorial concessions to Italy in Africa, particularly on the border of Libya, and a clarification of the rights of Italian residents in French Tunisia. In addition, it was decided to recommend the conclusion of an agreement between Austria and other European states to respect the territorial integrity of the contracting parties. Until such an agreement was concluded, France and Italy would consult one another in the event of any threat to the independence of Austria or to her integrity.

The official reports of the Rome talks made no mention of Ethiopia. There is as yet no evidence to prove that Mussolini and Laval did make any agreement to guarantee Italian interests in Ethiopia. Informed opinion, however, favours the view that some agreement was made to the effect that Mussolini was to have a free hand in Ethiopia. Whether or not a formal agreement was consummated in January, there can be no doubt that henceforth the French were extremely reluctant to weaken the newly established Franco-Italian solidarity. The crisis in Africa was always a matter of secondary or even minor interest to a France which was still most vitally concerned with Europe, and in particular, with her defence against possible aggression by Germany. The French were unwilling to support a request for League action in Ethiopia when such action might very easily weaken her alliance system in Europe.

---

1. For text of agreement,
see Documents on International Affairs, 1935, Vol. I, p.19-25.

Very soon after the Rome talks, suspicions of secret concessions to Mussolini were raised, as in the following comment made in the April issue of Foreign Affairs:

> "The other explanation for the apparent paucity of French concessions to Italy rests on the supposition that in certain secret articles Laval gave Mussolini, if not carte blanche in Abyssinia, at least wide latitude in 'adjusting frontiers'."[1]

A similar interpretation was expressed in an article in the Contemporary Review:

> "As for France ... he (Mussolini) could depend upon the affectionate personal regard of M. Laval, on the subsidized friendship of a large and influential section of the French Press, upon the fears and inclinations of the 'Right' parties, on the very efficient condition of the German army, as guarantees against effective resistance to his plans from Paris."[2]

That an agreement about Ethiopia, at least with regard to economic matters, was made by Mussolini and Laval was confirmed by Sir Samuel Hoare in October, 1935:

> "In January of this year, the French and Italian Governments came to an agreement in Rome, part of which related to Abyssinia. Under this agreement France disinterested herself economically in Abyssinia, except for certain undertakings and except for a specified zone covering the French Railway from Djibouti to Addis Ababa."

Hoare also reported that, in January, the Italian Government inquired into British interests in Abyssinia:

---

1. Foreign Affairs - Woolbert, Robt. - Italy in Abyssinia, Vol. 13, April, 1935.

2. Contemporary Review - Hobhouse, Charles - Great Britain & Geneva, Vol. 147, Feb. 1935.

> "On 29th January, the Italian Government, in bringing the substance of this agreement informally to the notice of His Majesty's Government through the Italian Embassy in London, intimated that they would be glad to exchange views with the United Kingdom concerning the mutual and harmonious development of British and Italian interests in Abyssinia."[1]

During the early stages of the dispute, the British Press saw no crisis developing in Ethiopia. The Economist was particularly optimistic:

> "The dispute between Italy and Abyssinia seems likely to be settled without reaching a critical stage."[2]

In a similar vein, the Times, on February 12, found it:

> "... still too soon to assume that the action of the Italian Government is more than precautionary and defensive."

The official opinion of the British Government was not voiced in the House of Commons until February 13. On that day, Sir John Simon reported that the Italian Government had as a "precautionary and defensive measure" mobilized in Italy two divisions aggregating some 30,000 men. After informing the House that the Italian Government intended to continue negotiations, Simon went on to state that:

> "Our position is that we stand in friendly relations with both these countries and naturally wish to do everything to secure that there is a peaceful conclusion."[3]

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 305, Oct. 22, 1935, col. 24.
2. The Economist - The Abyssinian Affair, Vol. 120, Jan. 26, 1935.
3. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 297, Feb. 13, 1935, col. 1904-5.

Again, on February 18, Simon described the role of the British Government thus far in the dispute. The chief activities of His Majesty's Ambassador at Addis Ababa were devoted to attempts to promote an amicable settlement of the differences between Italy and Ethiopia. Sir John went on to suggest that the British role in the dispute should be a secondary one:

> "... it is not in every case in every part of the world that it is desirable that the British Government should raise every question."[1]

Privately, however, in a letter to King George V, Simon expressed concern over the outcome of the dispute:

> "Italy is at present occupied with the Abyssinian question as to which Sir John greatly fears that a serious outcome is probable. But this must be handled in a way which will not affect adversely Anglo-Italian relations."[2]

The reluctance to cause a rupture in relations between Britain and Italy is the key to the British policy throughout the dispute and certainly provides the basis for British policy prior to September, 1935. The Government was naturally reluctant to alienate Mussolini and perhaps drive him into the arms of Hitler. The British preferred to throw their weight in the direction of promoting negotiations rather than attempting to force Italy to yield in Ethiopia. This policy might have met with some degree of success had not the Government, later in the year, superimposed a second policy of coercion through the League.

---

1. Ibid, Vol. 298, Feb. 18, 1935, col. 9.

2. Quoted in Nicolson, Harold - King George the Fifth, His Life & Reign, p.528.

British policy with regard to the Ethiopian dispute was dictated in part by the impotence of British defences. Simon inferred the weakness of the British position when he spoke in the House of Commons on March 11:

> "The policy of His Majesty's Government is unalterably based upon membership in the League of Nations ... there is no security for the world comparable with the effective working of a real and universal League of Nations.
>
> "... in the present condition, with the League not a universal League and with our own armaments for many years kept at so low a level in the face of increasing armaments abroad, we have to face it and deal with it as it is to be dealt with now."[1]

Not only did the British Government fear a break with Italy but, in addition, there was considerable doubt as to how successful the United Kingdom would be in a war with Italy. If the question of use of force by the League actually arose, the onus of support for League action would fall chiefly on British shoulders. At this time, it was very doubtful if British defences could bear the burden.

By April, however, relations between Italy and Ethiopia did not augur well for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. On March 17, the Ethiopian Government again appealed to the League.[2] This time the appeal was made under Article 15 of the Covenant.[3] The telegram mentioned mobilization of the Italian forces and the constant despatch of troops and war material to the frontier. The Ethiopian Government also charged that the Italian Government had failed to

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 299, Mar. 11, 1935, col. 158.
2. LNOJ, May 1935, p.572
3. See appendix p. 154

enter into any real negotiations. In vain had the Ethiopian Government demanded arbitration of the dispute.

On March 22, the Government of Italy telegraphed a reply to the Secretary General.[1] The movement of troops was necessitated by military measures taken on a much larger scale by Ethiopia. The Italian Government considered that the phase of direct negotiations had not terminated. If, however, an agreement was not reached, the Italian Government agreed to take steps to constitute an arbitration commission. Since this was the procedure agreed to in the exchange of notes on January 19, Article 15 of the Covenant could not be applicable in the dispute.

On the 29th, the Ethiopian Government again communicated a note to the Secretary General.[2] The Government proposed a time limit of thirty days during which the two Governments would negotiate on the appointment of arbitrators and on fixing all the details of the procedure of arbitration. If, at the end of the thirty days, all the details of the arbitration proceedings had not been fixed, and the arbitrators had not been appointed, the Council of the League of Nations would itself be invited to appoint arbitrators. Both Governments would agree not to make any military preparations during the procedure of arbitration. The decision of the arbitrators, once pronounced, would be final and the two Governments would conform to all its terms including any reparations suggested.

---

1. LNOJ, May 1935, p.573.

2. Ibid, p.576.

Again on April 3, in a letter to the Secretary General,[1] the Ethiopian Government requested consideration of the dispute at the League Council meeting in April. The request mentioned the despatch, by Italy, of Egyptian labourers to the frontier area.

The attitude of the Italian Government was that negotiations could still be pursued. In a communiqué of April 10[2] to the Secretary General, Italy suggested the appointment of four arbitrators - two to be chosen by Ethiopia and two by Italy. If no agreement could be reached by the arbitrators, a fifth would be chosen by common consent and the dispute settled by a majority vote.

The British Government was receptive to this policy. On April 3, in the House of Commons, Simon described the official policy of the Government:

> "His Majesty's Government have done everything possible since this problem first arose to influence both sides towards an amicable settlement of their differences, and their efforts will be continued."[3]

Simon met with Laval and Mussolini at Stresa, on April 11 to 14, to discuss matters of concern to their respective Governments. At this conference the so-called "Stresa Front" was established. All three Powers expressed alarm at the rearmament measures recently adopted by the German Government. On the other hand, the Ethiopian question was not mentioned during the conversations. The final declaration of the conference in fact made specific reference to peace in Europe:

---

1. Ibid, p.577
2. Ibid, p.577
3. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 300, Apr. 3, 1935, col. 335.

> "The three Powers, the object of whose policy is the collective maintenance of peace within the framework of the League of Nations, find themselves in complete agreement in opposing, by all practicable means, any unilateral repudiation of treaties which may endanger the peace of Europe, and will act in close and cordial collaboration for this purpose."[1]

In his memoirs, Simon has described his objectives at the Stresa Conference:

> "One was to show the solidarity of the three Powers in the face of Germany's announced increase in military strength, and the other to keep the door open for Germany to return to Geneva and play her proper part in the creation of collective security for Europe."[2]

In the face of German rearmament and, in particular, of the conscription law of March 16, Simon and Laval were extremely anxious to avoid any embarrassment to Mussolini over Ethiopia. Simon decided not to complicate discussions of problems in Europe and hence no mention of Ethiopia was made at Stresa. The failure to discuss the Abyssinian dispute received little comment in Britain at the time and was not questioned in the House of Commons until May 1. On this occasion, Simon replied to a question from Geoffrey Mander that:

> "... the Italo-Ethiopian dispute was never on the agenda of the Stresa Conference and the subject was not discussed there."[3]

Mussolini, it was, who had insisted that the final declaration of the Conference specify peace in Europe. It must be noted, however, that he met with a favourable reception among the British and the

---

1. HC Cmd. 4880 of 1934-5, 4, XXIV, 710
2. Simon, Viscount - Retrospect. The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Viscount Simon, p.203
3. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 301, May 1, 1935, col. 348.

French who were both obviously more concerned with peace in Europe than in Africa.

The silence of Simon at Stresa on the Ethiopian question has been regarded by many observers as tantamount to a recognition of Italian interests in that territory. The reluctance of the British to introduce the subject undoubtedly was interpreted by Mussolini as an indication of the lack of interest of Britain in Abyssinia. The Stresa Conference represented a moment of decision for the British. If ever they were to display a strong hand to force Italy to yield in the dispute, the time for action was at this Conference. The opportunity, however, was let pass. The decision not to weaken the united front in Europe by introducing the Abyssinian dispute was, therefore, a binding one. Britain had committed herself to a policy of acquiescing in at least economic, if not political, penetration by Italy into Ethiopian territory.

On April 15, a Special Meeting of the League Council was held at Geneva. The meeting had been convened at the request of the French Government, which was alarmed at German rearmament. The Council first considered the request of the Abyssinian Government for consideration of their dispute with Italy. The President of the Council suggested postponement of discussion of the dispute until the regular Council meeting in May.

Baron Aloisi, the Italian representative on the Council, stated again that the Italian Government wished to pursue direct negotiations with Ethiopia. The Ethiopian request under Article 15

could not be considered while negotiations were still in progress.[1]

At this time the British Foreign Minister:

> "... entirely shared the President's satisfaction at the spirit of conciliation shown by both parties and his confidence that the spirit of conciliation would be carried into action."[2]

The Council accordingly voted to postpone discussion of the dispute until the regular Council meeting in May.

During the month of April, at both Stresa and Geneva, the Ethiopian problem was swept under the rug. From a technical point of view, the British were in a better position at Geneva than at Stresa. The April Council meeting was an extraordinary one and hence it was in order to shelve the Ethiopian request. Had the British, however, been really sympathetic to the request it doubtlessly would have received consideration by the Council in April. At Geneva, as at Stresa, Simon was chiefly concerned to prevent a rift between Britain and Italy. Britain simply could not afford to see Mussolini enter Hitler's camp.

On May 1, Simon again affirmed that the British Government favoured negotiations and a peaceful solution of the dispute:

> "We have done everything possible and shall continue to do so to help both of these parties, who are in good relations with ourselves."[3]

At this time, in Britain, the question of Italian interests in Ethiopia began to be discussed in earnest. What Italy's real

---

1. LNOJ, May 1935, p.547

2. Ibid, p.548

3. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 301, May 1, 1935, col. 349.

interests were remained somewhat of a mystery. Undoubtedly one concern of Mussolini was to avenge the humiliating defeat suffered by the Italian forces at the hands of the "uncivilized" Abyssinians at Adowa in 1896. Another deep-seated cause of resentment in Italy was the failure of the allies to grant territorial concessions to Italy at Versailles in 1919 - concessions which she had been promised in the London Agreement before her entry into the war.

The Italians themselves emphasized the necessity of expansion and the need for raw materials and new markets. Later in the year, Dr. Augusto Rosso, Italian Ambassador to Washington, mentioned these compelling factors:

> "... what could be more natural than that we should try to accomplish two very desirable objectives at one and the same time: first, termination of an intolerable situation that had harassed us for years, and seemed to have no solution but the ultimate sanction of force; and secondly, the creation of a market which could not compensate for the markets we had lost, but at least might furnish us with much needed raw materials - those raw materials with regard to which we earnestly invited the Great Powers - already in 1920 and not infrequently afterwards - to take a farsighted and constructive point of view.
>
> "Two comparatively small strips of the arid coast of North East Africa, were, practically, all that we possessed, and these colonies, confronted with formidable climatic and physical difficulties, could hope to survive only in the measure that normal and wholesome commercial intercourse with the adjacent hinterland might be established."[1]

Observers who pointed out Italy's need for raw materials

---

1. Address to Order of Sons of Italy, delivered at Boston, Oct. 14, 1935. Quoted in Documents of the American Assoc. for Internat. Conciliation, 1935, p.551.

seldom mentioned which products she could obtain in Ethiopia. There were not many, the main products of Ethiopia being restricted to wheat and cotton. Another persistent Italian claim was the need to bring "civilization" to Ethiopia, where slavery was still a common institution. However valid this claim may have been, the Italians had difficulty in backing up the charges against Ethiopia in view of the fact that Italy had supported Ethiopia's admission to the League of Nations in 1923, a step which placed Ethiopia on a par with "civilized" nations.

Mussolini's main interest was, in all probability, a question of prestige, the desire for Italy to attain a sense of colonial equality with Britain and France.

Even at this time, observers in Britain were still generally confident that a real crisis in Ethiopia would be averted:

> "In view of the serious situation in Europe, Italy cannot afford to become involved in trouble in Africa, which is difficult to localize. Military operations against Abyssinia ... might have grave repercussions in her African possessions and thereby weaken her position in Europe.
>
> "Her most likely policy is one of peaceful penetration and development which may bring much material benefit to the Abyssinians ... in this ... Italy would strengthen her position by close co-operation with Great Britain and France, a policy now made possible by the Pact of Rome."[1]

The Economist, although acknowledging the military preparations of Italy, expressed a similar view on May 11:

---

1. Contemporary Review - Newman, E.W. - Italian Policy in Africa, Vol. 147, May 1935.

> "... this week Signor Mussolini has mobilized the whole of the rest of the 1913 class of the Italian regular army as well as two blackshirt divisions, four blackshirt battalions, and a division of Eritreannative troops .... Yet it is hard to believe that Signor Mussolini in his senses can really be contemplating war in Africa - even a war in which Abyssinia has been provoked into assuming the aggressor's part - in view of the present state of Europe."[1]

Professor Gilbert Murray, Chairman of the League of Nations Union, in a letter to the Times on May 23, was considerably less optimistic:

> "... the action of Italy towards Abyssinia threatens us with a catastrophe .... One Member of the League is openly planning against another Member, under the eyes of all Europe, aggression of the most extreme kind, and claiming the right actually to prohibit any consideration of the matter by the League. If the League submits, there is no law left between nations."

The Ethiopian Government also was pessimistic about the outcome of negotiations. In communications of May 11, 20, and 22,[2] to the Secretary General, Ethiopia again complained of warlike preparations of Italy. Italy had submitted questions to the arbitrators in such a way as to hinder arrival at a solution. The Italian Government had also objected to the appointment of two non-Ethiopian arbitrators. The Ethiopian Government therefore requested the Council to investigate, if Italy should continue to obstruct arbitration proceedings. The request was again made under Article 15 of the Covenant.

---

1. The Economist - Italy's Policy With Abyssinia, Vol. 120, May 11, 1935.
2. LNOJ, June 1935, p.220-23.

At the regular Council meeting on May 25 the Ethiopian question finally came up for discussion. A resolution,[1] submitted by the President of the Council and subsequently adopted, called for a meeting of the Council on July 25 if a settlement had not been reached by the four arbitrators and the arbitrators had not reached an understanding as to the selection of the fifth arbitrator. The Council would meet on August 25 if no solution by arbitration had been arrived at by that date.

During the discussion on the resolution, Baron Aloisi pointed out that the Italian Government did not accept arbitration of the boundary line:

> "... the Italian Government does not in any way intend to limit the mission entrusted to the arbitrators under the terms of the 1928 Treaty, but it cannot in any circumstances agree to their extending their survey to frontier questions."[2]

British support for continued negotiations outside the League was expressed at this Council meeting by Anthony Eden, who said he would like to pay:

> "... tribute to the parties whose spirit of conciliation has enabled this result to be reached."
>
> "I venture to hope ... that the action which it is proposed to take to-day will lead to a friendly and equitable settlement of the questions which have been brought to the notice of the Council."[3]

---

1. Ibid, p.640
2. Ibid, p.642
3. Ibid, p.642.

Conciliatory though the British attitude may have been, at this time, attacks on Britain's sincerity began to appear in the Italian press. Signor Gayda, editor of the semi-official Giornale d'Italia, led the barrage:

> "For more than a year important concentrations have been noted by British forces among the regions of the White Nile, the Blue Nile, the Sabat, and towards Lake Rudolf.
>
> "It has been noted, for example, that under the pretext of giving playing fields to their sports teams, which are organized in military form, the British have prepared round their undertakings vast stretches of land, which can be transformed into landing grounds for aircraft.
>
> "... must these preparations be connected as the Abyssinian Government has connected them, with a vague plan of a possible advance into Abyssinian territory, a confirmation of which, it is thought in Addis Ababa, is to be seen in the British steps already taken in Abyssinian territory?"[1]

In addition, Mussolini now began to clarify his intentions towards Ethiopia:

> "... we have agreed to take part in conciliation and arbitration proceedings, so long, of course, as these are confined to the Walwal incident ...; but no one, especially in Italy, should harbour unnecessary illusions as to their success."[2]

On May 25, the Times Correspondent in Addis Ababa reported that an official statement of the Ethiopian Government declared that Ethiopia knew nothing of the British preparations in the Sudan.

Sir John Simon replied to the charges in the Italian press

---

1. Quoted in The Times (London), May 24, 1935.

2. Address in Chamber of Deputies, May 25, 1935. Quoted in Documents on International Affairs, 1935, Vol. II, p.24.

in a speech in the House of Commons on May 27:

> "I am glad to have the opportunity of stating publicly that the whole of these statements are destitute of any foundation whatever."[1]

The fate of Ethiopia was for the first time the subject of a lengthy debate in the House of Commons on June 7. Clement Attlee pointed out that the authority of the League was at stake; he therefore called for a stronger stand by the United Kingdom in the League:

> "There is to-day, I believe, a great opportunity in this incident for re-establishing the authority of the League and the rule of law in Europe. We want to tell Signor Mussolini that among the political realities of which he has to take account is that this Government, like other Governments, upholds the Covenant against an aggressor State, that it believes it is a matter that affects our honour and our vital interests, that the refusal to accept the League's authority constitutes a refusal by an aggressor, and that we shall in that event be bound under Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant to see that we give no assistance whatever to an aggressor, but, on the contrary, that we are bound to act against an aggressor."

Attlee went on to raise the question of Britain excluding Italian ships from the Suez Canal:

> "The vital point in this matter is the question of the control of the Suez Canal. If Italy were to count on the fact that the League would not act if she intended to use force, she ought to be told frankly that in that event she would not have the use of the Suez Canal. The League will be destroyed altogether, if within the circle of the League, powers are enabled to carry out Imperialist filibustering enterprises."[2]

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 302, May 27, 1935, col. 757-8.

2. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 302, June 7, 1935, col. 2194-5.

A Conservative, Arnold Wilson, took exception to the suggestion of closing the Suez Canal:

> "The closing of the Suez Canal appears to me, from such knowledge as I have, to be of all possible sanctions, the most complicated, the most dangerous, and quite possibly the most ineffective.
>
> "To announce that we propose to close the Canal if the League of Nations so desired would be to throw a strain upon the French administration of the Canal which they would find intolerable. It would be for them to search ships and ascertain whether they contained troops or munitions; it would be for the Egyptian Government to take the responsibility. It would be practically tantamount to a declaration of war and only two Powers, namely France and Great Britain, could effectively participate in executing that sanction."[1]

On this occasion, Eden denied again the anti-British charges in the Italian press and stressed the need for a peaceful solution of the dispute between Italy and Ethiopia:

> "Nothing could better please His Majesty's Government than a peaceful and lasting settlement of this dispute and a restoration of friendly relations between the two countries, one of whom is a great Power in Europe with whom we have long-standing and traditional relations of friendship, and both of whom are our neighbours in Africa."[2]

It was on June 7, as mentioned above, that a Cabinet shuffle was announced by the British Government. On this day, Sir Samuel Hoare became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the Government of the United Kingdom. It is therefore appropriate at this point to summarize briefly the policy of Sir John Simon vis-à-vis the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. As yet, there had been no really clear statement of policy

---

1. Ibid, col. 2202

2. Ibid, col. 2210.

by the Government. The chief hope of the Government centred around a negotiated solution. This approach had been mentioned in every speech which Simon had made on the subject of Ethiopia. All efforts by the British, thus far, had been made in the direction of a settlement outside the League.

As pointed out above, this policy was dictated by a recognition in Britain of the need for the friendship of Italy in Europe, particularly now that the rearmament of Germany was proceeding despite protests from the League Council. In her fear of a rupture with Italy, Britain was in close sympathy with France. After his Rome talks in January, Laval was clearly unwilling to allow an African venture to come between France and Italy. After the Conference at Stresa in April, both France and Britain were anxious to preserve the newly established solidarity of Italy, France, and Britain in Europe. French policy, thus far, had been mainly to follow along in the wake of British statements about facilitating negotiations between Italy and Ethiopia. Relations between Italy and France remained good but such was not the case between Italy and Britain. We have already noted the beginnings of an anti-British propaganda campaign in the Italian press. Clearly, it was recognized in Italy that if any action was to be taken against Italy by the League, the lead would have to come from Britain and not from France.

It was into an already troubled situation that Sir Samuel Hoare entered as Foreign Minister, on June 7, 1935. Italy was already eyeing Britain with distrust and was becoming more openly aggressive in her attitude toward Ethiopia. It would clearly not be easy for

Sir Samuel to attempt to maintain the "Stresa Front" and respect for the League at the same time.

CHAPTER III

ATTEMPTS AT SETTLEMENT OUTSIDE THE LEAGUE

> "The best ... therefore, I could hope for in my new post was to avoid frontal crises until we were strong enough to overcome them."[1]

Such is Sir Samuel Hoare's description of the policy he felt compelled to pursue on being appointed British Foreign Minister in June, 1935. This approach, which was most evident in his handling of the Ethiopian dispute, was largely an extension of the loosely formulated policy of his predecessor, Sir John Simon. Until September, the Foreign Office continued to support no policy other than peaceful negotiation of the Abyssinian dispute. By mid-summer, however, demands from the Government's critics, both in Parliament and in the Press, for strong action through the League, against Italy, had become increasingly difficult to ignore.

In the Foreign Office itself, Hoare found that:

> "Diametrically opposite views were pressed upon me, and sometimes with the intolerance of an odium theologicum."

Vansittart's views were particularly strong:

> "Vansittart firmly believed in the reports of Hitler's aggressive plans, he was certain that the only method of blocking them was by British rearmament, and that as British rearmament would take years to complete, the immediate need was to gain time and strengthen the allied front ..."

Hoare was inclined to agree:

> "These convictions ... were not only founded upon actual facts, but needed to be applied immediately to two concrete cases, the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and the Abyssinian crisis."[2]

---

1. Templewood, Op.cit., p.135.

2. Ibid, p.137-8.

These views were also shared by L.S. Amery, a traditionalist, who rejoiced at Hoare's appointment, but not at Eden's. Amery felt that Sir Samuel's chief problem would be to rein in Eden, since, as Minister for League Affairs, he might advance what Amery regarded as very progressive "collectivist" views.[1]

Shortly after his appointment, Hoare conducted a series of interviews with the High Commissioners of the Dominions, who, although anxious to assert their loyalty to the League, were more concerned to remain free from European commitments. Like the High Commissioners, the King and the Cabinet were extremely anxious not to become involved in war. Conversations, with Attlee, Lansbury, Lloyd George, Samuel, Churchill, and Austen Chamberlain, revealed complete agreement, that any action taken by Britain in the Ethiopian dispute, must be genuinely collective, and based on Anglo-French co-operation.[2]

By June, Mussolini had grown more openly aggressive in his attitude toward Ethiopia. The day following Hoare's appointment as Foreign Secretary, the Italian premier made it clear that he did not welcome British intervention in the dispute:

> "We pay no attention to what may be said across the frontier, because it is we, only we, who are judges of our interest, responsible for our future ... we will imitate to the letter those who wish to give us a lesson. They have shown that where it was a question of creating an empire or defending it, they never took any notice of world opinion."[3]

The Ethiopian Government, on the other hand, in a communication of June 19 to the Secretary General,[4] again complained of the provocative

---

1. Amery, L.S. - My Political Life, Vol. 3, p.168.
2. Templewood, Op.cit., p.159-61.
3. Quoted in The Economist - Italy, Abyssinia, and Great Britain, Vol. 120, June 15, 1935.
4. LNOJ, August, 1935, p.972-73.

attitude taken by Italy. The continued despatch of Italian troops to East Africa and the aggressive attitude of the Italian press were mentioned in the letter. The Council was asked to designate neutral observers, immediately, to inspect the Italo-Ethiopian frontier districts and to investigate all alleged incidents.

By this time, the Italo-Ethiopian dispute was deemed to be of such a serious nature that the British Government made its first real effort to facilitate settlement of the conflict. On June 23, as mentioned above, Anthony Eden journeyed to Rome for talks with Mussolini. At this time, the first of a number of violations of official secrecy occurred in Britain. Hoare reports that, because of the indiscretion of a Parliamentary Private Secretary of one of the Ministers, the proposals to be submitted to Mussolini were prematurely disclosed to the Press. Such was to become the pattern of events throughout the dispute. Almost without exception, plans for settling the dispute were revealed in the Press prior to their consideration by Mussolihi.

The British offer was subsequently described by Eden in the House of Commons:

> "To obtain a final settlement of the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia, His Majesty's Government would be prepared to offer to Abyssinia a strip of territory in British Somaliland giving Abyssinia access to the sea.[1] This proposition was intended to facilitate such territorial and economic concessions by Abyssinia to Italy as might have been involved in an agreed settlement. His Majesty's Government ask for no concession in return for this arrangement save grazing rights for their tribes in such territory as might be ceded to Italy.
>
> "I much regret that the suggestion did not commend itself to Mussolini."[2]

---

1. i.e. the port of Zeila.

2. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 303, July 1, 1935, cols. 1521-2.

Eden's offer to Mussolini was criticized in Britain on a number of counts. The main body of criticism was levelled at the suggestion of surrendering British territory and British subjects to a foreign power. Such was the criticism, in part, of Winston Churchill, who saw the offer as a dangerous sign of British weakness and feared the offer would be so interpreted by others, particularly by Germany:

> "The policy of ceding British protected territory and British protected subjects in order to get round some diplomatic difficulty, or in order to assuage the disputes of foreign countries, or even to pay our own way from year to year, in the modern world, is a very dangerous one for this country to open."[1]

Lloyd George, former Liberal leader, on the other hand, did not disagree with the offer, in principle:

> "With regard to Zeila, I certainly say that if you could have averted this trouble by a grant of territory of that kind, I should be one of those who would have congratulated the two right honourable Gentlemen."[2]

What Lloyd George did criticize was what he considered the ill-founded optimism of the Government in expecting that such an offer would meet with a favourable reception in Rome. Other critics regarded the offer as surrender to an aggressor. Such was the attitude of the New Statesman and Nation:

> "To reward him (Mussolini) by helping him to secure some at least of his neighbour's goods that he coveted would hardly be a vindication of League principles."[3]

---

1. Ibid, Vol. 304, July 11, 1935, col. 546

2. Ibid, col. 553

3. New Statesman and Nation, Mussolini or the League, Vol. 10, July 6, 1935.

Apt criticism was levelled at the procedure which led up to the offer. The Foreign Office had neglected to consult the French before making the offer to Mussolini. Since Eden's Rome visit came so soon after the uproar in Paris over the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, it is difficult to understand this oversight. Clearly, French interests were involved since the cession of a port to Abyssinia would offer competition to the French-owned Djibuti Railway, which linked Addis Ababa to a port in French Somaliland.

Even more valid was the contention that the offer should have been made through ordinary diplomatic channels. It is in this regard that Vansittart has criticized the proposals:

> "The offer ... should have been made with no breath of publicity by our Ambassador in Rome direct to the Duce. The plan had an even chance of success .... the Cabinet again decided to bypass diplomacy and to send Eden out with the importance of a special mission.
>
> "Our purists, objecting to any settlement whereby Italy gained, cried publicly against 'giving away British territory'. The French raged against any outlet which might compete with their Djibuti Railway. All this denigatory pather set off Mussolini on the other end, and he said that the offer was not good enough before it could be explored."[1]

The reasons for Mussolini's rejection of the offer are not of as much concern to us, however, as the reasons for which the offer was made. The suggestion that Britain surrender part of her empire to a foreign power to facilitate settlement of a dispute with a third power was a novel one indeed. That such an offer was made is a clear

---

1. Vansittart, Op.cit., p.530-31.

indication of the gravity of the situation that was developing in Ethiopia. Prior to June, although the Government had favoured a policy of diplomatic solution of the dispute, nothing concrete had been done to bring about this outcome. By June, the Government was considerably more realistic about Mussolini's motives in Ethiopia. Clearly, some concessions would have to be made if war was to be averted. Hoare has described his view of the situation at this time in the following way:

> "Somehow or other we had to find a card of re-entry in a hand that was almost lost."[1]

The offer made by Eden in June was the first of a number of offers of concessions to Italy which were intended to settle the conflict in Ethiopia peacefully. These offers were therefore a logical extension of the policy of Sir John Simon of attempting a diplomatic solution of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

In Britain, by June, public opinion on the dispute was just beginning to take shape. The attitude of the public was influenced greatly by critics of the Government, both in Parliament and in the Press. Because of the influence of these critics, the idea was becoming widespread throughout the country that the prestige of the League was at stake in Ethiopia. Demands for strong action in support of the League were becoming more and more frequent.

Even the hitherto optimistic Economist was somewhat dismayed at Mussolini's rejection of Eden's offer, which made ...

---

1. Templewood, Op.cit., p.155.

> "... it imperative that the British Government should demonstrate now that Britain will honour her undertakings if League action should become necessary .... it looks as though Signor Mussolini had made up his mind to turn his back on the very conception of a League of Nations and to repudiate Italy's signature of the Covenant ..."[1]

Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, now viewed the situation as particularly ominous. In his diary, on July 5, he wrote:

> "... if in the end, the League were demonstrated to be incapable of effective intervention to stop this war, it would be practically impossible to maintain the fiction that its existence was justified at all."

Again on July 6, he wrote:

> "... it seems more than ever unlikely that Laval will consent to anything that might embroil him with Mussolini. Yet if the latter goes on, he will torpedo the League, and the small states in Europe will just race one another to Berlin."[2]

Shortly after Eden's talks with Mussolini in Rome, the results of the Peace Ballot were published. The Peace Ballot was a questionnaire that had been circulated by the League of Nations Union in Britain. Balloting had begun on November 12, 1934.

The questions were as follows:

> "(1) Should Great Britain remain a member of the League of Nations?
>
> (2) Are you in favour of an all-round reduction in armaments by international agreement?
>
> (3) Are you in favour of an all-round abolition of national military and naval aircraft by international agreement?

---

1. The Economist, Signor Mussolini's Refusal, Vol. 121, July 6, 1935.

2. Quoted in Feiling, Keith - The Life of Neville Chamberlain, p.265.

(4) Should the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit be prohibited by international agreement?

(5) Do you consider that, if a nation insists on attacking another, the other nations should combine to compel it to stop by:

(a) Economic and non-military measures?
(b) If necessary, military measures?"[1]

The results of the balloting were announced by Lord Cecil, president of the League of Nations Union, on June 27, 1935. Almost 12,000,000 persons had been polled and to each of the five questions, a large majority replied in the affirmative. On questions (1), (2), (4), and (5)(a), the affirmative replies made up over ninety percent of the answers, on questions (3) and (5)(b), over seventy-five percent.[2]

The League of Nations Union interpreted the results as a clear indication of popular support for the League and for the principle of collective security. Hoare, on the other hand, felt that the announcement of the results did much to weaken the Government's position:

"They (the questions) gave the impression that we could depend on collective security when four of the Great Powers held aloof, and they kept discreetly in the background the need for British rearmament. The real question that should have been asked: 'Do you support British rearmament in the interests of peace?' was carefully avoided. The result was a strengthening of all pacifist influences at a time when peace was threatened, and an encouragement to the complacent in their belief that no special effort was necessary to strengthen British defences. The opposition at once exploited the situation for an attack on the Government for increasing the Air Force, and failing to make quicker progress in the disarmament discussions at Geneva."[3]

---

1. Quoted in Survey, 1935, Vol. II, p.48
2. Reported in The Times (London), June 28, 1935.
3. Templewood, Op.cit., p.128.

Ignoring the weakness of British defences, critics of the Government harped on the need to support the League. Such was the attitude of the New Statesman and Nation:

> "The League must either deal with Mussolini as with a power openly preparing aggression, or it must confess itself impotent and bankrupt. A second failure of the Manchurian type it could not survive."

The weekly went on to pose the question of closing the Suez Canal to Italy and also, to consider the degree of French support to be expected:

> "Italy cannot defy the two leading Mediterranean Powers nor can she do anything in this corner of Africa without the use of the Suez Canal. A failure to stop her could mean only one of two things - either that the guardians of the Canal do not choose to stop her, or else that they could not reckon on French goodwill. It is on the latter condition that our anxiety fastens when we try to analyse this disquieting situation."[1]

The Economist had also begun to question French support:

> "... what will France do? Gossip still makes vivid play with the stories of what M. Laval said about Abyssinia to Signor Mussolini in Rome in January."[2]

The Spectator, on July 12, concluded that not Abyssinia but the League was at stake:

> "For the League the problem is only incidentally how to save Abyssinia. Fundamentally it is how to save itself."[3]

On July 11, Sir Samuel Hoare, making his maiden speech in the House of Commons as Foreign Secretary, attempted to answer his

---

1. New Statesman and Nation, Mussolini or the League, Vol. 10, July 6, 1935.
2. The Economist, A Tight Corner, Vol. 121, July 13, 1935.
3. The Spectator, Abyssinia and British Policy, Vol. 155, July 12, 1935.

critics. He first admitted:

> "... the need for Italian expansion. We admit again the justice of some of the criticisms that have been made against the Abyssinian Government. But are the facts that Italy needs expansion and that complaints are made against the Abyssinian Government sufficient cause for plunging into war?"

The Foreign Minister went on to speak in terms favourable to the principle of collective security:

> "The more I look at the future prospect whether it be a near or far prospect, the more sure I am that a system of collective security is essential to peace and stability and that the League best provides the necessary machinery."

Hoare emphasized, however, as he was to do many times later, that collective security must be collective:

> "... we are ready and willing to take our full share of collective responsibility. But when I say collective responsibility, I mean collective responsibility."[1]

The Liberal leader, Sir Herbert Samuel, took exception to the reserved tone of Sir Samuel's remarks:

> "He (Hoare) did not exhibit any very resolute spirit to make sure that the functions of the League should be carried out in a courageous and effective fashion."[2]

On the other hand, a reminder of the need for caution, because of the weakness of the British position, was made by Churchill:

> "We are not strong enough ... to be the law-giver and spokesman of the world. We will do our part, but we cannot be asked, and we ought not to put ourselves in a position of being supposed to do more than our part in these matters."[3]

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 304, July 11, 1935, cols. 517-19.
2. Ibid, col. 533
3. Ibid, col. 545.

Clement Attlee, nevertheless, seemed to feel that the Abyssinian crisis could be dealt with in isolation, without consideration of its possible repercussions on Europe:

> "... in all these discussions about the position of Abyssinia ... what has appeared to concern us most has been, not so much what is right, as what will be the effect on something else in connection with foreign affairs."[1]

Geoffrey Mander, one of the most vocal critics of the Government, also could see no obstacle in the way of League action:

> "... I know that we cannot possibly act alone, and no one would suggest it, we have merely to carry out our obligations as a member of the League."[2]

About this time, pressure from the Government's critics began to show its effects in statements by members of the Cabinet about support of the League. The new Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, was too shrewd a politician to swim against the flow of public opinion. With regard to the Peace Ballot, Baldwin felt:

> "... that the object of the Ballot was by no means to criticize the Government ... but rather to show that the Government had a large volume of public opinion behind us in the efforts which we are to-day making to maintain the authority of the League of Nations ... the Government intend to persist in the policy that they have hitherto pursued ... the League of Nations remains ... the sheet anchor of British policy."[3]

Baldwin's audience could interpret his words in any way they chose. He seemed to be speaking of support for the League and

---

1. Ibid, col. 538

2. Ibid, col. 575

3. Quoted in The Times (London), July 24, 1935.

many would adopt this interpretation. But he had not committed himself or his Government to any real action in support of the League. Persistence in the policy "hitherto pursued" would hardly call for any very dynamic leadership. Throughout the dispute, Baldwin was careful in his speeches not to make any binding commitments for the Government and, yet, he led the public to expect action.

During the month of July, the question of export of arms and munitions to Ethiopia became a minor issue in Britain. The importation of arms by Ethiopia was subject to the restrictions of a treaty signed in 1930 by Ethiopia, Britain, France, and Italy.[1] The treaty provided that arms could be imported into Ethiopia only if the consignment had been authorized by the Ethiopian Government for its own use. The three Powers, since they controlled the entrance routes to Ethiopia, could prevent the entry of unauthorized supplies.

On July 24, Walter Runciman, the President of the British Board of Trade, informed the House of Commons, that, during the last four months, there had been no completed application for arms from Ethiopia. There had therefore been no export of arms to Ethiopia from Britain during that time.[2] On the same occasion, the Foreign Secretary informed the House that the French Government had prohibited the export of war material to Italy and Ethiopia.[3] The following day, Sir Samuel disclosed to the members, that the British Government:

---

1. For text see HC Cmd. 3707 of 1930-31, XXXIII, 263-301
2. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 304, July 24, 1935, col. 1815.
3. Ibid, col. 1813.

> "... did ... not wish to do anything which might prejudice the situation. They will, therefore, for the present not issue licences for the export of arms from this country either to Italy or to Abyssinia."[1]

The position taken by the Government with regard to the export of arms, while it was diplomatically correct, left the Government open to the charge, made by its critics, that the restrictions restrained Ethiopia much more than Italy. As a manufacturing country, Italy was in a good position to produce her own munitions. Ethiopia, on the other hand, not only had little war material in supply, but in addition, was not able to manufacture her own weapons.

Meanwhile, arbitration proceedings between Ethiopia and Italy had broken down. On July 9, the Ethiopian Government had communicated, to the Secretary General, three documents[2] of the Arbitration Commission which had been appointed to deal with the dispute. The two arbitrators appointed by the Italian Government complained, in their award, that the agent of the Ethiopian Government had entered upon an examination of a frontier question. The Italian arbitrators were willing to continue the work of the Commission only within the agreed limits of the terms of the arbitration agreement. The two arbitrators appointed by the Ethiopian Government contended, in their award, that the Ethiopian agent had at least the right to state his reasons for considering that the Commission should judge the ownership of Walwal. In a third document, the arbitrators of the Ethiopian Government declared that the time had come to select a

---

1. Ibid, July 25, 1935, col. 2016

2. LNOJ, Aug. 1935, p.973-5.

fifth arbitrator.

Accordingly, on July 26, the Secretary General announced to the members of the Council that the extraordinary session of the Council, contemplated in the resolution of May 25, would take place. This session began on July 31.

At the meeting on August 3, the Abyssinian representatives, in an effort to yield to the wishes of France and Britain, consented to an interpretation of the resolution of May 25, which supported the Italian view that frontier questions were not within the competence of the Arbitration Commission. For Italy, Baron Aloisi, in turn, agreed to proceed without delay to the appointment of a fifth arbitrator. Accordingly, the two Governments were invited to inform the Council of the results of the Commission's findings by September 4, 1935. The Council was to meet in any event on September 4 to examine relations between Italy and Ethiopia.[1]

Anthony Eden informed the Council that representatives of the U.K., France, and Italy had met together, at Geneva, on August 1. The three Powers, signatories of the Treaty of 1906[2] concerning Ethiopia, had agreed to open conversations at the earliest possible date to facilitate a solution of the differences between Italy and Ethiopia. Eden concluded his remarks with the statement that:

> "His Majesty's Government will devote every effort to securing a pacific settlement of this dispute in harmony with the principles of the Covenant. The United Kingdom Government fully realizes the gravity of the issues that are at stake and is mindful of its obligations as a member of the League."[3]

---

1. Ibid, p.967-70
2. For text, see Documents Relating to the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict, p.32-35
3. LNOJ, August 1935, p.969.

The proposal to hold three-Power talks on the dispute is a further indication that the British now recognized the gravity of the situation which was developing in Ethiopia. A second attempt was to be made to devise a plan whereby the dispute could be settled diplomatically, and thus war averted, and a worsening of relations between Britain and France, on the one hand, and Italy, on the other, avoided.

There was good reason for the British to feel anxious about the situation in Ethiopia. In a speech on July 31, Mussolini had maintained:

> "The essential agreements ... absolutely unanswerable are two: the vital needs of the Italian people and their security in East Africa.
>
> "Italy is the sole judge of her security in East Africa. In military terms, the Italo-Abyssinian problem is simple and logical. It admits with Geneva, without Geneva, against Geneva, but one solution."[1]

Meanwhile, in Britain, demands for support of the League grew both in number and in intensity. Once again, the New Statesman and Nation called for a firm stand by Britain and the League:

> "Mussolini is already finding it impossible to raise loans abroad; if the League chooses, this automatic sanction may be extended until all international facilities are denied to the aggressor.
>
> "... Italy should be made clearly to understand during this month's private negotiation that the League Powers will not condone or participate in her aggression and will be prepared in the last resort to take the appropriate and effective steps to stop it."[2]

---

1. Quoted in The Times (London), Aug. 1, 1935.

2. New Statesman & Nation, The League or the Duce, Vol. 10, Aug. 10, 1935.

In addition, more consideration was now being given to the role of France in the dispute. Further suspicions were cast on the sincerity of Laval. A somewhat limited understanding of Laval's position was expressed by the Spectator on August 2:

> "M. Laval's desire not to compromise his re-established friendship with Italy can be understood, particularly when he contemplates the current execration of this country in the Italian Press. But the French Prime Minister may have to choose between Italy and the League of Nations, and he will be making a singularly poor bargain if he elects for the former."[1]

The plan to hold three-Power talks in Paris to negotiate a solution was the subject of severe criticism by Lloyd George:

> "The very country whose integrity and independence has been challenged has been ruled out from the Conference that is discussing its very existence as an independent State .... Are they discussing how they are to prevent Signor Mussolini from destroying the independence of a friendly Power which is a member of the League? Not at all. They are just discussing what measures of economic and political control can be given to Italy without war. How they can deliver Abyssinia on the cheap to Italy - that is the question that is being discussed."[2]

On the eve of the Paris talks, the Ethiopian Government again advised the Secretary General of the continued military preparations of the Italian Government. The situation for the Ethiopian Government was aggravated by the fact that:

---

1. The Spectator, Abyssinia at Geneva, Vol. 155, Aug. 2, 1935

2. Quoted in Doc. for Internat. Concil., Abyssinia, p.458-9.

> "The Imperial Ethiopian Government to-day finds it absolutely impossible to obtain means of defence outside its own frontiers. Whenever it attempts to obtain them, it meets with prohibitions and export embargoes."[1]

Representatives of the three Powers convened in Paris, on August 16. Britain was represented by Eden and Vansittart, France by Laval, and Léger, the Director of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and Italy by Baron Aloisi, and Cerrutti, the newly appointed Italian ambassador to Paris. Baron Aloisi had been sent to Paris with very limited powers. During the talks he was frequently obliged to consult Rome by telephone and even then, he was reluctant to make a clear statement of Italian demands in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, the British and French attempted to draw up some plan which would satisfy Mussolini.[2]

Hoare has commented on the difficult circumstances in which the conversations were held:

> "As ... the French wished to keep out of the controversy as much as possible, the brunt of negotiations inevitably fell upon us .... Italy was an essential part of the western front, and the Covenant of the League the basis of our foreign policy. We could not sacrifice either without grave danger to ourselves and Europe and were bound to intervene actively in the attempt to reconcile their conflicting demands."[3]

Hoare reports that the demands eventually made by Italy at the talks were unacceptable to the British, who were being careful not to agree to a plan which would subsequently be rejected by the

---

1. LNOJ, Nov. 1935, p.1602
2. Reported in The Times (London), Aug. 17, 1935.
3. Templewood, Op.cit., p.157-8.

League Council. The demands of the Italians would have involved the unconditional annexation of all the non-Amharic territories (i.e. the southern half of Abyssinia) and a mandate for the rest of the country. The British counter-proposals involved: (a) an exchange of territory in which Abyssinia would cede territory to Italy in return for access to the sea; (b) an economic zone in which Italian interest would be predominant; (c) League assistance to the economic and administrative development of Ethiopia.[1]

Eden, when he described the proposals to the League Council in September, did not elaborate on the territorial concessions to be made to Italy, but instead, stressed assistance to the development of Ethiopia:

> "As a member of the League of Nations, Ethiopia might appeal to the League for collaboration and assistance necessary to assure the economic development and administrative reorganisation of the country. France, the United Kingdom, and Italy, as limitrophe Powers would be particularly well qualified to lend this collective assistance ..."
>
> "The work of reorganisation was to have extended to the most varied fields of national life, such as economic, financial, commercial and constitutional development ...
>
> "... the collective assistance would not have prevented particular account being taken of the special interests of Italy."[2]

The proposals were submitted to the Italian Government on August 16 and two days later it was announced that they had been

---

1. Ibid, p.161

2. LNOJ, Nov. 1935, p.1134.

rejected; consequently the conference was adjourned.[1]

Although the collapse of the Paris conference made the possibility of a diplomatic solution, prior to the September meeting of the League Council, remote, the British Cabinet, after a meeting on August 22, announced a decision to maintain its embargo on the issue of licences for export of arms to Italy and Abyssinia, and its intention to continue to pursue a diplomatic solution.[2]

There can be little doubt that in official circles at this time, there was a firm belief that a negotiated settlement was essential to avert a war which would be disastrous for the British. Hoare's own views were expressed in a memorandum of August 18 to Neville Chamberlain:

> "... it is urgently necessary for the Cabinet to consider what in these circumstances our attitude should be on two assumptions: (1) that the French are completely with us; (2) that the French have backed out. It is equally urgent for the Cabinet to consider what preparations should be made to meet a possible mad dog act by the Italians .... Our line, I am sure, is to keep in step with the French and, whether now or at Geneva, to act with them."[3]

Churchill's attitude at this time was remarkably similar:

> "... I thought the Foreign Secretary was justified in going as far with the League of Nations against Italy as he could carry France; but ... he ought not to put any pressure upon France because of her military convention with Italy and her German pre-occupation .... I was, of course, oppressed by my German fears and the conditions to which our defences had been reduced."[4]

---

1. Reported in The Times (London), Aug. 19, 1935
2. Ibid, Aug. 23, 1935
3. Quoted in Feiling, Op.cit., p.267
4. Churchill, Winston - The Gathering Storm, p.169.

In a memorandum to Hoare, on August 25, Churchill expressed grave concern over the relative strengths of the British and Italian fleets:

> "It seems to me that you have not half the strength of Italy in modern cruisers and destroyers and still less in modern submarines."[1]

Meanwhile, criticism of the inertia of the Government grew. The Economist added its voice to the chorus:

> "No one can any longer pretend that Signor Mussolini does not mean to go to war with Abyssinia .... we have a positive obligation to allow - perhaps even to assist - Abyssinia to secure the arms with which she may be able to ward off the impending aggression."[2]

The Spectator could see no reason why economic sanctions alone would not be effective in deterring Italy from aggression:

> "The idea that Italy might take armed action against nations, exerting economic pressure on her is not to be seriously contemplated so long as they present a solid front, and if they are not prepared to do that, they had better not so much as pass a condemnatory resolution."

The article, nevertheless, concluded that:

> "... there must be no resort to war."[3]

That economic sanctions alone might be inadequate was suggested by the New Statesman and Nation:

> "Unless, in full accord, France and Great Britain are ready to place at its (the League's) service all their resources, including their fleets ... it would be wiser not to embark on this enterprise at all."[4]

---

1. Quoted in Ibid, p.171
2. The Economist, Italy Says "NO!", Vol. 121, Aug. 24, 1935.
3. The Spectator, The Crisis, Vol. 155, Aug. 23, 1935.
4. New Satesman & Nation, "League, Duce and Empire", Vol. 10, Aug. 24, 1935.

In addition, some consideration was now being given to the effect of the dispute on British economic interests. The New Statesman and Nation reported on the attitude of the "City" to the crisis:

> "... every international move which threatens the market value of securities is anathema. For Great Britain to stand by the League Covenant is considered mad, to stand up to Italy is considered madder. Because it is believed that France does not want collective action against Italy under Article 16, that is regarded in the City as a heaven-sent opportunity for Great Britain to sneak out of the League of Nations ..."[1]

For some time, the Italian Press had been accusing the British of hypocrisy in their attitude to the dispute. The Italians, particularly Signor Gayda, charged that the British were most concerned to retain exclusive control over the water supply for the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, from the source of the Blue Nile in Lake Tsana. Support of Ethiopia and the League, they argued, was merely a camouflage to conceal the narrow interests of the British in Ethiopia.

As early as January 1935, the British Government itself had set up a Committee, headed by Sir John Maffey, Permanent Under-Secretary for the Colonies, to examine British interests in Abyssinia. The Committee's report was first made public when parts of it were published by an Italian newspaper in February 1936. Anthony Eden, Foreign Secretary at the time, commented on the report in the House of Commons:

> "The Committee reported to ... the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the 18th June last, and its report was to the effect that there was no important British interest in Abyssinia with the exception of Lake Tsana, the waters of the Blue Nile, and certain tribal grazing rights."[2]

---

1. Quoted in Doc. for Internat. Concil., Abyssinia, p.471n

2. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 309, Feb. 24, 1936, cols. 7-8.

Undoubtedly these British interests in Ethiopia were insufficient to warrant a war with Italy. Indeed, if it had been of vital concern to Britain to prevent Italy from gaining control of Ethiopia, the whole course of events in the dispute would have been quite different. We have noted, on a number of occasions, the conciliatory attitude of the British toward Italy and their failure to give firm support to Ethiopia's cause. This approach to the conflict would have been meaningless had the British been primarily concerned to protect their own interests in Abyssinia, which supposedly necessitated maintenance of the independence of Abyssinia. If Britain had had vital interests in Ethiopia, then the logical course of action would have been a firm stand against the encroachment of Italy on Ethiopian territory.

On the contrary, it was much more in the best interests of Britain to avoid a war with Italy. The Cabinet meeting on August 22 had asserted that British policy was still concentrated on attempts to reach a "diplomatic solution". By this time, however, the chances of a peaceful outcome of the dispute were very slight indeed. Two offers of concessions to Mussolini had already been made - one in Rome, by Eden, and a second in Paris, by Eden and Laval. Both plans had been summarily dismissed by Mussolini. The difficulty of arriving at a solution which would be acceptable to Italy, Abyssinia, and the League can hardly be exaggerated. Nevertheless, this was the declared policy of the British Government.

By the end of August, it was clear that no solution would be found prior to the League Council meeting, scheduled for September 4,

when the Arbitration and Conciliation Committee was to present its findings. The role the British Government was to play in League action was not yet clear. Government officials were painfully aware of the fact that a rupture with Italy over Abyssinia would be disastrous to the British position in Europe. Nevertheless, the demands of the Government's critics in Parliament and in the Press for strong action through the League could no longer be ignored. The Government would soon be compelled to indicate whether or not it favoured League action against Italy.

CHAPTER IV

A DUALISTIC POLICY

Prior to examining developments at Geneva in September, it is necessary to consider a number of factors which provided the background for the September meeting of the League Council. One incident, of some import, was the granting of an oil concession by the Ethiopian Government, to an American company. Another was the threatening communiqué issued, prior to the Council meeting, by the Italian Cabinet. In addition, since both the British and the French were primarily concerned about the possible repercussions of the Ethiopian conflict on their security in Europe, some consideration must be made of the attitude of Germany to the dispute. Of significance, also, are the proceedings of the Arbitration Committee, since they provided the immediate preface to the Council meeting.

Late in August, the announcement of the granting of an oil concession by the Government in Addis Ababa was the cause of considerable embarrassment to the British Government. On August 31, it was announced by the Ethiopian Government that the right to exploit the oil and mineral deposits, over approximately half the Ethiopian Empire, had been granted to the African Development and Exploration Corporation. Although the company was an American firm, negotiations had been conducted for it by an Englishman, Mr. F.W. Rickett. The region to be exploited was the area which had been regarded, in the Treaty of 1906, as within the Italian sphere of influence.

The response of the British Government to this announcement

was the immediate drafting of a communication to the Ethiopian Government that such a concession necessitated preliminary consultation with the three Powers who were signatories of the Treaty of 1906. The British Government, therefore, advised the Emperor to withhold the concession.[1] In addition, a statement was issued denying that any British capital was involved in the oil concession. This denial was corroborated by a statement of the American financial advisor to the Emperor.[2]

Despite these statements, the cry of double dealing was immediately taken up by the Italian Press and some sections of the French Press. Again Signor Gayda led the attack:

> "... while England was proposing, evidently in agreement with the Emperor, economic concessions to Italy on Abyssinian territory in order to prevent direct action by war, the Government of Addis Ababa pledged itself to reserve to a group of foreigners the greatest advantages of the possible concessions."[3]

The controversy placed the American State Department in a delicate position, since the company involved was an American firm. Discussions were therefore held between Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, and officials of the Standard-Vacuum Oil Co., the parent company of the corporation which was to receive the concession in Ethiopia. Subsequently, the State Department issued a statement that the company would withdraw from the concession.[4]

---

1. Reported in The Times (London), September 2, 1935
2. Ibid, September 3, 1935.
3. Quoted in Ibid, September 3, 1935.
4. Reported in Ibid, September 4, 1935.

This statement by the American Government closed the incident, but unfortunately not before it had provided fuel for the Italian propaganda campaign. It could only be regretted that the incident occurred on the eve of the League Council meeting.

On August 28, the Italian Cabinet met to determine the line to be taken, by its delegate, at the League Council meeting. The communiqué, subsequently issued by the Government, left no doubt as to the dangers inherent in a League threat to impose sanctions. Mussolini directed his warning at Britain in particular:

> "Italy has a problem to solve with Ethiopia. She has none and wants none with Great Britain, with whom during the world war, at Locarno, and more recently at Stresa she achieved collaboration of undoubted importance for European stability.
>
> "... to speak of sanctions means venturing on to a dangerous slope which may lead to the gravest complications."[1]

At the same meeting, the Italian Cabinet decreed certain measures to meet the event of an application of sanctions by the League. Some of the measures to be imposed on Italian nationals were: (1) obligatory cession of foreign credits; (2) compulsory conversion of foreign investments into Government bonds; (3) limitation of dividends to six percent of paid-up capital; (4) employment of substitute fuels in all public service vehicles.[2]

A few days later, further military preparations were announced by Mussolini, and a second warning issued as to the danger of imposing sanctions:

---

1. Documents on International Affairs, 1935, Vol. II, p.53

2. Reported in The Times (London), August 29, 1935.

> "... another 200,000 men will be called ... to bring the effectives of the army up to the level of a million men .... The world must know, once again, that as long as this absurd and provocative talk about sanctions continues, we will not give up one soldier, one sailor, or one airman, but we will raise all the armed forces of the nation to the highest possible level of strength."[1]

Mussolini's statements, coupled with the measures adopted by the Italian Government to meet the threat of sanctions, left little doubt that effective sanctions would require the unanimous support of League Members. Indeed, in view of the attitude of Mussolini, it now seemed probable that, in order to be effective, economic sanctions would have to be applied over a considerable period of time. Even then, it was doubtful if sanctions could really deter Italy from aggression, if she were to be able to trade freely with states who were not members of the League, particularly with the United States and Germany.

The attitude of Germany to the dispute provides another interesting backdrop for the League Council meeting in September. The official attitude of Berlin was one of reserve. This reserve was partly, according to the Times Correspondent, owing to a desire for Germany to renew colonial activity herself. On the other hand, at this time, Germany had no desire to see Italy strengthened, since Italy was the chief guarantor of Austrian independence. However, Berlin was undoubtedly happy to see Britain and France occupied in another corner of the globe, at a time when German rearmament was proceeding rapidly. In addition, since Germany had already withdrawn from the League, she

---

1. Documents on International Affairs, 1935, Vol. II, p.55.

would welcome the collapse of the League system of collective security.[1]

The realization of the fact that Germany hoped for the breakdown of the League over the Ethiopian crisis made the position of the British Government in the League particularly awkward. Basically, the Government still hoped to settle the dispute outside the League. On the other hand, it did not wish to see the League discredited over the crisis, since such an outcome might well play into Hitler's hand. The imposition of ineffective sanctions, against Italy, however, could discredit the League as easily as a public revelation of the fact that both Britain and France were reluctant to use League machinery against Mussolini.

The Conciliation and Arbitration Committee had resumed its meetings, on August 20, in Paris. A former Greek Foreign Minister, Nicholas Politis, had been unanimously appointed as fifth arbitrator. The four arbitrators had soon proved unable to agree, either as to the facts of the Walwal incident, or as to the responsibility. M. Politis had therefore been called in on August 29.

On September 3, the Committee unanimously concluded that:

> "... neither the Italian Government nor its agents on the spot can be held responsible in any way for the actual Walwal incident ..."

On the other hand:

> "... although the Ethiopian Government has no reasonable interest in provoking that engagement, its local authorities ... may have given the impression that they had aggressive intentions ... but nevertheless it had not been shown that they can be held responsible for the actual incident of December 5 ..."

---

1. Reported in The Times (London), September 3, 1935.

With regard to the incidents which took place after December 6, 1934, the Committee decided that:

> "... these incidents ... were of an accidental character .... no international responsibility need be involved."[1]

On September 4, the League Council, in accordance with its resolution of August 3, met to examine the Ethiopian problem. At this meeting, Eden summarized the proposals which Britain and France had made to the Italian Government in August. Eden concluded his remarks with statements which for the first time gave evidence of the intention of the British Government to use the means provided by the League to settle the dispute:

> "... if in the judgment of world opinion, the League fails in this dispute, its authority for the future will be grievously shaken and its influence gravely impaired. The collapse of the League and the new conception of international order for which it stands would be a world calamity.
>
> "It is our duty to use the machinery of the League that lies at our hand."

Nevertheless, Eden still hoped for a peaceful solution:

> "Let us set it to work forthwith ... we shall not fail to achieve that peaceful settlement which we so earnestly desire."[2]

The remarks of Baron Aloisi, unfortunately, left little grounds for Eden's optimism. The Italian delegate made the most extreme charges against Ethiopia that had been heard thus far in the dispute:

> "... we are faced with a premeditated armed attack ...
>
> "Ever since 1928, Ethiopia ... has developed

---

1. LNOJ, November, 1935, p.1355.
2. Ibid, p.1134.

> her policy of arming against Italian possessions .... Acts of provocation ... and violence against the peaceful people on our frontier have steadily increased."
>
> "Any possibility of peaceful conditions and co-operation between Italy and Ethiopia have unfortunately vanished."

Aloisi concluded his remarks by announcing that:

> "... the Italian Government is compelled to state formally that Italy's dignity as a civilized nation would be deeply wounded were she to continue a discussion in the League on a footing of equality with Ethiopia ..."[1]

The Ethiopian delegate, M. Jèze, objected to the delaying tactics which were being used to conceal the real issue which:

> "... is whether in a few days a war of extermination will begin and that is the point which the Council should immediately discuss."[2]

M. Jèze again called on the Council to take action under paragraph 3 of Article 15 of the Covenant. In answer to a plea which could no longer be ignored, the Council set up a Committee consisting of the representatives of the United Kingdom, Spain, France, Poland, and Turkey (i.e. the Committee of Five). The Committee was to examine the problem and seek a peaceful solution.[3]

While the Committee of Five was engaged in examining the documents presented to it, by the Italian and Ethiopian Governments, the Sixteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the League was

---

1. Ibid, p.1136-7
2. Ibid, p.1140
3. Ibid, p.1145.

convened at Geneva, on September 9. Because of the gravity of the crisis in Ethiopia, Sir Samuel Hoare himself journeyed to Geneva to address the delegates. Prior to addressing the Assembly, Hoare met with Laval in Geneva to discuss the dispute and all its implications. Hoare's comments on these talks with Laval reveal his own mental reservations about League action against Italy:

> "Our long talks ... although they produced no new proposals for Abyssinia, were valuable in fixing the importance of the crisis upon the central point that mattered, the growing threat of German rearmament .... A double line of approach was essential. On the one hand, a patient and cautious negotiation that would keep him (Mussolini) on the Allied side; on the other, the creation of a united front in Geneva as a necessary deterrent against German aggression.
>
> "... he (Laval) was determined to preserve the Franco-Italian Pact that he regarded as the greatest achievement of his career .... We ... agreed that as we must, if possible, avoid provoking Mussolini into open hostility, any economic pressure upon which the League collectively decided should be applied cautiously and in stages, and with full account of the unescapable fact that the United States, Japan, and Germany were not Member States of the League."[1]

Hoare did not specify what limitations this last consideration would place on the application of sanctions against Italy. However, when Laval reported on the conversations to the Chamber of Deputies, on December 28, 1935, he was much more specific:

> "We found ourselves instantaneously in agreement upon ruling out military sanctions, not adopting any measure of naval blockade, never contemplating the closure of the Suez Canal -

---

1. Templewood, Op.cit., p.168-9.

> in a word, ruling out everything that might lead to war."[1]

Whether or not the British Foreign Secretary did make such an agreement with Laval in September cannot be determined on the basis of the documents presently available. However, the sanctions which Britain was later willing to impose against Italy would not have conflicted with Laval's interpretation of the agreement. The application of all sanctions short of war, which became the declared policy of the British Government, would necessarily eliminate the measures mentioned by the French Premier. Although a definite agreement may not have been made by Hoare, the British Government nevertheless proved unwilling to apply any sanctions which might lead to war.

Hoare's insistence to Laval that a double line be maintained in the dispute provides an interesting background for his speech in the Assembly, on September 11. This speech marked the beginning of the dualistic policy of Britain toward the conflict. Prior to this time, we have seen a consistent attempt by Britain to achieve a solution to the dispute through diplomatic channels. This policy was maintained throughout the crisis, but when Sir Samuel spoke at Geneva, his tone suggested that the British had embarked on a new policy of support for the League and collective security. Hoare spoke first of the faith of the British public in the League:

> "The British people supported the League for no selfish motives .... They were determined to throw the whole weight of their strength into the scales of international peace and international order. They were deeply and genuinely moved by a great ideal.

---

1. Quoted in Survey, 1935, Vol. II, p.184.

> "... they believe that collective security ... is the most effective safeguard of peace ...
>
> "... His Majesty's Government and the British people maintain their support of the League and its ideals as the most effective way of ensuring peace ... this belief in the necessity for preserving the League is our sole interest in the present controversy.
>
> "The League is what its Member States make it. If it succeeds, it is because its Members have ... the will and power to apply the principles of the Covenant. If it fails it is because its Members lack either the will or the power to fulfill their obligations."

Hoare went on to emphasize the need for solidarity among the League Members. This part of his speech was, however, generally ignored at the time:

> "... one thing is certain. If the burden is to be borne it must be borne collectively. If risks for peace are to be run, they must be run by all."

Instead, what was heard was the pledge:

> "On behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, I can say that ... that Government will be second to none in its intention to fulfil within the measure of its capacity, the obligations which the Covenant lays upon it."[1]

Laval's address to the Assembly, delivered two days later, contrasted in tone at least, with Hoare's speech. The French Premier first assured the delegates that:

> "France is loyal to the Covenant. She cannot fail to carry out her obligations."

Nevertheless, he went on to speak in terms highly favourable

---

1. LNOJ, Special Supplement No. 138, p.43-44.

to conciliation with Italy, first recalling friendly meetings with Mussolini at Rome and at Stresa, where he had found the Italian Premier:

> "... imbued with the same desire and the same will to serve the cause of peace. I know he is prepared to persevere in his collaboration."[1]

Hoare's speech was acclaimed throughout the world. Numerous delegates at Geneva added their hearty support of his pledge. Public opinion in Britain applauded the conversion of Hoare to faith in the League and collective security. The collectivists saw the speech as a pledge to support League action against Italy. Few took note of the caution that collective action must be genuinely collective. The warning had been overshadowed by the pledge. The reservations in Hoare's mind with regard to League action against an aggressor had not been conveyed to his audience - either at Geneva or in Britain. This lack of communication must be blamed on both the speaker and his audience. People heard what they wanted to hear. The British public, by and large, had already been persuaded that collective security was a panacea for all the ills of the world. Therefore, when Hoare spoke in terms favourable to the League, the public applauded him wholeheartedly. Hoare, on the other hand, although he inserted a reservation in his pledge, put emphasis on his guarantee of British support for the League. He can hardly have spoken in such terms unwittingly. Since he had already decided that measures against Italy must be cautious and reserved, and therefore in all likelihood, ineffective, his speech can at best be interpreted as an attempt to intimidate Mussolini by a mere threat of action.

---

1. Ibid, p.65-66.

It was evident almost immediately that Mussolini would not be bluffed so easily. On September 14, the Italian Cabinet issued the following communiqué:

> "... the Italo-Ethiopian problem does not admit of a compromise solution after the immense efforts and sacrifices made by Italy and after the irrefutable documentation contained in the Italian memorandum presented at Geneva."[1]

Mussolini himself was as determined as ever not to yield to pressure from Britain or from the League. In fact, he had his own threats to make:

> "We will go straight ahead. You must thoroughly understand that never from our side will come any hostile act against a European nation, but if one is committed against us, well it means war ... to take sanctions would be to run the risk of re-making the map of Europe."[2]

In Britain, the Ethiopian crisis had become a favourite topic of debate. Discussions centred around the difficulty of applying sanctions. Lloyd George felt that the time for coercive measures had passed:

> "... sanctions, when they are advised, will be worthless, because by that time, he (Mussolini) will have on the shores of Africa all he needs for conducting the most ruthless massacre on these helpless people defending their native mountains."[3]

The controversy in Britain over sanctions resulted, partly, from the existence of two different views of the purpose and meaning of the League of Nations. The collectivists regarded the League as

---

1. Quoted in The Times (London), September 16, 1935.
2. Quoted in Royal Institute of International Affairs, Information Paper No. 16, Abyssinia and Italy, p.46
3. Quoted in The Times (London), September 16, 1935.

an agency which could employ force to deter an aggressor. The traditionalists, on the other hand, viewed the League as an international conference, and an agency for facilitating revision and peaceful change. This latter view was expressed in an article in the Round Table, which regarded the League as:

> "... an instrument of reason and conciliation to which all nations can be expected to belong because membership involves no automatic obligations to do more than confer, but which may make possible effective co-operative action against aggression, or in favour of revision ...
>
> "... by far the most important thing to-day is to preserve and rebuild the League as a conference of all nations, much more concerned with Article 19, even at the price of abandoning for the time being the automatic obligations and penalties under Article 16."[1]

Since the application of sanctions against Italy now seemed imminent, questions about sanctions became much more meaningful. It was no longer possible to ignore such inquiries as: Will economic sanctions alone be adequate? Do economic sanctions lead to war? Will the French support sanctions?

J.M. Keynes, the economist, had an affirmative reply to the first question:

> "... the League Powers should impose ... the ... sanction of prohibiting commercial and financial transactions with Italy on the part of their own nationals. No attempt should be made to blockade Italy ..."
>
> "The possibility of Italy deciding in the face of these measures to declare war on one or more of the major League Powers must be entirely ruled out ..."[2]

---

1. The Round Table, Europe, the League, and Abyssinia, Vol. 25, Sept. 1935.

2. New Statesman & Nation, J.M. Keynes, Economic Sanctions, Vol. 10, Sept. 28, 1935.

The Round Table, however, was not as optimistic as Dr. Keynes:

> "... economic sanctions are often put forward by pacifists as an alternative to the use of military sanctions. They are so only if the aggressor is prepared to submit to them, if he is not, his readiness to go to war will always overtrump the neutrals' unwillingness to go to war."
>
> "The present shortcomings of international solidarity coupled with the existence of geographic danger-spots, make it possible that automatic and universal sanctions, so far from preventing war, would turn every local spark into a conflagration."[1]

The question of French support for sanctions was taken up by the New Statesman and Nation. Its conclusion was somewhat pessimistic:

> "M. Laval seems to have promised Mussolini not to go beyond economic sanctions and the Duce has apparently accepted this assurance as a guarantee that France's co-operation is only formal ..."[2]

The most ardent supporters of collective security in Britain had long maintained that the most effective method of deterring Italy from aggression would be for the British Navy to close the Suez Canal to Italian ships. Therefore, when, on September 19, it was reported that the battle cruisers Hood and Renown, and a number of additional cruisers and destroyers had arrived at Gibraltar, these movements were immediately interpreted by Italy as a threat to her fleet.[3]

---

1. The Round Table, Neutrality & Sanctions, Vol. 25, Sept., 1935.
2. New Statesman & Nation, Socialists & Sanctions, Vol. 10, Sept. 21, 1935.
3. Reported in The Times (London), Sept. 19, 1935.

Admiral James has explained in his memoirs how the Foreign Office came to agree to reinforcements of the Mediterranean Fleet:

> "Collective security was then the slogan, but we at the Admiralty never doubted that if Mussolini was to be halted it would be by our fleet and our fleet alone.
>
> "... we could not fight simultaneously against Germany and Japan unless Italy was friendly or neutral ...
>
> "... when (Admiral) Fisher sent an urgent request for two reserve cruisers ... and also asked that the Hood should replace this battleship, the Foreign Office raised objections.
>
> "I went over to the Foreign Office to see Mr. Eden, who ... rang for Sir Robert Vansittart. They told me quite frankly that Mussolini was in an excited state and strengthening the fleet at Alexandria might tip the balance over to war .... I must have been an hour with them developing every argument I could muster and in the end they agreed to the movement."[1]

The pressure from the Admiralty, in favour of reinforcing the Mediterranean fleet, illustrates another factor which had to be considered in mapping policy. We have already noted that there was considerable pressure exerted by the Admiralty in favour of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. Military authorities were also inclined to offer advice in the Ethiopian crisis. On the whole, the Military, conscious of the impotence of British armed forces as a result of disarmament, favoured concessions to Italy.

Meanwhile, on September 18, the Committee of Five communicated to the Italian and Ethiopian representatives a plan of assistance for Ethiopia. The plan included suggestions for reforms including improve-

---

1. James, Admiral Sir Wm. - The Sky Was Always Blue, p.183.

ment of police force, economic development, financial, judicial, and educational reforms. The reforms were to be carried out on the advice of foreign specialists appointed by the League, with the approval of the Emperor. Special care would be taken to see that slavery was suppressed, and illegal traffic in arms curtailed. Police protection in frontier areas, in particular, would be improved to safeguard neighbouring territories. It was noted that France and the United Kingdom had informed the Committee, that their respective governments were willing to make certain sacrifices in Somaliland to facilitate territorial adjustments between Italy and Ethiopia. The two Governments were also willing to recognize a special Italian interest in the economic development of Ethiopia.[1]

Once again a plan which might have been the basis of a solution to the conflict appeared in the British Press before it reached Mussolini's hands. Hoare regarded this leakage as the cause of failure of an otherwise acceptable solution:

> "A London paper[2] published it before he (Mussolini) received it, and what was worse, suggested that he could not possibly accept it .... he felt that it would be humiliating to accept proposals that the London Press expected him to reject, and on this account he finally came out against them."[3]

Hoare's conclusion is based on a rather optimistic view of the proposals of the Committee of Five. Actually, the plan of the League Committee differed little from the settlement proposed at the

---

1. LNOJ, November 1935, p.1621-4.
2. See The Daily Mail, September 18, 1935.
3. Templewood, Op.cit., p.172.

Three-Power Talks held at Paris, in August. The chances of Mussolini accepting proposals, which accorded him few additional advantages over a plan already rejected, were very slight indeed. By September, the Italian Premier, far from growing more conciliatory, had become decidedly more aggressive in his demands. It is therefore difficult to agree with Hoare on this point.

On September 22, the Committee was informed by the Italian delegate that the Italian Cabinet regarded the proposals as unacceptable. Baron Aloisi again denied the right of Ethiopia to discuss matters on a footing equal with other Members of the League:

> "A case like that of Ethiopia cannot be settled by the means provided by the Covenant, because the Covenant does not contemplate the case of countries which, though unworthy and incapable of participation in the League of Nations, continue to claim the rights and to demand the observance of the obligations which such participation involves."

In addition, the Italian delegate rejected the Franco-British suggestions of an exchange of territory:

> "This seems to be a renewal of the proposal which had already been made, to give to Ethiopia an outlet to the sea.
>
> "The Italian Government is forced definitely to oppose these proposals, because it has repeatedly denounced the danger of such a solution, which makes Ethiopia into a Maritime Power, thus heightening the real threat that she constitutes to Italy."

No agreement, even economic, he concluded, was possible with Ethiopia:

> "... in view of that country's incapacity to enter into, and still less to respect, international agreements of any kind

whatever."[1]

The Ethiopian delegate, on the other hand, on September 23, informed the Committee that Ethiopia was willing to open discussions on the basis of the report.[2]

Three days later, the League Council met to receive the report of the Committee of Five. The President of the Council pointed out that the time had come for the Council to consider preparation of a report under paragraph 4 of Article 15 of the Covenant. He therefore proposed the drafting of a report by a Committee of the Council consisting of all the Members of the Council, with the exception of the parties (i.e. the Committee of Thirteen).

Eden supported the President's proposal and pointed out that while the Committee was engaged in drawing up its report:

> "... the work of conciliation can continue, and clearly no opportunity for such conciliation within the terms of the Covenant should be missed."[3]

At this time, a series of notes were exchanged by the Foreign Offices of Britain and France to determine the degree of mutual support to be expected if a violation of the Covenant occurred. The French were primarily interested in determining the British position in the event of an attack on Austria by Germany. In reply to an oral enquiry of the French Government, Sir Samuel Hoare reaffirmed British support of collective security:

> "... the League stands and this country stands with it, for the collective maintenance of the

---

1. LNOJ, November, 1935, p.1624.
2. Ibid, p.1627
3. Ibid, p.1201.

> Covenant in its entirety, and <u>particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression</u>.
>
> "... in cases where Article 16 applies, the nature of the action appropriate to be taken under it may vary according to the circumstances of each particular case."
>
> Once again, Hoare emphasized:
>
> "... action must, like the security, be collective."[1]

Within a week of this exchange, a series of events marked the outbreak of war in Ethiopia. On September 28, the Council received a telegram from the Emperor of Ethiopia announcing that it was no longer possible to delay mobilization in defence of Ethiopia. On October 2, the Ethiopian Government informed the Council that Italian troops had violated the Ethiopian frontier near French Somaliland. The next day, the Italian Government charged that the warlike and aggressive spirit of Ethiopia had succeeded in imposing war. The mobilization of Ethiopian troops on September 28, the Italians maintained, presented a direct threat to Italian troops and necessitated measures of defence by Italy. On the same day, the Ethiopian Government informed the Secretary General that Italian aeroplanes had bombed Adowa.[2]

In view of these developments, the President of the Council called a meeting for October 5. The report of the Committee of Thirteen was presented at this time. After describing, in detail, the history and circumstances of the dispute, the Committee pointed out that the other European Powers possessing territories contiguous to Ethiopia

---

1. Quoted in <u>The Times</u> (London), September 30, 1935.

2. <u>LNOJ</u>, November, 1935, p.1603-4.

had arrived at diplomatic solutions in any disputes that had arisen. The report concluded with the following recommendation:

> "Having thus stated the facts of the dispute, the Council should now in accordance with Article 15 of the Covenant, make known the recommendations which are deemed just and proper in regard thereto."
>
> "... any violation of the Covenant should immediately be brought to an end."[1]

After an appeal by the Ethiopian delegate for action under Article 16, paragraph 1,[2] the President proposed the formation of a committee of six Members to study the situation and report on the state of war in Ethiopia. The report of the Committee of Six was presented to the Council on October 7. The report concluded with this finding:

> "After an examination of the facts ... the Committee has come to the conclusion that the Italian Government has resorted to war in disregard of its covenants under Article 12 of the Covenant of the League of Nations."[3]

The report was unanimously adopted by the Council. This decision was an historic one for the League. The declaration, that a Great Power was an aggressor, and the suggestion, that sanctions under Article 16 might be applied against a Great Power, were to embark the League Members upon a previously uncharted course of action. The decision was made more dramatic by the fact that it was taken in defiance of a threat made by Mussolini only a few days before:

---

1. Ibid, p.1619
2. See appendix p.154
3. LNOJ, November, 1935, p.1225.

> "To sanctions of an economic character we will reply with our discipline, with our sobriety, and with our spirit of sacrifice. To sanctions of a military character we will reply with orders of a military character. To acts of war we will reply with acts of war."[1]

The League Assembly, which had been adjourned on September 28, reconvened, on October 9, to consider the Council's adoption of the report of the Committee of Six. During the debates of the next few days, the delegates of Austria, Hungary, and Albania informed the Assembly that owing to special political and economic conditions, their Governments could not participate in the application of sanctions against Italy.

On October 10, the Assembly established a committee consisting of one delegate each, of League Members, excluding the parties (i.e. the Co-ordination Committee). The delegates, with the assistance of experts from each Member state, were to consider measures to be taken against Italy.[2] The Co-ordination Committee met for the first time on October 11. The forty-nine states, excluding the parties, represented on the Committee, proceeded to set up a smaller committee which would make proposals for implementing sanctions (i.e. the Committee of Eighteen).[3]

Now that the imposition of sanctions against Italy seemed imminent, the British Government was anxious to learn if it could rely on French assistance in the event of an attack on the Mediterranean Fleet. The French reply of October 18 to an inquiry made by the Foreign Office was an affirmation of support for collective security:

---

1. Quoted in The Times (London), Oct. 2, 1935.
2. LNOJ, Spec. Sup. No. 138, p.115
3. Ibid, Spec. Sup. No. 145, p.13.

> "The French Government certainly interprets the obligation prescribed for members of the League of Nations towards any one of them who should, as a result of measures taken in application of Article 16, be exposed to attack by the Covenant-breaking State, as implying unlimited solidarity of action in the matter of military, air, and naval assistance ..."
>
> "The British Government itself seems to share this view, since it offers the French Government the assurance that it will not take the initiative in any measure against Italy which would not be in conformity with the decisions taken, or to be taken, by the League of Nations in full agreement with France."[1]

Despite this reply, the British Government was, nevertheless, aware that it might have to "go it alone" in the Mediterranean. The French seem to have taken the view that the reinforcement of the Mediterranean Fleet was a unilateral act on the part of the British, and that, therefore, under Article 16 of the Covenant, the French were not bound to come to the assistance of the Fleet. In fact, on October 16, two days before the above reply was made, Laval had requested the British Government to reduce the Mediterranean Fleet as a gesture of friendship to Italy. The British reply had been a curt refusal.[2]

On October 19, the Co-ordination Committee, acting on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee of Eighteen, communicated five main proposals to the States Member and non-Member of the League. The Co-ordination Committee was to reconvene, on October 31, to fix, on the basis of the replies from the Governments, the date of enforcement of the proposed sanctions. The Committee of Eighteen was to remain in

---

1. HC Cmd., 5072 of 1935-6, 3-4, XXVII, 727-8.
2. Reported in The Times (London), Oct. 16, 1935.

existence to facilitate execution of the proposals and to submit any new proposals deemed advisable.

The five main proposals communicated to the Government at this time may be summarized as follows:

(1) Cancellation of measures prohibiting the export of arms to Ethiopia and immediate prohibition of export of arms and munitions to Italy;

(2) Cessation of all loans to the Italian Government or any public authority, person or corporation in Italian territory, and of all bonding or other credits;

(3) Prohibition of all imports from Italy;

(4) Enforcement of an embargo on export to Italy of certain specified articles of strategic value;

(5) Undertaking of all Members to support one another in the application of economic and financial measures.[1]

Certain commodities were conspicuous by their absence from the list of articles mentioned in the fourth proposal. It had been the decision of the Committee of Eighteen to exclude from the list any goods which could be easily obtained from non-Member States. For this reason, such products as oil, iron, and steel, despite their strategic value, were not included in the embargo. An effective embargo on these products was dependent on the support of non-Member States, particularly the United States. Quite apart from this consideration, was the fact that Hoare had already concluded that sanctions against

---

1. LNOJ, Spec. Sup. No. 145, p.14-27.

Italy should not be applied too rigidly. The advisability of imposing an oil embargo against Italy soon became the subject of considerable controversy in Britain. This aspect of the sanctions problem will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter, where the position of the United States will be considered.

In Britain, the controversy over the imposition of sanctions had already produced a rift in the Labour Party. The contrast in views of supporters of the Labour Party is aptly illustrated by two articles, which appeared in the Times on September 23. One was the report of a resolution adopted by the Trades Union Conference, which urged mass pressure in favour of the use of all the resources of the Covenant, including all forms of sanctions and the closing of the Suez Canal. The other article reported an address of George Lansbury to a Labour rally at Cardiff, in which he said:

> "If collective security means that every nation in the Pact is to put its scientists to work on the foulest poison gases, the swiftest machine in the air, the most terrible submarines, the most horrible gases, then I am not for collective security of that kind."

Lansbury, in fact, soon found that he could no longer allign his pacifist philosophy with support of collective security. Therefore, when, at the Labour Party Conference at Brighton in October, a resolution was adopted calling on the British Government and the League:

> "... to use all the necessary measures provided for by the Covenant to prevent Italy's unjust and rapacious attack upon the territory of a fellow member of the League."[1]

---

1. Quoted in The Times, (London), October 2, 1935.

Lansbury found his position as parliamentary leader of the Labour Party untenable. Consequently, within a week, his resignation and the appointment of Clement Attlee as chairman of the Labour Party were announced.[1]

Despite evidence of widespread support for collective security within the ranks of the Labour Party, the Party still opposed any measure of rearmament. Not long after the party conference at Brighton, the Daily Herald, official organ of the Labour Party, carried an editorial condemning rearmament proposals:

> "The Labour Party in the House of Commons has steadily opposed and will oppose the rearmament proposals of the Government ... we are willing to maintain the necessary forces to make our proper contribution to collective security, but we will not support the creation of huge national armaments, which so far from leading to peace, inevitably make for war."[2]

The Conservative ranks were also not free from division. Again two comments made on the same day serve to indicate a difference in emphasis in the views of two Cabinet members. On October 5, Eden was quoted from a letter to his constituents:

> "The real issue is whether or not the League of Nations can prove itself an effective instrument in this dispute, and whether its Members are prepared to respect and uphold the Covenant."

Baldwin, on the other hand, put emphasis on the fact that:

> "... His Majesty's Government have not and never have had, any intention of taking isolated action in this dispute .... The responsibility for any action that may be taken rests on all and must be faced squarely by all ..."[3]

---

1. Reported in Ibid, October 9, 1935.
2. Quoted in Hogg, Quinton - The Left Was Never Right, p.58
3. Quoted in The Times (London), October 5, 1935.

By mid-October, it would appear, on the surface, that there had been a major change in the position of the British Foreign Office vis-à-vis the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. Hoare's famous speech at Geneva, on September 11, seemed to mark the beginning of a whole new approach, in which activities would centre in the League of Nations. This new approach reached its peak in mid-October, with the decision of the League Assembly to adopt sanctions against Italy. League leadership this time had been provided by Anthony Eden. Britain seemed to have, at the last moment, decided to take up the lead in the League.

The sincerity of British support of the League on this issue is, however, open to question. Hoare and Baldwin had both emphasized, on a number of occasions, that any action taken must be truly collective. Certainly no steps could be taken without the full support of France. Full support of France, however, in sanctions against Italy was never a practical possibility. The reservations made by Hoare and Baldwin could, therefore, be interpreted as a means of providing a convenient exit, when Britain herself did not back a complete application of sanctions against Italy. The Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister were being completely honest when they said that Britain could not take isolated action against Italy. On the other hand, they were doubtlessly somewhat less than sincere when they spoke of Britain's undying faith in the League.

In any case, Britain had now embarked on a declared policy of support of the League. This policy, however, at no time replaced the policy of pursuit of a negotiated settlement of the dispute. Hoare himself had pointed out to Laval that both lines must be pursued.

Consequently, even when support of collective security was at its height in mid-October, the Foreign Office arranged to send one of its members, Maurice Peterson, to Paris, where he was, in collaboration with St. Quentin, Chief of the African Department in Paris, to attempt to arrive at some solution which would satisfy Mussolini, and yet not discredit the League.

The decision to pursue this dualistic policy in the dispute was one of the most regrettable features of Hoare's policy. We have already noted his reasoning which was based on his desire to retain Italy as an ally against Germany. On the other hand, Sir Samuel anticipated that the League might be a necessary means of defence against Germany and, therefore, must not be discredited. How difficult it would be to pursue two courses of action, one of conciliation and the other of coercion, was soon to become apparent.

CHAPTER V

NOVEMBER ELECTION AND SANCTIONS

Public statements of British policy, made during October and November, cannot be divorced from the fact that a national election was in the offing. Speeches of Cabinet members, being election speeches, tended to emphasize League action to a degree they might not otherwise have done. Thanks largely to the campaigning of the Labour Party, collective security had achieved such widespread sympathy among the British public that Baldwin and his Party chose to make support of the League one of the main planks of their election platform.

Sir Samuel Hoare has commented in his memoirs on some of the problems faced in the election campaign:

> "On the one hand, we were doing our utmost to create a united League front against Mussolini; on the other, we were profoundly conscious of our own military weakness and the urgent need to repair it. If ... we had weighted the scale too heavily on the side of rearmament, we should have given the impression that the negotiations at Geneva were bound to fail. If, on the other hand, we had lost the chance of making rearmament a definite issue in the Election, our hands would have remained tied .... The Opposition concentrated on the rearmament side, and turned the campaign into a movement of resistance against militarism."[1]

Labour's tactics in the election have been described by A.J.P. Taylor:

> "During the previous two years, the Labour Opposition had made all the running in

---

1. Templewood, Op.cit., p.195.

> foreign affairs. It caught the National Government both ways round, denouncing at one moment the failure to assert collective security and at the next the alleged sabotage of the Disarmament Conference. Thus Labour hoped to win the votes both of the pacifists and of the enthusiasts for the League."[1]

On October 19, speaking at Worcester, Baldwin announced a general election for November 14. On this occasion, the Prime Minister's remarks on foreign policy suggested that there was considerable doubt in his own mind as to the possibility of a successful outcome of League action against Italy:

> "If that path should fail, I know it has been said that that would be an end of the League of Nations .... That is not my view .... if this first attempt fails, let us see whether the machinery has been at fault ...
>
> "... these strained weeks the people of this country will see by practice and will learn by example what the League can do and what the League cannot do."

Again, he emphasized that Britain would support no isolated action:

> "... no step do we take except in full unison with those who are working with us." [2]

Baldwin seemed to be trying to prepare the public for the failure of the League in Ethiopia. If so, he would have done well to clarify his remarks. Knowing that League sanctions against Italy were not likely to succeed, the best course for the Government was to educate the public to accept the only possible alternative to war - a negotiated settlement. Had the British public been better prepared to accept

---

1. Taylor, A.J.P. - The Origins of the Second World War, p.93.

2. Quoted in The Times (London), Oct. 21, 1935.

such a solution, the proposals later made by Hoare and Laval might have met with a different reception. Neither Baldwin, nor Hoare, however, really attempted to convert public opinion to their view of the situation. They were too often inclined to go along with public opinion, instead of attempting to lead it.

The last foreign policy debate in the House of Commons, prior to the Election, was held on October 22 and 23. At this time, Hoare again affirmed that:

> "... loyalty to our League obligations was approved by almost everyone in the House .... I can claim that it is also the policy of the great majority of men and women in the country as a whole."

Like Baldwin, Hoare now seemed unsure of the success of the League:

> "If the League does fail, the world at large, and Europe in particular, will be faced with a period of almost unrelieved danger and gloom."

On the question of military sanctions, however, Hoare's remarks were unequivocal:

> "... in my view, the pre-condition for the enforcement of such sanctions, namely, collective agreement at Geneva has never existed .... From the beginning of the present deliberations at Geneva until now, there has been no discussion of military sanctions."

Therefore, he wished to keep the door open for negotiations:

> "Italy is still a member of the League .... Cannot this eleventh hour be so used as to make it unnecessary for us to proceed farther along the unattractive road of economic action against a fellow-member, an old friend, and a former ally?"[1]

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 305, October 22, 1935, cols. 18-32.

Speaking for the Labour Party, Clement Attlee criticized the Government, both for its failure to support the League, and for its rearmament proposals:

> "... we have unremittingly urged the Government to make support of the League the whole basis of its policy.
>
> "... they appear to be seeking the occasion of this dispute to go in for a huge armaments programme."[1]

Another Labour member, Colonel Wedgwood, raised the question of an oil embargo:

> "All that is necessary is to prevent petrol from getting into Eritrea .... The blockade of that one article, which is not included, unfortunately in the present list, would prevent war."[2]

A Conservative, Earl Winterton, pointed out a flaw in Labour logic:

> "... individual members of this House expect that the British Government be omnipotent, and, on the other hand, do not supply that Government ... with the materials in the matters of defence forces."[3]

The following day, Baldwin attempted to squelch rumours that Eden was taking an independent line at Geneva:

> "... the Minister for League Affairs during his conduct of those affairs at Geneva has been in constant touch with his colleagues in London and ... his every action is endorsed with unanimity."

The Prime Minister took the opportunity to make another plea for rearmament:

> "The lessons of this crisis have made it clear to us that in the interests of world peace it

---

1. Ibid, cols. 35-44
2. Ibid, Oct. 23, 1935, col. 232
3. Ibid, Oct. 22, 1935, col. 64.

> is essential that our defensive services should be stronger than they are to-day."[1]

The two conditions necessary to a peaceful settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian war were stated by Anthony Eden:

> "The first is that the three parties, Italy, Abyssinia, and the League accept the settlement, and secondly that the terms shall be consistent with the Covenant."[2]

L.S. Amery, a Conservative who felt that the application of sanctions against Italy could lead only to disaster, proposed that sanctions be dropped and the League made to serve as:

> "... a permanent Round Table of the nations in conference ... growing greatly in authority and influence and in universality, provided always that it did not have at the background the threat of coercion."[3]

In a debate in the Lords on the same day, Lord Lothian spoke in equally strong terms of the necessity of achieving a negotiated solution:

> "... it is quite impossible ... to inflict only feeble economic sanctions which inflame ... everybody and ... will end in extending the war all over the world ... it seems to me that unless we can bring this conflict to an end on a real basis of peace discussion by the end of this year the last state of this world will be immeasurably worse than it is to-day."[4]

During the following week, election manifestos of the three Parties appeared in the Press. The Labour Party called for a new foreign policy based on co-operation with the League of Nations and

---

1. Ibid, Oct. 23, 1935, cols. 149-51
2. Ibid, col. 223
3. Ibid, col. 182
4. H. of L. Deb., 5S, Vol. 98, Oct. 23, 1935, col. 1164.

on the collective system of peace. Through use of League machinery, the war in Ethiopia was to be ended as soon as possible. The two main planks of the platform were support of collective security and reduction of national armaments.[1]

The Liberal programme for the conduct of foreign affairs bore a striking resemblance to the Labour manifesto. According to the Liberals, peace lay through strengthening the League of Nations and through international disarmament. Only by these means could security be attained.[2]

The foreign policy of the National Government, as outlined in its programme, was to be as follows:

> "The League of Nations will remain ... the keystone of British foreign policy. We shall, therefore, continue to do all in our power to uphold the Covenant and to maintain and increase the efficiency of the League. In the present unhappy dispute between Italy and Abyssinia there will be no wavering in the policy we have hitherto pursued. We shall take no action in isolation, but we shall be prepared faithfully to take our part in any collective action decided upon by the League and shared by its members. We shall endeavour to further any discussions which may offer the hope of a fast and fair settlement, provided that it be within the framework of the League and acceptable to ... Italy, Abyssinia, and the League itself."
>
> "The fact is that the actual condition of our defence forces is not satisfactory. We have made it clear that we must in the course of the next few years do what is necessary to repair the gaps in our defences."
>
> "The defence programme will be strictly confined to what is required to make the country and the Empire safe and to fulfill our obligations towards the League."[3]

---

1. Reported in The Times (London), Oct. 26, 1935
2. Reported in The Times (London), Oct. 25, 1935
3. Quoted in Ibid, Oct. 28, 1935.

A careful examination of this manifesto reveals that the National Government had made no major commitments. A promise of "no wavering in the policy hitherto pursued" was not a far-reaching pledge. Guarantees of "no action in isolation" and support of truly "collective action" left the Government with a convenient exit when collective action did not materialize. The Government would continue its attempt to negotiate a solution. Even the rearmament proposals were cautious and reserved. In fact, there was no really strong pledge made by the National Government in this manifesto. Nevertheless, it was accepted by the public as a promise to support the League and collective security. It is not unreasonable to conclude that this was the spirit in which the authors of the manifesto hoped it would be received.

A few days after the manifesto appeared, Baldwin, in an address to the Peace Society, spoke in very reserved tones of the need to re-arm:

> "... we have gone too far alone and must try to bring others along with us. I give my word there will be no great armaments."[1]

Speaking at Chelsea, Hoare once again outlined his dual policy:

> "Our policy has always been perfectly simple - namely loyalty to the League and readiness to help with any honourable settlement of the dispute that is acceptable to the three parties concerned - the League, Italy, and Abyssinia. That has always been our policy. It will always be our policy, and it is the policy that I shall support at Geneva."[2]

---

1. Quoted in Young, G.M. - Stanley Baldwin, p.215

2. Quoted in The Times (London), Oct. 31, 1935.

Meanwhile, at Geneva, the Co-ordination Committee met, on October 31, to receive the replies from the Governments to its sanctions proposals. On this day, in Britain, financial sanctions, (i.e. prohibition of loans and credits to Italy) came into effect. In Rome, the Italian Government adopted additional measures to offset the imposition of sanctions by the League. Some of the provisions were: (1) rationing of foodstuffs; (2) curtailment of rail services; (3) provisions for the preservation of scrap iron; and (4) the employment of Sardinian cloth only in uniforms.[1]

The Chairman of the Co-ordination Committee informed the delegates that fifty Governments had prohibited, or were about to prohibit, the export of arms and munitions to Italy in conformity with Proposal I. Forty-nine states had already taken action or were willing to take action on Proposal II (financial sanctions). Forty-eight states expressed their willingness to enforce economic sanctions as outlined in Proposals III and IV. Thirty-nine were ready to co-operate as requested in Proposal V. The Committee therefore decided that Proposals II, III, and IV should come into effect by November 18.[2]

Once again the French Premier took the opportunity to express the hope that a diplomatic solution would be achieved:

> "We must endeavour to seek as speedily as possible, for an amicable settlement of this dispute.
>
> "This duty is particularly imperative for France which, on January 7th last, signed a treaty of friendship with Italy. I shall therefore stubbornly pursue my attempts - from which nothing

---

1. Reported in The Times (London), Nov. 4, 1935

2. LNOJ, Spec. Sup. No. 146, p.7-8.

> will deter me - to seek for elements that might serve as a basis for negotiation."[1]

Sir Samuel endorsed Laval's remarks:

> "He has accurately expressed what is in the minds of us all. On the one hand, as loyal Members of the League, we feel it our bounden duty to carry out our obligations and to undertake the duty imposed on us by the Covenant. On the other hand, we are under a no less insistent obligation to strive for a speedy and honourable settlement of the controversy."

Hoare went on to inform the Committee of the conversations which were in progress, in Paris, between Britain and France:

> "... there have been conversations taking place between Rome, Paris and London, on the possibilities of such a settlement .... Up to the present, the conversations have been nothing more than an exchange of tentative suggestions .... Nothing is further from our minds than to make and conclude an agreement behind the back of the League."[2]

Meeting separately, on November 6, the Committee of Eighteen adopted a proposal to extend the embargo on exports to Italy to include petroleum, pig-iron, iron, and steel. The proposal was communicated to the Governments who were to indicate their views as to the desirability of such sanctions. The Committee also empowered its President to reconvene it whenever necessary.[3]

The suggestion by the Committee that the embargo on exports to Italy include oil had the effect of speeding efforts in both London and Paris to achieve a settlement before the Governments would have to take a stand on an oil embargo. Meanwhile, steps were taken, in Britain, to apply limited sanctions. On November 9, the Board of Trade announced

---

1. Ibid, p.8

2. Ibid, p.9

3. Ibid, p.46-50.

that the prohibition of certain exports to Italy would become effective on November 18.[1]

Almost immediately, a protest against sanctions was communicated to the British Foreign Secretary by the Italian Ambassador in London:

> "... the Italian Government renew the fullest and most emphatic protest against the serious measures and the injustice of the proceedings which are being adopted against them."[2]

In addition, the Italians maintained that their memorial had not been adequately considered by the League Council. It was pointed out that the Italians had been welcomed as liberators in non-Amharic Ethiopia. The British and French Governments were warned that the imposition of economic sanctions would have to be met by counter-measures.

London made no immediate reply to this protest, perhaps because the National Government was now fully occupied in the election campaign. Speaking on November 9, Hoare announced the Government's intention:

> "... to carry out our obligations, wherever they exist, and to strive for peace wherever peace is threatened. This is our policy. It has not changed since my speech at Geneva, nor will it change after the Election.
>
> "If we are to defend the cause of peace, we must be able to defend ourselves and take our full part in collective action."[3]

---

1. Reported in The Times (London), Nov. 9, 1935.
2. Quoted in Ibid, Nov. 13, 1935.
3. Quoted in Ibid, Nov. 11, 1935.

The last speech made by Baldwin, before election day, could almost have been delivered by a Labour candidate:

> "... I pledge the National Government to work faithfully for security at home and peace throughout the world, spending not a penny more on our Defence Forces than is necessary for the safety of our people and striving always to bring the nations into agreement for the all-round reduction of armaments in a world where collective security has been made the sure protection against aggression."[1]

It was on the basis of these pledges that the National Government was re-elected on November 14 with a majority of over two-hundred and forty seats.[2] It is difficult, if not impossible, to judge the true meaning of election results. These returns, however, must, in part at least, have represented a vote for the League and collective security. There was little wonder that a naive, ill-informed public was to be so amazed at what it regarded as a repudiation of the Government's pledges, in the Hoare - Laval proposals, which were put forth within a month of the election.

Popular support in Britain for sanctions, however, had no parallel in France. On the contrary, there was considerable opposition among a number of French organizations, who made it their avowed aim to prevent the application of sanctions against Italy. One such group was the Fédération Républicaine, which consisted of a number of right-wing deputies who:

> "... note that the application of sanctions against Italy will have very serious effects on French economic life .... we urgently

---

1. Quoted in Ibid, November 13, 1935.

2. Reported in Ibid, November 16, 1935.

> call on the Government to negotiate with the League for the postponement of the application of sanctions to the latest possible date."[1]

The "committee of national union against sanctions", a newly formed organization in France, protested against sanctions, which were maintained to be:

> "... illegal, iniquitous, prejudicial to French economic interests and likely to provoke war."[2]

Several Paris newspapers added their weight to the forces opposing sanctions; one of these was "Le Matin", which maintained:

> "... nothing can excuse the privations to which we are condemning a friendly and civilized people."[3]

On November 20, Maurice Peterson was, for a second time, sent to Paris for talks with St. Quentin. The talks held in October had resulted in little more than a report to London on the view of the French as to the concessions on which a settlement could be based. Peterson reports that, on leaving for Paris, he was convinced that the Baldwin Government would not go to war for Abyssinia and that, with this in mind, he must do the best he could for Abyssinia.

The conversations between Peterson and St. Quentin were to provide the basis of the plan which was agreed to by Hoare and Laval in December. Peterson records that there was considerable divergence in view between himself and the French. The British and French agreed on the cession of a considerable amount of non-Amharic territory to Italy and compensation in the form of a port in French or British

---

1. Quoted in Ibid, Nov. 14, 1935

2. Quoted in Ibid, Nov. 18, 1935.

3. Quoted in Ibid, Nov. 19, 1935.

Somaliland. According to Peterson, however, the French pressed for the cession of the whole of the Tigre province while the British had considered ceding only Eastern Tigre to Italy. The French also wanted a guarantee of the monopoly of the Djibuti Railway.[1]

While these talks were in progress, the British and French Governments communicated replies to the Italian protest against sanctions. Both Governments, although emphasizing their desire for continued friendly relations with Italy, pointed out that, as League Members, they were obliged to participate in collective action taken by the League.[2]

Nevertheless, it became increasingly evident that neither Government was willing to include oil in the embargo on exports to Italy. For this reason, after conversations with the British ambassador in Paris, Laval requested and obtained postponement of the meeting of the Committee of Eighteen, which had been scheduled for November 29. Laval's request was based on the necessity of his presence in Paris at the time, owing to a number of important debates in the Chamber of Deputies.[3] There can be little doubt that his real purpose was to postpone discussion on an oil embargo and to allow time for the Franco-British conversations in Paris to proceed to a solution.

The proposal to impose an oil embargo on Italy now began to be examined in earnest in Britain. The Economist thought:

> "It is intolerable that ... petrol should be supplied any longer by British companies, and

---

1. Peterson, Maurice - Both Sides of the Curtain, p.118
2. Reported in The Times (London), Nov. 23, 1935
3. Reported in Ibid, Nov. 26, 1935.

> it is no answer to suggest that, if we stop supplying the Americans will step in."
>
> "If we refuse to sell him (Mussolini) oil, he will treat our refusal as a casus belli .... But in fact, the oil embargo is one against which Signor Mussolini can take very little, if any, effective military action."[1]

The New Statesman and Nation had grown even more critical of the Government's Foreign Policy:

> "The Government ... called a General Election on the wave of popularity that followed Sir Samuel Hoare's speech, foreseeing that the eventual settlement with Mussolini might lead to criticisms which would be better incurred after than before the Election."
>
> "... it is a mistake to believe in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute that peace can be preserved by a patched-up settlement acceptable, as Sir Samuel Hoare puts it, to Italy, Abyssinia, and the League. Such a settlement is obviously impossible. If Abyssinian integrity is preserved Italy will not be satisfied. If it is destroyed, the League's credit goes too far."[2]

On the other hand, Douglas Jerrold, writing in the English Review, felt that a settlement not only could but must be reached:

> "The Abyssinians are fighting with the support of the League for one system of external control through the League as opposed to another system of external control through Italy. The tribesmen on whom the Emperor of Abyssinia can call know nothing of this. Many of them are, in fact, as hostile to Abyssinia as to the Italian Government and none of them have heard of the League of Nations. No one denies that a settlement can be reached."[3]

Baldwin himself had spoken earlier of the dangers of imposing

---

1. The Economist, Sanctions Begin, Vol. 121, Nov. 23, 1935.
2. New Statesman & Nation, Mr. Baldwin's Foreign Policy, Vol. 10, Nov. 30, 1935.
3. The English Review, Douglas Jerrold, Current Comments, Vol. 61, November, 1935.

sanctions:

> "... of the severest kind ... they lead inevitably to blockade, and blockade brings in the question of countries outside the League. That was what I meant when I said I would not agree to this country going into a blockade unless I was assured beforehand of the attitude of the United States of America."[1]

What did Baldwin mean by "sanctions of the severest kind"? Did he consider an oil embargo to be in this category? Unfortunately, once again, he failed to elaborate.

The need for the co-operation of the United States in an oil embargo was the reason most frequently offered for the failure to impose this sanction on Italy. Therefore, a brief examination of the policy of United States to the dispute is necessary to determine if her assistance in such measures was ever a practical possibility.

The Ethiopian Emperor had first communicated with the American Government on July 3, 1935. At that time, a request was made for action on the part of the United States to assure the observance by Italy of the terms of the Kellogg Pact. The reply of the American Government, although it reaffirmed support of the Pact of Paris, nevertheless made no promise of action to deter Italy from aggression.[2] In a Press Conference, President Roosevelt stated that the dispute between Italy and Ethiopia was of no official concern to the American Government, except in so far as it disturbed world peace.[3]

In August, the Neutrality Resolution came up for presidential approval. Accordingly, on August 31, the President signed a joint

---

1. Quoted in The Times (London), Oct. 26, 1935
2. Reported in Ibid, July 6, 1935
3. Reported in Ibid, July 27, 1935.

resolution of the two Houses of Congress which made it mandatory for him, upon the outbreak of war between foreign countries, to impose upon the belligerents an embargo on the export of arms and munitions.[1] Therefore when, on October 3, war broke out between Italy and Ethiopia, Roosevelt issued a proclamation:

> "... making effective an embargo on the exportation from this country to Ethiopia and Italy of arms, ammunition and implements of war."

In addition, he pointed out that:

> "... any of our people who voluntarily engage in transactions of any character with either of the belligerents do so at their own risk."[2]

The reply of the American Government to the League enquiry about sanctions was made on October 26. The Secretary of State pointed out that the United States had already imposed an embargo on the export of arms to the belligerents. The Government, however, expressed no willingness to participate in sanctions against Italy.[3] Nevertheless, efforts were made by President Roosevelt to persuade American businessmen not to expand their trade with Italy, lest they indirectly aid Italian aggression.[4]

Despite the urgings of the President, the value of American exports to Italy during the month of October increased to 6,821,366 dollars as compared with 4,995,887 dollars in September.[5] In view of this trend, Cordell Hull issued a statement on November 15, pointing out that the export to belligerents of certain products, such as oil

---

1. Reported in Ibid, Sept. 2, 1935.
2. Documents on International Affairs, 1935, Vol. II, p.279.
3. LNOJ, Spec. Sup. No. 146, p.7.
4. Reported in The Times (London), Oct. 31, 1935.
5. Reported in Ibid, Nov. 23, 1935.

and steel, which were essential war materials, constituted a class of trade directly contrary both to the official policy of the Government and to the spirit of the Neutrality Act.[1] A few days later, the Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, called on the American oil industry voluntarily to suspend shipments to Italy. Only thus could they comply both with the letter and the spirit of the Neutrality Act.[2]

The attitude of the United States to the dispute left little grounds for the hope that she would participate in sanctions against Italy. The Americans could be expected to maintain strict neutrality in the war. Therefore, there was no reason to delay decision on an oil embargo until the position of the United States could be determined. It had already been clearly fixed.

One of the major criticisms of Baldwin's Government has been that its support of the League in the Ethiopian crisis was insincere. Much of the critics' ammunition is based on the election speeches of Baldwin and Hoare. The charge is that the Government pledged support of the League only to win the election and was never sincere in its pledges. There is certainly some basis for these accusations. Support of the League was emphasized to a greater extent prior to the election than it would have been under ordinary circumstances. In this way, the Government was able to capitalize on some of the campaigning of the Labour Party.

---

1. Reported in Ibid, Nov. 16, 1935

2. Reported in Ibid, Nov. 22, 1935.

However, a careful examination of the speeches made by Baldwin and Hoare and of the election manifesto of the Government reveals that the Government had made no definite pledge with regard to the Italo-Ethiopian war. The Government promised to support the League only in truly collective action. A double approach was to be continued and a peaceful solution sought. The Government cannot, in all justice, be charged with having made pledges it did not intend to keep. What the Government can be accused of is failing to mention that collective action was not really a practical possibility, especially since it was now clear that there was little support in France for sanctions against Italy, and that therefore, the British Government intended to impose mild sanctions only against Italy. There was little wonder that the British public did not realize that the real effort to terminate the war was being made, not at Geneva, but at Paris, where Peterson and St. Quentin were attempting to formulate a diplomatic settlement.

An oil embargo was generally regarded as the one sanction which would be most effective in deterring Italy from aggression. Had it been ruled out in the discussions between Hoare and Laval in September? The question remains as yet unanswered. According to Hoare's own account, sanctions were to be applied "cautiously". Did this mean that an oil embargo, rumoured to be a "casus belli" in Mussolini's mind, was never seriously considered? If the Government felt that the co-operation of the United States was essential to the effective application of an oil embargo, then such an embargo was never a serious consideration since the co-operation of the United States

in sanctions against Italy was never a practical possibility.

We are forced to conclude that the real criticism of the Government was not that it made a pledge which it did not intend to keep but that it failed to inform the public of the real facts of the case. Had the public realized that a negotiated settlement was the only solution possible to the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, then it might have been prepared to accept such a settlement. In that case, the reaction to the proposals elaborated in Paris by Hoare and Laval might have been quite different.

CHAPTER VI

THE HOARE-LAVAL PACT AND RESIGNATION

On December 7, Sir Samuel Hoare, while on route to Switzerland for a well-earned holiday, stopped in Paris for talks with the French Premier. From these talks emerged the "Hoare-Laval Pact", a plan for ending the Italo-Ethiopian war. Before examining the course of the talks and the peace plan itself, it is necessary to consider the public statements made in Britain, France, and in Italy immediately before the Paris conversations. The stated policies of the British leaders are of particular interest, since we are partly concerned to see if the peace plan was consistent with these statements.

For his part, Mussolini was still emphasizing the danger of imposing sanctions:

> "It is not the economic side of sanctions which arouses our indignation .... But what revolts us in the sanctions is their moral aspect. It is the fact of having put Abyssinia and Italy on the same level .... Even when everything will be finished the furrows which these measures have traced in our souls will remain deep."[1]

In Britain, the policy of the National Government was announced in the Speech from the Throne, on December 3:

> "My Government's foreign policy will as heretofore be based on a firm support of the League of Nations. They will remain prepared to fulfill, in co-operation with other members of the League, the obligations of the Covenant. In particular, they are determined to use at all times the full weight of their influence for the preservation of peace.

---

1. Quoted in The Times (London), Dec. 2, 1935.

> "In pursuance of these obligations My Government have felt compelled to adopt in co-operation with some fifty other States Members of the League, certain measures of an economic and financial nature in regard to Italy. The same will continue to exert their influence in favour of a peace acceptable to the three parties in the dispute, namely, Italy, Ethiopia, and the League of Nations.
>
> "The fulfilment of our international obligations under the Covenant, no less than the adequate safe-guarding of My Empire, makes it urgently necessary that the deficiencies in My Defence Forces should be made good. My Ministers will in due course lay before you their proposals, which will be limited to the minimum required for these two purposes."[1]

Once again emphasis had been laid on the fact that League action must be based on co-operation with other members, and also on the desirability of a peaceful solution. This dual line met with criticism from Clement Attlee, who found:

> "... in that statement on foreign affairs that fatal dualism that runs through all the Government's foreign policy ..."

The Labour leader went on to criticize the Government's re-armament proposals:

> "What has happened to disarmament? Disarmament has gone from the picture altogether."[2]

Lord Snell, addressing the House of Lords, agreed with Attlee:

> "We are willing to support armaments to the extent which will enable us to take our share in enabling the League of Nations to impose collective security, but beyond that armaments are suspected by us as unnecessary and dangerous. The Labour Party renounces armed force as a weapon of policy, and hopes that in the Naval Conference and at Geneva and elsewhere we shall get universal disarmament."[3]

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 307, Dec. 3, 1935, cols. 45-46.
2. Ibid, cols. 59-61.
3. H. of L. Deb., 5S, Vol. 99, Dec. 3, 1935, col. 21.

In the Commons, Hugh Dalton (Lab.) urged the Government to impose an oil embargo:

> "Unless we take steps to stop the supply of oil to Mussolini, we are neglecting the most important and most effective sanction and permitting the war to drag on needlessly and dangerously for the rest of the world."[1]

Sir Samuel, on the other hand, defended his dual policy:

> "... we have consistently and steadily followed the double line that has time after time been approved by the League and by this House. On the one hand, we have taken our full part in the collective action under the Covenant, and on the other hand, we have continued our efforts for a peaceful settlement."
>
> "... any proposals that might emerge ... must be acceptable to the three parties to the dispute - the League, Italy, and Abyssinia."

Once again, Sir Samuel emphasized the need for a peaceful settlement, and his desire to retain the friendship of Italy:

> "We and France, acting on behalf of the League and in the spirit of the League are determined to make another great effort for peace. We have no wish to humiliate Italy or to weaken it. Indeed, we are most anxious to see a strong Italy in the world, an Italy that is strong morally, physically, and socially, and that is able to contribute to the world valuable assistance."[2]

Even more emphatic in his remarks on the need for a diplomatic solution was Austen Chamberlain:

> "... if it is satisfactory to the League and Abyssinia refuses to accept it, are we to go on employing sanctions, when not merely Italy has disregarded, but Abyssinia also disregarded a decision of the League? ... I do not think you can say to Abyssinia: 'We will continue

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 307, Dec. 5, 1935, cols. 326-7.

2. Ibid, col. 343.

> indefinitely our pressure on Italy and go on heightening it until you agree'. I think it must be until the League of Nations agree and a satisfactory solution is accepted by Italy."[1]

It was left to Anthony Eden to take up the Labour challenge to rearmament proposals:

> "How are we to get collective security, if we want to apply it honestly and not on the cheap, unless this country is at least as strong as other Great Powers that bear responsibilities similar to our own?
>
> "... you are not improving the international situation ... if you say that you will reduce your armaments and hope that there will be collective security as a result, and that other nations will reduce their armaments also."[2]

Hoare's speech had laid new stress on the need for a negotiated solution. He had not, however, informed the public that, in his view, a diplomatic solution was the only possibility. Only if the British public had been completely convinced of the necessity of a peaceful settlement would it have been willing to accept proposals such as those put forth in Paris within a few days of Hoare's speech. Hoare's problem, however, was capable of no easy solution. He was reluctant to admit that the League powers lacked solidarity and, therefore, that League action would, in all probability, be unsuccessful. On the other hand, neither he nor Laval was willing to adopt any sanction which might lead to war with Italy.

Laval, in a radio broadcast on November 26, had emphasized even more than Hoare the need for negotiation as an alternative to the application of sanctions:

---

1. Ibid, cols. 352-3.
2. Ibid, cols. 429-30.

> "From the beginning we were in agreement over the avoidance of all military sanctions as well as any measures likely to lead to a naval blockade. The closing of the Suez Canal has never been considered .... I have resolutely pursued and shall not cease to pursue, with patience and tenacity, the arrangement of a friendly settlement. No one can see in sanctions the only method of stopping war."[1]

On the eve of Hoare's departure for Paris, Mussolini addressed the Italian Chamber in tones which left no doubt that Italy would not be easily satiated:

> "I declare it my intention to reaffirm in the most distinct manner that the epilogue of this crisis can only consist in the full recognition of our rights, and in the safeguarding of our African interests. In the meantime, our activity continues, in Italy, and in Africa, where our troops and Blackshirts, united in will and in faith in the revolution will give to the Fatherland a deserved and decisive victory."[2]

Hoare reports that no special cabinet meeting was convened in Britain, prior to his departure for Paris, because he did not expect to conclude a final plan with Laval. Baldwin's final instructions to Hoare were:

> "... push Laval as far as you can, but on no account get this country into war."[3]

In Paris, to assist in the talks, were Vansittart, Peterson and the British Ambassador, Sir George Clerk. The French participants in the conversations were Laval, Léger, and St. Quentin. On several occasions during the course of the talks, Laval phoned Mussolini with whom he seemed to have a direct line. Hoare reports that the French

---

1. Quoted in Salvemini, Gaetano, Prelude to World War II, p.387n.
2. Quoted in The Times (London), Dec. 9, 1935.
3. Quoted in Templewood, Op.cit., p.178.

Premier, because he was determined not to impose an oil embargo, felt that a plan to end the war must be elaborated immediately. Laval's attitude made Sir Samuel question French support in the event of an attack by Italy on the Mediterranean Fleet:

> "I therefore asked Laval categorically whether in the event of an attack we could depend upon French help. His answer, though it was in general terms satisfactory, avoided any undertaking to make military preparations, and obviously assumed that French co-operation would depend upon Anglo-French agreement as to our immediate policy."[1]

In discussing an exchange of territory, Laval pointed out that Italy now occupied a considerable part of the northern Province of Tigre. Hoare was therefore inclined to agree with him that some concessions in addition to those already discussed by Peterson and St. Quentin should be considered. Sir Samuel felt that the port obtained by Ethiopia should be in the Italian territory of Eritrea but agreed that Britain would surrender Zeila if the emperor should prefer that port. The British Foreign Secretary insisted that any economic rights accorded to Italy in Ethiopia be subject to League supervision. Laval consented, but insisted that the proposals be sent to Rome before submission to Addis Ababa or Geneva.[2]

The final draft of the proposals was drawn up on Sunday, December 8. The plan called for: (1) the cession of Tigre province to Italy and the rectification of the frontier between Ethiopian and Italian territory in the east and south-east; (2) an economic monopoly for Italy in a large zone in the south and south-west of Ethiopia; (3) an outlet to the sea for Ethiopia. The plan was to be submitted

---

1. Ibid, p.179.

2. Ibid, p.179-81.

to the League for approval.

Hoare agreed to the plan because:

> "... it seemed clear that unless we could end it (the war) in the immediate future, incalculable suffering would be inflicted on the population, and the whole country annexed, the Emperor deposed, Mussolini inevitably driven into Hitler's arms, the League hopelessly disrupted, and German aggression everywhere encouraged."
>
> "It was these considerations that on that Sunday evening made me recommend to the Cabinet the acceptance of the joint plan for submission to the League."[1]

That evening, Peterson was despatched to London with the draft proposals. He reports that on leaving:

> "Vansittart urged me, in his name, to emphasize in London the pressing need for closing the ranks against the coming onrush of Germany."[2]

The following day, the details of the plan were published in the Paris papers. It has been argued that the plan was deliberately "leaked" to the Press by Laval to force the British Cabinet into the position where it would have to endorse the plan or reject its Foreign Secretary. The consequence was that eventually the Cabinet rejected both the plan and its Foreign Secretary.

No official statement was issued by the British Cabinet after its meeting, on December 9, and no confirmation or denial made of the Paris reports, which were now carried in the British papers. This reticence naturally led to the conclusion that the reports were accurate.[3]

---

1. Templewood, Op.cit., p.182.

2. Peterson, Op.cit., p.121.

3. Reported in The Times (London), Dec. 10, 1935.

On the following day, in answer to questions in the House of Commons, Baldwin declared:

> "... it would clearly be premature to make a statement on the subject at present."
>
> "I am told by those who have studied the original proposals and the Press reports that there are considerable differences in the matter of substance."[1]

Lees-Smith (Lab.), found this reply unsatisfactory:

> "... if they are accurate up to only fifty per cent, they are a contradiction of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and more serious still, ... they are an abandonment of the foundations upon which the Government fought the last Election ..."
>
> "... Italy is to receive territory which ... she has not herself yet been able to win on her own account."[2]

Anthony Eden assured Lees-Smith that:

> "... in the account which he has read to us there certainly are important inaccuracies."
>
> "... surely it must be clear to the House that it would be unprecedented at this stage to make public proposals ... before the principals have even had a chance to read them."[3]

These arguments were insufficient to hold back the tide of criticism that was now swelling, not only in the House of Commons, but throughout the country. Colonel Wedgwood regarded the proposals as a:

> "... policy of peace at any price and justice forgotten ... the English Government will not only fail to secure the authority of the League, but will be damned in the eyes of all those small nations and those innumerable people in America and throughout the world who have pinned their faith upon the honesty of the British Government."[4]

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 307, Dec. 10, 1935, col. 717.
2. Ibid, col. 817.
3. Ibid, col. 824.
4. Ibid, col. 834.

Eleanor Rathbone, an Independent member, found it:

> "... a strange sort of victory which allows an aggressor who has made war after six months warning from the League, ... should be offered, three months after he has gone to war, terms incomparably better ... than he was offered before he went to war at all."[1]

Later in the debate, Baldwin implied that the Commons could not fairly evaluate the proposals since all the facts were not known to the members:

> "... my lips are not yet unsealed. Were these troubles over I would make a case, and I guarantee that not a man would go into Lobby against us."
>
> "Some people speak of the League of Nations as though it were a kind of celestial body which is always right, whereas it is really a human body of fallible nations gathered in council and represented by fallible statesmen trying to do what they can to build up a League, which in time may perform all those services for humanity that we dreamed of when the League was first founded .... We ... cannot control the League of Nations ... it is no easy matter to get decisions on a continuous course from a body of fifty nations."
>
> "... we are learning and have learned a great deal in the last three months, as to what is possible at present in the world and what is not."[2]

That evening, the British Cabinet met and issued a statement that there was no question of repudiating proposals to which the Foreign Secretary had assented as a basis for discussion by the League of Nations and by Italy and Abyssinia. Accordingly, draft proposals[3] were despatched, from London, to Rome and Addis Ababa. The instructions to Sir Eric Drummond, the British Ambassador in Rome, were to present

---

1. Ibid, col. 846.
2. Ibid, cols. 856-58.
3. See appendix p.155

the proposals to Mussolini jointly with the French Ambassador. If Mussolini were to accept the proposals as a basis for discussion, they would be put before the Committee of Five which would meet before December 12.[1] The instructions to Sir Sydney Barton, the Ambassador in Addis Ababa, were more emphatic:

> "You should use your utmost influence to induce the Emperor to give careful and favourable consideration to these proposals and on no account lightly to reject them."[2]

On December 12, the Ethiopian Government, in a despatch to the Secretary General, requested a debate in the League Assembly on the proposals. Ethiopia interpreted the plan as an invitation:

> "(1) To cede to its Italian aggressor, in a more or less disguised form and under the pretext of a fallacious exchange of territories, about half of its national territory in order to enable the aggressor country to settle part of its population there;
>
> "(2) To agree that the League of Nations should confer upon its aggressor, in a disguised form, control over the other half of its territory pending future annexation."[3]

Meanwhile, in Britain, criticism began to pour in from every corner of the Isles and from every country in the world. The Liberal opposition in the Commons prepared a motion condemning:

> "... any settlement of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute which violates the territorial integrity or the political and economic independence of Abyssinia in favour of the declared aggressor and would regard any settlement on these lines as a betrayal of the League of Nations and as an act of national dishonour."[4]

---

1. HC Cmd. 5044 of 1935-36, 13-14, XXVII, 647-8.
2. Ibid, 19, XXVII, 653.
3. LNOJ, Jan. 1936, p.41-42.
4. Quoted in The Times (London), Dec. 13, 1935.

A.F. Pollard, in a letter to the Times, pointed out that the proposals were:

> "... an invitation to the League to proclaim by its action that any powerful state may with impunity ... absorb its weakest neighbours, provided it does so piecemeal."[1]

The Times itself considered the proposals as:

> "... not ... likely to commend themselves to any of the three parties concerned - except perhaps Signor Mussolini."[2]

The Spectator had similar views:

> "If peace were made on these terms the answer to the question: 'Does aggression pay?' would be emphatically 'Yes'. The collective system would be dead and the League of Nations an academic irrelevance."[3]

No less critical was the New Statesman and Nation:

> "... the proposals put by the League to Mussolini and Abyssinia were in direct contradiction of the pledge on which they (the Government) had won the support of hundreds of thousands of dubious voters in the election. ... the facts precisely fulfil the prophesy that the Government's sudden conversion to a League policy was for the duration of the election only and that they would attempt to make a dirty deal directly after they returned to office."
>
> "We call upon people of all parties and creeds to demand the rejection of this scandalous basis for negotiation and to insist that Great Britain shall strive seriously for a peace that is in conformity with their sworn allegiance to the Covenant."[4]

On December 16, the Times Correspondent, in Paris, reported

---

1. Ibid, Dec. 13, 1935, Letter to the Editor.
2. The Times, London, Dec. 11, 1935.
3. The Spectator, Shall Aggression Pay, Vol. 155, Dec. 13, 1935.
4. New Statesman & Nation, The Great Betrayal, Vol. 10, Dec. 14, 1935.

that it was generally accepted there that the proposals included the understanding that Ethiopia would not be permitted to build a railway to her port and, that therefore the French-owned Djibuti Railway would retain its monopoly. In its famous editorial, "A Corridor for Camels", the Times criticized this suggestion as:

> "... incredible ... completely at variance even with the most cynical interpretation of a civilizing mission ..."

The Times' Editor, Geoffrey Dawson, who was as distinctly anti-Italian as he was pro-German, was particularly savage in his attack on the proposals. As a Germanophile, he had little sympathy for Hoare's anxiety to maintain the Stresa Front against Germany. Visualizing Germany more as a possible ally than as a potential enemy, Dawson saw no necessity to prevent Mussolini from entering Hitler's orbit. He therefore disagreed with the basic principles of Hoare's policy.[1]

Also on December 16, Emperor Haile Sellaisie issued a statement on the plan, calling it:

> "... the negation and abandonment of the principles upon which the League of Nations is founded. For Ethiopia they would consecrate the amputation of her territory and the disappearance of her independence for the benefit of the state which has attacked her."[2]

In response to demands from the Commons, Baldwin scheduled a debate on Foreign Policy for December 19. On December 17, Clement Attlee gave notice to the Commons of his intention to move:

---

1. The History of the Times, Vol. 4, Part II (1921-48), p.897.

2. Quoted in The Times (London), Dec. 17, 1935.

> "That the terms put forward by His Majesty's Government as a basis for the Italo-Abyssinian settlement reward the declared aggressor at the expense of the victim, destroy collective security, and conflict with the expressed will of the country and with the Covenant of the League of Nations, to the support of which the honour of Great Britain is pledged, this House therefore demands that these terms be repudiated."[1]

Conservatives, too, although for varied reasons, joined in the chorus of protest. On the one hand, were the Party Whips who regarded the peace plan as political dynamite. On the other, were some of the younger Conservatives, whose opposition to the plan was based on a genuine sympathy for the League ideal. Austen Chamberlain, who, according to Hoare, had prepared to address the Foreign Affairs Committee of Conservative members in terms favourable to the proposals, found feelings in that group so strong that, instead, he delivered a speech denouncing the plan.[2]

Protests from both individuals and organizations grew in number and in intensity. Harold Macmillan, Conservative M.P., described the situation, in a letter to the Times:

> "It must be galling for the Prime Minister to reflect on the character of the limited support which his new foreign policy is receiving. In the House of Commons many members of the Government side are in open revolt .... Outside the House, in whatever circle one goes, one hears nothing but expressions of puzzled dismay."[3]

Around the world, reaction differed little. In the United States, in particular, there was a general disillusionment in British

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 307, Dec. 17, 1935, col. 1558.

2. Templewood, Op.cit., p.187.

3. The Times (London), Dec. 18, 1935, Letter to the Editor.

leadership. The New York Tribune noted:

> "... something a trifle ironic in the picture of a great nation solemnly sworn 'to preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence' of Ethiopia, thus offering to reward the aggressor by ratifying his title to large gobs of Ethiopian territory ..."[1]

In France, Premier Laval attempted to justify his actions to the Chamber of Deputies:

> "The conversation took place. It resulted in the joint drafting, of the complete agreement, a plan of which you know the details. We drew up formulas which were intended to serve as a basis for negotiation for an agreed settlement .... they represented the limit of what we could do.
>
> "We took our initiative at the desire expressed by the League itself, and I for one, find no difficulty in explaining our action.
>
> "We are true to the spirit in which the Covenant was applied in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute and it was to avoid the risk of the extension of the war that I preferred ... to propose formulas which might lead us ... to a peaceful solution of the conflict ..."[2]

Only in Germany was there a favourable reaction to the proposals. Berlin, of course, delighted in the loss of League prestige and in the realization that it would now be unlikely that Germany would be forced into the position of re-entering the League.

While most of the protests were being aired, Sir Samuel Hoare was absent from Britain. He returned to London on December 17 and was soon visited by Neville Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, on behalf of the Cabinet, proposed to discuss the peace plan with

---

1. Quoted in Ibid, Dec. 11, 1935.

2. Quoted in Ibid, Dec. 18, 1935.

Hoare. Hoare insisted that the concessions were considerably less than the original Italian demands and did not differ greatly from the formulae worked out by Peterson and St. Quentin, which had been previously submitted to the Cabinet. The Foreign Secretary proposed to meet the House and stand by the proposals, by laying emphasis on the fact that they were merely suggestions to be submitted to the League for approval.

After a Cabinet meeting on December 18, Chamberlain visited Hoare once again and informed him that the Cabinet wanted him to revoke the plan. Hoare, however, was determined to stand by his convictions that the proposals were necessary to save Abyssinia and to keep Mussolini out of the arms of Hitler. He therefore decided to resign.[1]

The next day, Sir Samuel, no longer Foreign Secretary, addressed the House as a private member:

> "... I have been obsessed with the urgent necessity of doing everything in my power to prevent a European conflagration ... (and) to avoid an isolated war between Great Britain and Italy.
>
> "... about a fortnight ago it was clear that a new situation was about to be created by the question of an oil embargo .... Just because of the effectiveness of the oil sanction ... the situation immediately became more dangerous from the point of view of Italian resistance.
>
> "It was in these circumstances ten days ago that I went to Paris .... I was pressed on all sides to go, and I was pressed in such a way as to make refusal impossible. It was in an atmosphere of threatened war that the conversations began, and it was in an atmosphere in which the majority of member States ... appeared to oppose military action .... Within five days the question of the oil embargo was to come up at Geneva, and I did

---

1. Templewood, Op.cit., p.185.

not feel myself justified in proposing any postponement of the embargo, unless it could be shown to the League that negotiations had actually started. It was a moment when ... no member state except ourselves had taken any military precautions.

"Lastly, it was a moment when it seemed to me that Anglo-French co-operation was essential if there was to be no breach at Geneva and if the sanctions when functioning were not to be destroyed.

"I felt that the issues were so grave and the dangers of the continuance of war so serious that it was worth making an attempt, and that it was essential to maintain Anglo-French solidarity.

"... not long ago the Emperor himself showed his great desire for an outlet to the sea by offering to exchange for it the vast region of Ogaden. The Paris proposals substituted for Ogaden a part of the Tigre province that is now in Italian occupation .... Secondly, they suggested a strip of Danakil and Ogaden territory of limited area. This territory is entirely desert.

"As to the port ... no stipulation was discussed concerning any restriction upon it as to the building of a railway.

"... a large area was to be set aside for Italian economic development and expansion. This area is non-Amharic. It represents comparatively recent conquest by Abyssinia ...

"These proposals were immensely less favourable to Italy than the demand that Signor Mussolini made to my right honourable friend, the Minister for League of Nations' Affairs, last summer.

"I cannot honestly recant. I sincerdy believe that the course I took was the only course possible in the circumstances."[1]

Hoare's speech was followed by Attlee's motion of censure which has been quoted above. Speaking in support of the motion, the Labour leader refused to accept:

---

1. H. of C. Deb., 5S, Vol. 307, Dec. 19, 1935, cols. 2007-16.

> "... the right honourable Gentleman being made the scapegoat for acts for which, ... the Government have taken collective responsbility. If it is right for the right honourable Gentleman to resign, then it is right for the Governmat to resign."[1]

The Prime Minister, on the other hand, attempted to justify the Government's action:

> "We thought the proposals went too far and we would have liked to modify them. Were we to repudiate it and let the French know immediately that an agreement, at any rate on these lines, was impossible? Here, although we were all responsible, the chief responsibility was mine, as it must be and I decided at once that I must support the colleague who was not present to give his reasons, not present to be examined."[2]

That evening, the Times, in its editorial, hinted that Sir Samuel, rather than submitting to the Paris proposals, should have exposed Laval's reluctance to apply effective sanctions:

> "Another course would have been to postpone the oil embargo, for the reason, frankly given, that it could not be enacted so long as any leading Member-State, while unwilling to oppose it openly in the councils of the League, was also unwilling to contribute its share of the insurance against Italian truculence .... Unfortunately, Sir Samuel was induced to take a line of least resistance."

Such an alternative course, however, was never open to Hoare. He could expose the reluctance of the French to impose an oil embargo, only if the British themselves were ready to accept all the risks involved in the application of strong sanctions, that is, only if the British were ready to go to war. As they were clearly not prepared to

---

1. Ibid, col. 2018.

2. Ibid, col. 2032.

do so, the peace plan was the only possible solution.

Hoare's resignation made a dead letter of the Paris proposals which had now been repudiated by the British Government. In addition, his resignation averted the fall of the National Government over the issue. The formal end came, on December 21, when a communiqué was issued from Italy, which, in effect, was a rejection of the proposals:

> "The Fascist Grand Council affirms that the action of Fascist Italy will continue, with inflexible decision, for the necessary attainment of the goals marked out by the Duce as the destiny of the Fatherland."[1]

Writing his memoirs, in 1954, Hoare still felt that the plan was the best possible at the time:

> "What would happen in a fight to the death, most people refused to consider, Some seemed to think that if the League shouted long enough the Italian walls would collapse. Others continued to believe that the League front was unshakeable, whereas cracks in it were painfully obvious whenever it was tested. Very few realized that the real danger to Europe was a Germany with Italy as an ally. The result was an overwhelming outcry that swept away the plan, and with it, a good chance, possibly the last chance, of maintaining the Stresa Front against Hitler."[2]

Hoare maintains that Mussolini would have accepted the proposals had they not been prematurely disclosed in the Press, and subsequently repudiated by the British Government. His conclusion is based on a study of the memoirs of Rafaele Guariglia, Secretary-General of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Apparently, Mussolini was ready to accept the plan, and rejected it, only after

---

1. Quoted in The Times (London), Dec. 21, 1935.

2. Templewood, Op.cit., p.188.

learning of Hoare's resignation.[1] L.S. Amery, whose information is based on a conversation with Signor Grandi, the Italian ambassador in London, has confirmed Hoare's account. According to Amery, Grandi had actually been instructed to report Mussolini's acceptance of the proposals, but, before Grandi reached the Foreign Office, Hoare's resignation had been announced.[2]

Like Hoare, Vansittart regarded the plans as the only possible solution:

> "They were bad terms - we all knew that, so were the League's - but this was a bad mess, and single-handed war was the only other way out of it."[3]

Peterson's views, in retrospect, are similar:

> "Those who were not entirely satisfied might fairly enough be asked, whether, now that the final military defeat of Abyssinia appeared already certain, they were prepared to back their rejection of the possibility of an immediate settlement by readiness to go to war at a later date."[4]

Thomas Jones, an intimate friend of Baldwin, has recorded, in his Diary, a conversation he had with Baldwin, in which the Prime Minister expressed his view of the situation:

> "Before the Cabinet met the proposals were out, dressed up with a lot of preliminary frills. We had either to ratify or disown Sam. If we disowned Sam the French would be angry and would say we had let them down, so we backed him.
>
> "I had repeatedly told Sam: 'Keep us out of war; we are not ready for it' ... until

---

1. Ibid, p.189.
2. Amery, L.S., Op.cit., p.184.
3. Vansittart, Op.cit., p.549.
4. Peterson, Op.cit., p.117.

> we got agreement with the French we would have to go single-handed fighting Italy for a month or so. French mobilisation could have led to riots. They were not ready in the air without mobilisation. Malta is the only harbour apart from those of the French, where you can take ships that are wounded ... One thundering good thing we have got out of it is the realisation of what sanctions mean. They mean that we have got to be much more self-contained. Europe has to be armed and to be ready, that is the conclusion which follows upon collective security."
>
> "I had in mind the menace of war; our fleet would be in real danger from the small craft of the Italians operating in a small sea. Italian bombers could get to London. I had also Germany in mind. Had we gone to war our anti-aircraft munitions would have been exhausted in a week. We have hardly any armaments firms left."[1]

It is quite possible that the Paris Peace Plan would have provided a basis for settlement, had it not been rejected by the British Government. However, the uproar in Britain and the subsequent resignation of Hoare made Italy's acceptance of the proposals impossible. The arguments put forth by Hoare in favour of the proposals were on the whole sound. Why then were they rejected in Britain? Again we return to the conclusion that the public had not been prepared to accept such far-reaching concessions to Italy as the only real alternative to war. The public had not been made to realize that the chances of truly collective action were very slim and that no nation was prepared to take military action against Italy. Indeed, it was not possible for Hoare to inform the public fully of the facts of the case, since he did not wish to make a public

---

1. Jones, Thomas - A Diary with Letters (1931-50), Diary of Jan. 7, 1936, p.159-60.

condemnation of the League and thereby reveal to the world its lack of solidarity.

The "leakage" of the plan undoubtedly contributed, to some degree, to the collapse of the proposals. Had they been presented to Mussolini in a discreet fashion, without a public airing, the plan would have had some chance of success. It would have been better still if the proposals had remained in the hands of Peterson and St. Quentin and been submitted to the Italian Government without any particular association with the Foreign Secretary. In this case they would not have attracted such widespread interest, and would have been considered in a less hectic atmosphere. Since the proposals were presumed to have been fathered by Hoare himself, they not only attracted worldwide attention, but, in addition, the reaction to the plan was paralleled by a general disillusionment in British leadership.

The proposals themselves were not in conflict with the spirit of the policy previously pursued by the British Government vis-à-vis the Ethiopian conflict. On the contrary, they were the logical outcome of a policy which had persistently favoured a negotiated settlement. Even after September, when the dual policy had been inaugurated, Hoare never disguised the fact that he preferred a diplomatic solution. The settlement proposed in December had to be more generous to Mussolini than any previous plan had been, because of the success of Italy in the war, but, in general, the plans were an outgrowth of the Zeila offer, the Paris Proposals, and the Report of the Committee of Five.

CONCLUSION

British policy throughout the tenure of the Foreign Office of Sir Samuel Hoare, as indeed throughout most of the 1930's, was dictated, in large measure, by the military weakness of Britain. We have already noted how the disarmament policies of the 1920's had brought about this situation. During the last five years prior to World War II, the Government's rearmament proposals were consistently opposed by the Labour Party which was waging a campaign against the maintenance of national armaments. At the same time, the collectivists nevertheless emphasized the British commitment to support the League and collective security. The more realistic Conservatives, on the other hand, tended to regard the protection accorded by the League and the system of collective security as utopian ideals, and therefore favoured the more traditional methods of settling disputes by diplomatic procedure and maintenance of peace through a Balance of Power. Because of the impotence of British defences in the 1930's, however, British Foreign Secretaries were in a poor position when they conducted negotiations.

We have noted this lack of strength in the conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. The acceptance of this treaty by Hoare seemed to be dictated by a desperate need to conclude some agreement with Germany whereby German rearmament would be restricted and time bought for British rearmament. In addition, in 1935, British statesmen, since they were, unlike the French, not yet willing to accept the inevitability of hostilities with Germany, were inclined to favour an agreement with Hitler, which would facilitate the re-entry

of Germany into the diplomatic circle of Europe.

During Hoare's tenure of office, as throughout the inter-war period, the aims of British policy often differed considerably from those of France. French statesmen were much more inclined clearly to label Germany as a potential aggressor. Consequently, they regarded the League of Nations as a union of states whose purpose was to deter Germany from aggression. Therefore, the French, who had never sympathized with the British views on disarmament, nor with the British desire to accord equality of rights in armaments to Germany, were greatly offended at the Anglo-German Naval Agreement which the British concluded without adequately consulting their ally.

The Ethiopian crisis presented a situation in which, a reversal of the roles, which had been played, thus far, by the French and the British in the League of Nations, occurred. Since 1919, France had been trying to persuade Britain to "put teeth into the Covenant" and thereby provide security for France in Europe. The British, however, being inclined to consider each situation individually, consistently refused to apply a literal interpretation of their obligations under the Covenant. In the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, however, France, who now seemed to be reading Britain's lines, refused to perform its duty under the Covenant; the British, on the other hand, now spoke as if loyalty to the League was their foremost interest.

The French approach to the Ethiopian crisis was less deviating than the British, since Laval consistently appraised the crisis solely from the point of view of its repercussions on Europe. For Laval, Italy represented a new-found ally against Germany. After concluding

his agreement with Mussolini, in January, when French acquiescence in Italian penetration into Ethiopia may well have been promised, the French Premier had no intention of losing his friend over an African venture.

British policy, too, was dictated largely by the fear of alienating Mussolini. For this reason, the favoured policy of the Government was a diplomatic settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. To a considerable extent, British policy had been fixed at the Stresa Conference before Hoare came to office. Simon's silence at Stresa on the Ethiopian question was undoubtedly interpreted by Mussolini as a green light in Africa. Furthermore, once the "Stresa Front" had been established, the British were extremely anxious not to drive Mussolini into Hitler's arms. Vansittart, in particular, was convinced of the need to retain Italy as an ally:

> "Having calculated in 1933 that Germany would make her Second World War at any time after January 1935, I had been forced to the conclusion that, if there was no real rearmament, the Foreign Office must make the only munition within the power of diplomacy - Time. On this assumption it would clearly be important to deprive Germany of the one thing she needed to precipitate the conflict before we could be even half ready - an ally."[1]
>
> "I persistently saw an end if ever Hitler were sure of his southern flank."[2]

Hoare's views were similar:

> "... it was essential to British security to have a friendly Italy in the Mediterranean that would both guarantee our lines of communication to the

---

1. Vansittart, Lord - Lessons of My Life, p.48.

2. Vansittart, Lord - The Mist Procession, p.522.

> Far East and make it unnecessary for the French to keep an army on the Italian frontier."[1]

By mid-summer, however, public opinion in Britain had come out overwhelmingly in favour of support of Abyssinia at Geneva. Undoubtedly, pressure from the public, the Press, and the opposition in Parliament had considerable influence in persuading the Government to take the lead at Geneva against Italy. Hoare's speech to the League Assembly, in September, when his dual policy was inaugurated, was partly a response to public opinion. In addition, as Hoare himself has pointed out, he proposed to follow a double line because he hesitated to dismiss the League machinery publicly. The decision to pursue a dual course in the dispute must be considered as the fatal step. Since both Simon and Hoare sincerely believed that a negotiated settlement was the only possible solution to the Ethiopian dispute, the diplomatic course alone should have been followed. The November elections, unfortunately, had the effect of making the Government particularly conscious of public opinion and of public faith in the League ideal.

On the other hand, military experts, who were concerned, both at the weakness of British defences and at the failure of the French to guarantee support of the Mediterranean Fleet, tended to put pressure on the foreign office to conclude a negotiated settlement with Italy. Hoare has mentioned their advice:

> "The Chiefs of Staff were particularly insistent that we were in no position to risk war, and their opinion at this moment carried all the greater weight when it was supplemented by fresh reports that we had just received about German rearmament."[2]

---

1. Templewood, Op.cit., p.153.

2. Ibid, p.177.

Gaetano Salvemini feels that the advice of the military experts may have influenced Italian policy as well:

> "Great Britain in 1935 was a case exceptional in history - of professional soldiers who not only felt afraid of war, but actually shouted their fear from the house-tops, persuading Mussolini that he could challenge a country reduced to such weakness."[1]

The possibility that an oil embargo might be imposed by the League acted as a catalyst in the production of a peace plan by Hoare and Laval. If the Paris proposals were designed to delay an oil embargo, then, in this respect, the plan was successful, for, in fact, an oil sanction was never imposed on Italy. Clearly, the National Government did not reject the Hoare-Laval Plan because it proposed to follow the alternate course of strong action at Geneva against Mussolini. The British Government, after repudiating the Paris plan, had nothing with which to replace it. Since a negotiated settlement had been judged immoral, the only alternative was the immediate application of coercive measures. On December 19, the Times presumed that such a policy would now be adopted:

> "Now that the proposals have collapsed, after showing that it is hopeless at present to secure a just peace by mediation, the League returns to the question of seeking peace by pressure."[2]

During the next six months, however, "mild sanctions" only were imposed on Italy. The consequence was that in May, 1936, Italy annexed the whole of Abyssinia.

What the Times failed to realize was that, by December, the

---

1. Salvemini, Gaetano, Op.cit., p.360.

2. The Times (London), December 19, 1935, Editorial.

British were in a position where it was impossible to apply, effectively, a policy either of coercion or of conciliation. A much more accurate appraisal of the situation was made by J.A. Spender, in May, 1936:

> "The 'old diplomacy' would have at least kept Mussolini guessing and would have almost certainly saved something out of the wreck by compromise .... The League so acted as to make its defeat inevitable, and so preached a doctrine which made acceptance of any compromise impossible without dishonour."
>
> "If (1) settlement by compromise is to be vetoed in the name of League principles, and (2) the League is unable to make these prevail, our last state will be worse than our first. We shall have lost the advantage of the old diplomacy and gained none of the benefits of the new order. Europe, it seems to me, is in extreme danger of falling between these two stools."[1]

What had been clearly revealed by the Italo-Ethiopian war, was that talk of collective security was often a cloak to conceal pacificism. The collectivists urged the Government to use all necessary means to pressure Mussolini, and yet, consistently opposed rearmament. The question, as to what would happen if economic sanctions were ineffective, was never faced by Attlee and his followers. The campaigning of the collectivists, therefore, not only made the acceptance of a diplomatic settlement impossible, but also, deprived the Government of the means of applying force.

The British policy vis-à-vis the Ethiopian crisis had obviously been a failure. The result was not only the annexation of Abyssinia by Italy, but the loss of Italy as an ally, and the gravitation of Mussolini toward Hitler. In addition, the failure of the League to deter Italy from aggression, in 1935, is generally regarded as having been

---

1. The Times (London), May 12, 1936, Letter to the Editor.

a stimulus to German aggression, since the lack of solidarity of the League powers, in dealing with Italy, had been laid bare to the world.

The Hoare-Laval Pact itself has often been regarded as the death-blow to the League. There is some truth in this view. In the House of Commons, Hoare's defence of the proposals had been based, in part, on the lack of support of the League Members for collective action. The peace plan represented an attempt to reach a solution outside the League, and was, therefore, in part at least, a repudiation of League machinery.

If we accept this conclusion, the question arises: 'Did the Paris Peace Plan kill the League because of the very nature of the proposals or was it the rejection of the plan, and the consequent prolongation of the war which constituted the real blow to the League?' In other words, had the plan been supported in Britain and accepted by Mussolini, thus bringing the war in Ethiopia to an end, would the League nevertheless have been discredited? Unfortunately, any answer to this question is based on conjecture; but I am inclined to the view that the League would have been no more discredited by the acceptance of the settlement proposed by Hoare and Laval, than, by the revelation to the world that the solidarity necessary to the application of effective sanctions was never present among the League Members.

Looking back on the events of 1935, many have concluded that the best course of action would have been to apply strong sanctions against Italy, very early in the dispute. This argument is based on the assumption that solidarity of the League powers could be achieved.

This is at best a doubtful premise, particularly in view of the fact that, during the early stages of the dispute, most observers felt that coercive measures against Italy were unnecessary. The decision not to use the League machinery, early in the dispute, had been taken while Sir John Simon was Foreign Secretary. Certainly, at the time sanctions were applied they had little chance of success. By the time Hoare came to office, he had little choice but to attempt a diplomatic solution. It is therefore to be regretted that Sir Samuel did not pursue this policy exclusively. In the long run, his dual policy resulted in failure, since the policies of coercion and conciliation were, in practice, mutually exclusive. The policy of coercion resulted in the alienation of Mussolini; the policy of conciliation resulted in the discrediting of the League. Thus the two results which Hoare had been most anxious to avoid were brought about.

APPENDIX A

Excerpts from Exchange of Notes between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the German Government regarding the Limitation of Naval Armaments, London, June 18, 1935[1]

The ratio of 35 : 100 is to be a permanent relationship, i.e. the total tonnage of the German fleet shall never exceed a percentage of 35 of the aggregate tonnage of the naval forces, as defined by treaty, of the Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, or, if there should in future be no treaty limitations of this tonnage, a percentage of 35 of the aggregate of the actual tonnage of the Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Germany will adhere to the ratio of 35 : 100 in all circumstances, e.g., the ratio will not be affected by the construction of other Powers. If the general equilibrium of naval armaments, as normally maintained in the past, should be violently upset by any abnormal and exceptional construction by other Powers, the German Government reserve the right to invite His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to examine the new situation thus created.

In the matter of submarines, however, Germany, while not exceeding the ratio of 35 : 100 in respect of total tonnage, shall have the right to possess a submarine tonnage equal to the total submarine tonnage possessed by the Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The German Government, however, undertake that, except in the circumstances indicated in the immediately following sentence, Germany's submarine tonnage shall not exceed 45 per cent. of the total of that possessed by the Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The German Government reserve the right, in the event of a situation arising which in their opinion makes it necessary for Germany to avail herself of the right to a percentage of submarine tonnage exceeding the 45 per cent. above-mentioned, to give notice to this effect to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and agree that the matter shall be the subject of friendly discussion before the German Government exercise that right.

APPENDIX B

Article 5 of Treaty of Amity of 1928 between Italy and Ethiopia[2]

Both Governments undertake to submit to procedure of conciliation and arbitration disputes which may arise between them and which it may not have been possible to settle by ordinary diplomatic

---

1. HC Cmd. 4930 of 1934-35, 142-44, XXIV, 2-4.

2. LNOJ, May, 1935, p.572.

methods, without having recourse to armed force. Notes shall be exchanged by common agreement between the two Governments regarding the manner of appointing arbitrators.

APPENDIX C

Excerpts from Covenant of the League,[1]

Article 11, Paragraph 2

It is also declared to be the friendly right of each Member of the League to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstance whatever affecting international relations which threaten to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends.

Article 12

The Members of the League agree that if there should arise between them any dispute likely to lead to a rupture, they will submit the matter either to arbitration or to inquiry by the Council, and they agree in no case to resort to war until three months after the award by the arbitrators or the report by the Council. In any case under this Article the award of the arbitrators shall be made within reasonable time, and the report of the Council shall be made within six months after the submission of the dispute.

Article 15, Paragraphs 3 and 4

The Council shall endeavor to effect a settlement of the dispute, and if such efforts are successful, a statement shall be made public giving such facts and explanations regarding the dispute and the terms of settlement thereof as the Council may deem appropriate.

If the dispute is not thus settled, the Council either unanimously or by a majority vote shall make and publish a report containing a statement of the facts of the dispute and the recommendations which are deemed just and proper in regard thereto.

Article 16, Paragraph 1

Should any Member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants under Articles 12, 13, or 15, it shall ipso facto be deemed to have committed an act of war against all the Members of the League, which thereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of the covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a Member of the League or not.

---

1. HC Cmd. 153 of 1919, 12-14, LIII, 139-41.

APPENDIX D

Excerpts from Telegram of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Sir Eric Drummond (Rome), London, December 10, 1935[1]

I. Exchange of Territories

The Governments of Great Britain and France agree to recommend to His Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia the acceptance of the following exchanges of territory between Ethiopia and Italy:

(a) Tigre. - Cession to Italy of eastern Tigre approximately limited on the south by the River Gheva and on the west by a line running from north to south passing between Axum (on the Ethiopian side) and Adowa (on the Italian side).

(b) Rectification of Frontiers between the Danakil Country and Eritrea, leaving to the south of the boundary line Aussa and the extent of Eritrean territory necessary to give Ethiopia an outlet to the sea as defined below.

(c) Rectification of Frontiers between the Ogaden and Italian Somaliland. - Starting from the trijunction point between the frontiers of Ethiopia, Kenya and Italian Somaliland the new Italo-Ethiopian frontier would follow a general north-easterly direction cutting the Oueb Shebeli at Iddidolo, leaving Gorahei to the east, Warandab to the west, and meeting the frontier of British Somaliland where it intersects the 45th meridian.

The rights of the tribes of British Somaliland to the use of grazing areas and wells situated in the territories granted to Italy by this delimitation should be guaranteed.

(d) Ethiopia shall receive an outlet to the sea with full sovereign rights. It seems that this outlet should be formed preferably by the cession, to which Italy would agree, of the port of Assab and of a strip of territory giving access to this port along the frontier of French Somaliland.

The United Kingdom and French Governments will endeavor to obtain from the Ethiopian Government guarantees for the fulfilment of the obligations which devolve upon them regarding slavery and arms traffic in the territories acquired by them.

---

1. HC Cmd. 5044 of 1935-36, 14-16, XXVII, 648-50.

II. Zone of Economic Expansion and Settlement

The United Kingdom and French Governments will use their influence at Addis Ababa and at Geneva to the end that the formation in Southern Ethiopia of a zone of economic expansion and settlement reserved to Italy should be accepted by His Majesty the Emperor and approved by the League of Nations.

The limits of this zone would be: on the east, the rectified frontier between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland; on the north, the 8th parallel; on the west, the 35th meridian; on the south, the frontier between Ethiopia and Kenya.

Within this zone, which would form an integral part of Ethiopia, Italy would enjoy exclusive economic rights which might be administered by a privileged company or by any other like organization, which would be recognised - subject to the acquired right of natives and foreigners - the right of ownership of unoccupied territories, the monopoly of the exploitation of mines, forests, etc. This organization would be obliged to contribute to the economic equipment of the country, and to devote a portion of its revenues to expenditure of a social character for the benefit of the native population.

The control of the Ethiopian administration in the zone would be exercised, under the sovereignty of the Emperor, by the services of the scheme of assistance drawn up by the League of Nations. Italy would take a preponderating, but not an exclusive share in these services which would be under the direct control of one of the principal advisers attached to the Central Government. The principal adviser in question, who might be of Italian nationality, would be the assistant, for the affairs in question, of the Chief Adviser delegated by the League of Nations to assist the Emperor. The Chief Adviser would not be a subject of one of the Powers bordering on Ethiopia.

The services of the scheme of assistance, in the capital as well as in the reserved zone, would regard it as one of their essential duties to ensure the safety of Italian subjects and the free development of their enterprises.

The Government of the United Kingdom and the French Government will willingly endeavor to ensure that this organization, the details of which must be elaborated by the League of Nations, fully safeguards the interests of Italy in this region.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

1. Documents

Documents on German Foreign Policy (1918-45), Series C, Vol. III, June 14, 1934 - March 31, 1935. Edited by Margaret Lambert, London, 1959.

Documents on International Affairs (1935) Vols. I and II. Vol. I edited by J. Wheeler-Bennett and S. Heald, London, 1936, Vol. II edited by S. Heald, London, 1937.

Documents Relating to the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict. Published by the Authority of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, (Canada) Ottawa, 1936.

League of Nations Official Journal (Geneva)
Vol. XVI, Nos. 2, 5, 6, 8, 11. Minutes of the 84th - 88th Sessions of the Council.
Vol. XVII, No. 1. Minutes of the 89th Session of the Council.
Special Supplement No. 138. Minutes of the Sixteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly (Sept. 9 - Oct. 11, 1935).
Spec. Sups. Nos. 145-147. Minutes of the Co-ordination Committee, the Committee of Eighteen, and the Sub-Committees.

Parliamentary Debates. Official Report. House of Commons, 5th Series, Vols. 265, 273, 297-307, 309.

Parliamentary Debates. Official Report. House of Lords, 5th Series, Vols. 95-99.

Parliamentary Papers

HC Cmd. 153 of 1919, LIII, 139-41, 203. Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany, Signed at Versailles, June 28th, 1919 (London, 1919).

HC Cmd. 3707 of 1930-31, XXXIII, 263-301. Treaty regulating Importation into Ethiopia of Arms, Ammunition, and Implements of War. (London, 1930).

HC Cmd. 4498 of 1933-34, XXVII, 1103-14. Memoranda on Disarmament communicated by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the Governments represented at the Disarmament Conference (London, 1934).

HC Cmd. 4827 of 1934-35, XIII, 803-12. Statement Relating to Defence (London, 1935).

HC Cmd. 4798 of 1934-35, XXIV, 89-92. Joint Communiqué issued on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of the French Republic, (London, 1935).

HC Cmd. 4848 of 1934-35, XXIV, 131-34. Note delivered by His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin to the German Government on March 18, 1935, (London, 1935).

HC Cmd. 4930 of 1934-35, XXIV, 141-44. Exchange of Notes between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the German Government regarding the Limitation of Naval Armaments, June 18, 1935, (London, 1935).

HC Cmd. 4880 of 1934-35, XXIV, 707-10. Joint Resolution of the Stresa Conference, (London, 1935).

HC Cmd. 5143 of 1935-36, XXVII, 59-146. Correspondence showing the course of certain Diplomatic Discussions directed towards securing a European Settlement, June, 1934 to March, 1936, (London, 1936).

HC Cmd. 5044 of 1935-36, XXVII, 635-56. Documents relating to the Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy, (London, 1935).

HC Cmd. 5072 of 1935-36, XXVII, 725-36. Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy: Correspondence in Connexion with the Application of Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, (London, 1936).

2. Memoirs, Autobiographies, and Diaries

Amery, L.S. - My Political Life, Vol. 3, The Unforgiving Years, (1929-40), London, 1955.

James, Admiral Sir Wm. - The Sky Was Always Blue, London, 1951.

Jones, Thomas - A Diary With Letters (1931-1950), London, 1954.

Peterson, Maurice - Both Sides of the Curtain. An Autobiography, London, 1950.

Ribbentrop, Joachim - The Ribbentrop Memoirs. Translated by Oliver Watson, London, 1954.

Samuel, Viscount - Memoirs, London, 1945.

Simon, Viscount - Retrospect. The Memoirs of Rt. Hon. Viscount Simon, London, 1952.

Templewood, Viscount - Nine Troubled Years, London, 1954.

Vansittart, Lord - Lessons of My Life, London, 1943.
The Mist Procession. The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart, London, 1958.

3. Newspapers

The Times (London), Dec., 1934 - Dec., 1935.

The Economist (London), Vols. 120 and 121, Jan., 1935 - Dec., 1935.

New Statesman and Nation (London), Vol. 10, July, 1935 - Dec., 1935.

The Spectator (London), Vol. 155, July, 1935 - Dec., 1935.

4. Periodicals

The Contemporary Review (London), Vols. 147-48, Feb., 1935 - Dec., 1935.

Documents of American Association for International Conciliation, (New York), Nos. 314 and 315, Nov. and Dec., 1935.

The English Review (London), Vol. 61, Nov., 1935.

Foreign Affairs (New York), Vols. 13 and 14, April and Oct., 1935.

Journal of Royal Institute of International Affairs (London), Vols. 14 and 15, June, 1935 - Jan., 1936.

The Round Table (London), Vols. 25 and 26, June, 1935 - March, 1936.

Royal Institute of International Affairs. Information Department Papers, No. 16, Abyssinia and Italy, New York, 1935.

Secondary Sources

Baldwin, A.W. - My Father. The True Story, London, 1955.

Broad, Lewis - Sir Anthony Eden. The Chronicles of a Career, London, 1955.

Chaput, Rolland - Disarmament in British Foreign Policy, London, 1935.

Churchill, W.S. - The Gathering Storm, Toronto, 1948.

Feiling, Keith - The Life of Neville Chamberlain, London, 1946.

Garratt, G.T. - Mussolini's Roman Empire, London, 1938.

Henderson, Arthur - Labour's Way to Peace, London, 1935.

Hogg, Quinton - The Left was Never Right, London, 1945.

Jerrold, Douglas - Britain and Europe (1900-1940), London, 1941

Nicolson, Harold - King George the Fifth. His Life and Reign, London, 1953.

Postgate, Raymond - The Life of George Lansbury, London, 1951.

Richmond, Admiral Sir Herbert - Statesmen and Sea Power, Oxford, 1946.

Ridley, F.A. - Mussolini Over Africa, London, 1935.

Salvemini, Gaetano - Prelude to World War II, London, 1953.

Taylor, A.J.P. - The Origins of the Second World War, London, 1961.

Thomson, David - Two Frenchmen. Pierre Laval and Charles de Gaulle, London, 1951.

The Times - The History of the Times, Vol. 4, Part II (1921-48), London, 1952.

Toynbee, Arnold - Survey of International Affairs, 1933, London, 1934. Survey, 1935, Vols. I and II, London, 1936.

Wellesley, Sir Victor - Diplomacy in Fetters, London, 1945.

Wolfers, Arnold - Britain and France between Two Wars. Conflicting Strategies of Peace Since Versailles, New York, 1940.

Wrench, John - Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times, London, 1955.

Young, G.M. - Stanley Baldwin, London, 1952.