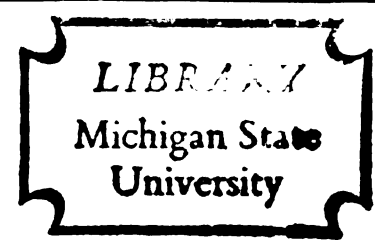


THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY'S FOREIGN POLICY
AND NAZI GERMANY, 1929-1938

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Alexander John DeVouton
1966

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THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY'S FOREIGN POLICY
AND NAZI GERMANY, 1929-1938

by

Alexander John DeVouton

A THESIS

Submitted to

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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1966

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will trace the evolution of the British Labour Party's foreign policy program between the formation of the second Labour Government in June 1929 and the Munich crisis in September 1938. The reluctant and often painful change through which its policy passed was prompted almost exclusively by the aggressive foreign policies of the European fascist regimes, particularly that of Adolf Hitler in Germany. This paper will concentrate on the influence of the Nazis on the Labour Party's foreign policy and on Labour's attitude towards Nazi Germany.

During the two years, June 1929 to August 1931, that Labour controlled the government there was little official recognition of the Nazis. It was only after Labour went into opposition to the National Government that it began to show real concern about the Nazis and the British Government's attitude towards them.

Throughout the thirties Labour was relegated to a small minority position in Parliament and thus had a very difficult time making its influence felt in Commons. After the election of 1931 the National Government, made up of Conservatives, a few Labourite followers of J. Ramsay MacDonald, and some Liberals, had an overwhelming majority. Labour was reduced to only fifty-two representatives in Commons. Even the election of 1935 did not do much to improve Labour's position although the party gained one hundred more seats in Parliament. Labour was still

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in no position to make itself a serious influence on the Government's policy. Even with the other opposition parties and groups all of Labour's censure motions were overwhelmingly defeated throughout the thirties.

The leadership of the party underwent a drastic change during the first few years of this period. The crisis in 1931 caused the leader of the party, J. Ramsay MacDonald, and another top leader, Philip Snowden, to break with the party and join the National Government as Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer respectively. This brought their expulsion from the Labour Party. Arthur Henderson, the Foreign Secretary in the second Labour Government, became head of the party briefly, but his Chairmanship of the Disarmament Conference and the fact he had been defeated in the Election of 1931 and so no longer sat in Parliament caused him to resign in 1932. He soon became ill and although he continued to influence greatly Labour's foreign policy program he faded from an active role in the party. He died in 1935.

Henderson was followed as party leader by another old-timer, George Lansbury, who was ". . .a respected Christian socialist and sentimental pacifist, but was seventy-two and not an able parliamentarian."¹ Lansbury resigned in 1935 over a

¹Carl F. Brand, The British Labour Party, a Short History (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1964), p. 162.

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The 1935 intra-party struggle between the pacifists and those who favored a strong policy of collective security through the League of Nations and the election of that year brought a new generation of leaders to the fore. Clement Attlee was elected to the party leadership. Ernest Bevin, Hugh Dalton, and Herbert Morrison together with Attlee represented the "strong League" group and assumed the policy making positions in the party. In the much weakened pacifist wing of the party Sir Stafford Cripps and Aneurin Bevan took over leadership and represented the younger generation in that faction.

Bevin and Dalton would be particularly instrumental in directing Labour's foreign policy towards a more realistic position after 1935. They urged the party to support rearmament in the face of the Nazi threat and to take a firm stand in opposing fascist aggression.

Labour's foreign policy would change between 1929 and 1938 from one advocating disarmament, collective resistance to aggression through the League of Nations, war-resistance by a general strike to any attempt by Britain to participate in any war other than through the League, appeasement of Germany's justified grievances, and the peaceful settlement of international disputes through the World Court and international law, to a position supporting British rearmament, recognizing that the League was no longer powerful enough to maintain peace,

supporting the Anglo-French alliance even though it was not based on the League of Nations, and realizing that appeasement of Nazi Germany would not preserve peace.

PART I: APPEASEMENT AND UNCERTAINTY, 1929-1933

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CHAPTER I

LABOUR BECOMES AWARE OF THE NAZIS

During the first year of the Second Labour Government, there was little serious concern about the National Socialist Party in Germany. The Nazis were still a small, ineffective parliamentary group, and as such the Labour Government found little reason to be concerned about them. When Labour mentioned the German Right at all it was in general and not any specific group.

At the time of the British General Election in 1929 there was a belief that a Labour victory would be a serious blow to the German reactionary parties. The London Daily Herald, a socialist newspaper considered the official organ of the Labour Party, observed that the German parties of the Far Right ". . . know that their own dreams of Fascist dictatorship would have not the smallest chance of success if a new wind of democracy and Socialism were to blow from England over the Continent instead of the reactionary spirit of the last four¹ and a half years."

In September and October of 1929 the nationalist parties of Germany undertook to defeat the Young Plan which was to readjust the reparation payments to make them easier

¹Daily Herald (London), May 28, 1929, p. 3.



for Germany. They hoped to defeat it by collecting enough signatures on a petition to have the question submitted to the voters. The Daily Herald believed that Hitler would be the main benefactor from the campaign in which supernaturalism would play so large a part. He was the most extreme of the nationalists and would thus draw heavily from the ranks of his nationalist allies.² The failure of the petition campaign was seen by the Labour Party as not only a defeat for the Nazis but a disaster for their cause. It admitted that Hitler had made some gains among the workers in the industrial areas of Saxony and Thuringia and in the rural areas of the East and North where signatures had been gained by intimidation. Labour found it significant that in Munich, the home of the Nazis, only 6.2 percent of the electorate signed the petition.³

Local elections held in Germany during November 1929 brought increases in the Nazi vote. In Berlin the increase was explained by the extremist parties exploitation of a government scandal. However, the Daily Herald was at a loss to explain the results from a number of Rhineland towns where the signatures for the petition the previous month had been "ridiculously few," but in the municipal elections the Nazis

²Daily Herald (London), October 21, 1929, p.3.

³Daily Herald (London), October 31, 1929, p. 3.

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had polled several thousand votes.⁴

The next German crisis in which Labour took an interest was the election campaign in the summer of 1930. Labour believed Germany was moving towards a decisive struggle between Democracy and dictatorship and the September election would be the first engagement of that conflict.⁵ The British Socialists saw more meaning in this German election than just the future of the German Republic. They believed that if Germany were to overthrow a democratic government and turn to a fascist dictatorship as Italy had done eight years before, it would prove the Bolsheviks right when they claimed the Socialists had misplaced their faith in democracy and that class war was inevitable.⁶

The Labourites during the summer of 1930 became increasingly alarmed at the growing strength of the Nazis demonstrated by the recent local elections.⁷ The Daily Herald predicted that the campaign would be a violent one due to the growing strength of the two extremist parties--the Communists and the Nazis.⁸

⁴Daily Herald (London), November 19, 1929, p. 3.

⁵W. N. Ewer, "Hindenburg--the Mailed Fist Again," Daily Herald (London), July 7, 1930, p. 13.

⁶Emile Vandervelde, "Where is Germany Going?" Labour Magazine, IX (September, 1930), p. 226.

⁷Ibid., p. 226.

⁸Daily Herald (London), July 19, 1930, p. 3.

As the election drew near the British Socialists began to become pessimistic about the future of German democracy. They believed that a Nazi success would pull the other parties to the Right. They thought that the Nazi parliamentary group would try to create an impossible situation so to force the disorganized parties of the Center to make a choice between supporting the Constitution or becoming more nationalistic and cooperating with the Right to overthrow the Weimar Republic.⁹ Labour saw the Center parties as too weak to resist the pull to the Right. The former Democratic Party in order to retain a few seats in the Reichstag, was being absorbed into a new party in which nationalism was the main plank. Stresemann's old party, the People's Party, since his death was returning to its former position as ". . . the Party of heavy industry, of the great capitalist bourgeoisie, which at heart hates democracy, suffers the Republic, and is ready for anything, even Fascism, in order to maintain its class domination." The Center Party's ambiguous position and its tendency to the Right made it untrustworthy in time of crisis to rely on to support the Republic. The British Socialists, however, believed, or at least hoped, that the Social Democrats would save the Republic. The party which ". . . gained mastery over Bismarck. . . rid itself of the Hohenzollerns

⁹Vandervelde, Labour Magazine, p. 226.

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. . .subdued the "putschists" in 1920. . .saved the Republic at the time of the Ruhr occupation" would again overcome its adversaries in the September 14 election.¹⁰

In spite of the optimism voiced concerning the strength of the Social Democrats, the Labourites still could not avoid alarm over what was at least the possible outcome of the election. Like most others they predicted the Nazis would win from forty to eighty seats in the new Reichstag.¹¹ On the eve of the election the Daily Herald editorially expressed the fear that all Europe would be affected by the German election in that even the responsible Right might abandon the policies of Stresemann and become more nationalistic. They were also alarmed at the attacks on the German Constitution and saw the possibility for the establishment of a reactionary aggressive government, a dictatorship, or even the restoration of the monarchy in Germany.¹²

The results of the election surpassed even Labour's worst fears. The Nazis' parliamentary group grew from the twelve elected in 1928 to not the forty or even eighty predicted, but to one hundred and seven, making it the second

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 226-227.

¹¹Daily Herald (London), September 13, 1930, p. 3.

¹²Ibid., p. 8.

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largest party in Germany. The Nazi Party after this election was a force that every group had to take into account in considering Germany's actions in the future.

CHAPTER II

THE NAZIS BECOME A THREAT

The results of the German election showed the Nazis to be surprisingly strong and caused Labour to begin to reflect seriously on the political troubles of Germany and to fear for its democratic government. Although Labour did not believe the Nazis to be an immediate threat to the Social Democrats, it found it particularly significant that the Nazis polled such a large proportion of their votes from the group around the¹ age of twenty who had not voted in the previous election. Labour was alarmed by the fact that eleven million out of thirty-five million German voters cast their ballots for² anti-democratic parties.

In the days following the Nazi election victory, the Daily Herald was full of articles giving descriptions and details about the "mystery man" who was now the leader of Germany's second largest party and speculating as to the real program of his party. The writers could find no detailed program of what the Nazis would do, but only vague references to "more room for the German people" and other general³ "jingoistic, anti-democratic, and anti-Semitic plans."

¹Daily Herald (London), September 15, 1930, p. 8.

²Daily Herald (London), September 16, 1930, p. 8.

³W. N. Ewer, "Germany Jingo Problem," Daily Herald (London), September 16, 1930, p. 9.

The Labourites found hope in the belief that now that the Nazis were a large opposition party it would accept the responsibilities of such a position and think out a practical policy. Their hope was strengthened when Hitler himself warned his followers to go slowly now that victory was near. Hitler believed that the next election, which he expected in about a year, would bring overwhelming victory to the Nazis.⁴

Labour was particularly disturbed by what it feared would be the affect of the Nazi victory upon international relations. France would become more nervous about Germany, and would harden its attitude on disarmament. In Germany Labour feared there would be increased pressure brought on the Government to declare the Young Plan unworkable and to demand revision of it. This particular point had won millions of votes for both the Nazis and the Communists in the last election.⁵

As things began to settle down in the weeks after the election the fear of a Nazi "putsch" faded and the stock market began to steady itself again, although Reichsbank shares which before the election were 247 were a week after it still at 230. Labour, relieved because an immediate Nazi

⁴Daily Herald (London), September 17, 1930, p. 9.

⁵W. N. Ewer, "Men and Things Abroad," Daily Herald (London), September 19, 1930, p. 13.

revolt seemed unlikely, was still worried by the support that Hitler was drawing from the army and industry.⁶

Labour was both relieved and alarmed towards the end of September 1930 by Hitler's testimony at the treason trial of three Nazi army officers. At the trial Hitler declared that his party planned to seize power only through constitutional means, but also threatened that "heads will roll" when the Nazis take power and that the Nazis would refuse to recognize any of the treaties and would break and evade them by all means. The revolution would follow the constitutional acquisition of power.⁷ An editorial in the Daily Herald stated that this new policy of waiting might cause some of the more fanatical members of the party to split away.⁸

During the remainder of 1930 Labour was not so concerned with the threat of a Nazi takeover in Germany as they were with the danger of a dictatorship being set up by the Chancellor Heinrich Brüning with the approval of President Paul von Hindenburg. Brüning, it felt, was planning to suspend Reichstag and rule Germany through the emergency powers of the Constitution, as he did not have a majority (without the

⁶Daily Herald (London), September 22, 1930, p. 8.

⁷Daily Herald (London), September 26, 1930, p. 1.

⁸Daily Herald (London), September 26, 1930, p. 8.

Nazi vote) to get the cabinet's financial program through the legislature. British Labour hoped that Brüning would change his program enough so the German Socialists could support it and thus avoid a dictatorial government that the Daily Herald predicted would be ". . . more absolute than the Hohenzollern Monarchy."⁹ Many felt that a dictatorship was inevitable for Germany and in Germany even supporters of parliamentary government favored a "dictatorship by consent" in order to avert a "dictatorship by force." A Labour columnist believed the Nazis would play an important role in bringing about a dictatorship, not because they would be a part of it, but because they served as a menace to secure the reluctant¹⁰ consent of the Reichstag and the people.

As the winter of 1930 progressed this same writer again said that the Nazis were increasing in strength as the misery of the German people increased. Three things were working to Hitler's advantage at that time. Firstly, there was the anti-Polish feeling. Hitler was able to denounce the Poles violently while the Government had to be tactful. Secondly, the imposition of taxes by decree was making the Brüning Government more and more unpopular. Thirdly, the Nazis' ability to capitalize on

⁹Daily Herald (London), October 1, 1930, p. 1.

¹⁰W. N. Ewer, "Machine Guns May Rule Berlin!" Daily Herald (London), November 7, 1930, p. 13.



Germany's many problems both domestically and in foreign affairs with vague slogans proved a large drawing point for them.¹¹ By the middle of December it was predicted that if an election were to be held immediately the Nazis would win at least 180 seats, drawing support mainly from the middle and working classes who were most affected by the increasing taxes, falling wages, and rising unemployment.¹²

By January 1931 W. N. Ewer, the Daily Herald's diplomatic correspondent, was predicting that the Nazis would be in the government within two months and would dominate it. The bourgeois parties were seeking Hitler's entry, but he would come in only on his own terms, Ewer believed. Even if there would be no Nazi Government in 1931, the leaders of the Nationalist and People's Parties and some from the Center Party were beginning to use Hitler's language, so there would likely be a Nazi foreign policy for Germany no matter what party formed a government. This policy would involve demands for revision of the Versailles Treaty, a Young Plan revision, parity in armaments, and a very stiff policy towards Poland. Ewer thought this would cause a very dangerous situation in

¹¹W. N. Ewer, "Men and Things Abroad," Daily Herald, (London), December 5, 1930, p. 13.

¹²W. N. Ewer, "Men and Things Abroad," Daily Herald, (London), December 12, 1930, p. 13.



Europe, considering France's likely reaction to it.¹³

By April 1931 it again seemed to British Labour that Hitler's party was in trouble. His lieutenant, Wilhelm Frick, the Minister of Interior and Education in the Thuringia government, was forced to resign and a revolt with the party, although put down, had disrupted it.¹⁴ A shift in the Nazi tactics to try to take over the German trade union alarmed the British Socialists. The Nazis, they said, were using the Communist's method of setting up cells in unions and working to win influential positions for their members. Labourites found this particularly dangerous to German democracy since they believed the trade unions were the backbone of the Weimar Republic.¹⁵

By May Hitler no longer seemed to be a serious threat in Germany. It appeared that Hitler had watered down his program to such an extent with his declaration against unconstitutional acts and his opposition to violence that the Nazi revolution was off and it seemed he would lose many of his fanatical followers. "It is not the Hitler menace," the

¹³W. N. Ewer, "Men and Things Abroad," Daily Herald (London), January 2, 1931, p. 13.

¹⁴Daily Herald (London), April 4, 1931, p. 4; and April 7, 1931, p. 7.

¹⁵"International Trade Union Notes and Labour Abroad," Labour Magazine, IX (April, 1931), p. 572.

Daily Herald declared, "but the present half-veiled dictatorship that is the danger to German democracy." Hitler was being used by the reactionary forces in Germany and Hitler's followers would ". . . one day wake up to find that they have been tools of those very financial interests against which they thought they were in revolt."¹⁶

The Nazi fortunes which seemed on the wane as late as May, by June again began to increase due to the worsening economic crisis. By the middle of the month Germany appeared to be on the verge of revolution. It was feared that if the economic crisis were not eased immediately by foreign aid to Germany the Brüning Government would fall and that there would be a "cold putsch" which would establish a dictatorship under Alfred Hugenberg's Nationalists and Hitler's Nazis.¹⁷

Hitler's fate fluctuated rapidly in the eyes of the British Socialists, who seemed unduly alarmed at each Nazi victory, and unduly hopeful at each Nazi setback. By August 1931 Hitler again appeared to be losing ground, Labour thought. It was predicted that in the next election there would be a large slump in the Nazi vote. The failure of an attempt in

¹⁶"A Waning Hero," Daily Herald (London), May 9, 1931, p. 8.

¹⁷Daily Herald (London), June 2, 1931, p. 1: and July 14, 1931, p. 1.



Prussia of a referendum that would have dissolved the Prussian Diet was seen as an important defeat for the Nazis, and that, coupled with Hitler's followers' shock at his cooperation with the Communists in the attempt, Labour thought, would cause him to lose a great deal of influence as a political leader.¹⁸ A Nazi-Communist success would have been a severe blow to Brüning, "who is doing so much at home and abroad to serve his country's highest interests by a policy of pacification and international co-operation."¹⁹ (A strange comment about a man whom Labour believed to be setting up a "half-veiled dictatorship.")

By November 1931 things were again looking dismal to the Labour Party for the future of democracy in Germany. It felt that an increase in the British tariff would throw another million Germans out of work to join the five million already unemployed. If this were to happen it would probably mean riots and a revolution of the Right or the Left, either of which would result in the repudiation of the Versailles Treaty and the possibility of War.²⁰ W. N. Ewer in November again predicted that there would be Nazis in the cabinet, possibly

¹⁸Daily Herald (London), August 7, 1931, p. 3: and August 10, 1931, p. 8.

¹⁹"Well Done," Daily Herald (London), August 10, 1931, p. 8.

²⁰C. Delisle Burns, "International Aspects of the General Election," The Labour Magazine, X (November, 1931), p. 306.



even Hitler, within a month. However, he believed it would not be the old Hitler who ". . . talked of chopping off heads, but one who comes quietly and constitutionally into the Government. . . ." The main reason of this entry was that negotiations were soon to begin with France to study the matter of reparations, and the German Government wanted the Right Wing parties to share²¹ the responsibility for the negotiations and their results.

By the end of the month rumors were beginning that Hitler might oppose Hindenburg for the presidency. This started with a refusal by Hitler to pledge Nazis support for the old President's re-election.²² Hindenburg agreed to run again in order to stop Hitler. It was believed that Hitler would not dare run against him, as he would not have a chance and would suffer a severe rebuff. The Nazis, on the other hand, had hoped that the President would step down and Hitler would²³ then stand a good chance of being elected.

The British Socialists again believed that the Nazis were losing ground. This time their reversal was due to a move by Brüning. He threatened the Nazis with martial law and a state of siege if they did not stop their terrorism. Whereas

²¹W. N. Ewer, "Men and Things Abroad," Daily Herald (London), November 3, 1931, p. 8.

²²Daily Herald (London), November 27, 1931, p. 3.

²³Daily Herald (London), December 11, 1931, p. 1.

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a few weeks before it had seemed that there were only two alternatives--to invite the Nazis to join the Government, or a Nazi march on the capital--now, enjoying the support of the Socialists because of his stand against the Nazis, Brüning was able to put across his unpopular economic program and thus avoid a crisis. The author of an article on this situation hoped the Brüning Government would be able to hold out until the French, the British, and the Americans realized that it was in their own interest to wipe out the reparations and to lend Germany more money so she could once again put herself on a firm financial footing. He thought Germany would not "crash" as long as the Social Democrats continued to support the Brüning Government. However, he predicted, if Germany did collapse she would bring the rest of Europe down with her.²⁴

In another feature article, the Berlin correspondent for the Daily Herald explored the Nazi program and its appeal. By offering something to everyone Hitler was able to amass a large following, he found. He was alarmed by the attitude of many Germans that since the other parties had tried and failed to cure Germany's ills Hitler should be given his chance. The people were in a mood for change and the method did not really matter so much. Much of Hitler's strength was based, he

²⁴Vernon Bartlett, "Will Germany Crash?" Daily Herald (London), December 18, 1931, p. 8.

believed, on the lack of courage in the middle class parties. They know that his program was pure nonsense, but many were willing to let him come into office where they figured he would disappoint his followers as soon as he had to face the political and economic realities. They believed it was useless to try to stop his advance by fighting him, but his movement would collapse under the weight of governmental responsibility. This correspondent, however, was worried about the terrible harm Hitler might do to Germany and the rest of the world in the meantime. Only by standing firm could the government convince the German people that Hitler's time had not come²⁵ and would not come, he said.

In early January 1932 Ewer predicted that 1932 would be Hitler's year, bringing his triumph or his collapse. It was hard to say which--"He might prove to be only Boulanger or he might prove to be a Mussolini."²⁶

The German presidential race dominated the attention of the Labour Party during the first quarter of the year. Brüning attempted to outmaneuver Hitler by proposing that two-thirds of the Reichstag should re-elect Hindenburg and thus avoid a strenuous campaign. Hitler refused to go along with the plan

²⁵"Hitler's Land of Promise--Why He is an Idol," Daily Herald (London), December 29, 1931, p. 6.

²⁶W. N. Ewer, "To-day's Men of Destiny," Daily Herald (London), January 8, 1931, p. 8.



and it was defeated in the Reichstag by the Nazis and the Hugenberg Nationalists. It was doubtful in early January whether Hindenburg would run in a public election, and certainly not as a candidate of one party. After the failure of his first plan, Brüning proposed to present the old President as the candidate of all parties except the Communists. There was some doubt whether the Socialists would support this plan.²⁷ The Nazis did not approve of this plan either, but for some weeks they would not state definitely whether they planned to present a candidate of their own. It seemed throughout the last part of January that they would probably nominate some candidate, possibly with the idea of a compromise in mind. No one was sure if Hitler, or even Hindenburg, would be a candidate. It was thought that Hitler did not wish to run as he believed it would be a serious political blunder to oppose Hindenburg, but the extremist wing of his party was pushing him into it.²⁸ The controversy continued well into February. In the early part of that month it was discovered that some time before Hitler had been made a minor official of Thuringia, thus also a citizen of Germany and legally able to run for the presidency.²⁹ However,

²⁷Daily Herald (London), January 9, 1932, p. 1; and January 12, 1932, p. 1.

²⁸Daily Herald (London), January 14, 1932, p. 1; and January 30, 1932, p. 9.

²⁹Daily Herald (London), February 4, 1932, p. 1.



for a while it was still believed that his lieutenant Frick would run in the first election to split the vote in the hope that Hindenburg would then withdraw and Hitler could replace Frick on the second ballot.³⁰ Hindenburg finally announced his candidacy on February 15, 1932. The German Socialists withheld their support for him until it was clear that the Right Wing³¹ was going to nominate a candidate of its own. Hitler at last announced his candidacy on February 22.

The Labour Party press followed these developments in Germany with a great deal of interest. It tended to agree that Hitler had made a mistake by running against Hindenburg. It believed, or at least hoped, that this would mean the end³² of Hitler as an important political force in Germany.

In an editorial on the eve of the election, the Daily Herald expressed its doubts about Hitler's ability to impose his "Third Reich" on Germany even if he should win. If he should lose it hinted that he probably would not be able to³³ hold his party together.

³⁰Daily Herald (London), February 10, 1932, p. 9.

³¹Daily Herald (London), February 16, 1932, p. 6.

³²R. W. Postgate, "Germany--a Country in Search of Itself," Daily Herald (London), March 7, 1932, p. 8.

³³"Germany's Choice," Daily Herald (London), March 12, 1932, p. 8.

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In the first election Hindenburg missed an absolute majority by less than one percent and British Labour saw the election as a defeat for the Nazis who, the Daily Herald reported, were so sure they would win that they were preparing a coup d'etat. The Nazis, however, did increase their vote considerably over the results of the 1930 Reichstag election. Labour attributed this increase to the fact that there were fewer parties involved in this election.³⁴

The results of the next election were a foregone conclusion. There was no doubt that Hindenburg would win. Even Hitler admitted that he did not have a chance of winning.³⁵

The British Socialists believed the decisive defeat of Hitler was due to the ". . . discipline and strength of the Social Democrats." Their support of Hindenburg, despite the fact that he opposed many of the ideals for which they stood, made his victory possible.³⁶

³⁴Daily Herald (London), March 14, 1932, p. 1; and March 15, 1932, p. 9.

³⁵Daily Herald (London), April 9, 1932, p. 9.

³⁶"Hitler's Next Round," Daily Herald (London), April 11, 1932, p. 8.

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CHAPTER III

THE NAZIS--A FUTURE OR FINISHED?

The election chaos in Germany did not end with the reelection of Hindenburg as President. A number of state elections, most importantly the Prussian election, were scheduled for April 24, 1932. Judging from the gains Hitler had made in the presidential election it was expected that the Nazis would make large gains in their representation in the various state legislatures. It was hoped that many of those who had voted for Hitler would be discouraged by his defeat and drift away from his party or return to their old parties, but it was still expected the Nazi vote would be large. The Hitlerites were particularly interested in Prussia because it contained four-fifths of the German population and was the key to Germany.¹

Even the suppression of the Nazi storm troops shortly after the presidential election by order of Hindenburg did not prevent the Nazis from greatly increasing their vote.² In Prussia they increased their representation from seven to one hundred sixty two, which made them the largest party but did not give them an absolute majority to enable them to form a government. The Daily Herald did not believe that Hitler

¹Daily Herald (London), April 19, 1932, p. 6.

²Daily Herald (London), April 14, 1932, p. 1



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would be able to get the co-operation of enough parties to enable him to form a coalition government. It hoped a deadlock would follow which would allow the old government under the Social Democrat, Otto Braun, to continue provisionally but indefinitely.³

During May 1932 governmental conditions in Germany grew more chaotic. The Braun Government in Prussia resigned and, as no party or coalition was large enough to form a new government, affairs remained disrupted there. It was also during May that the Brüning Government resigned. Labour saw both of these events as steps towards dictatorship. It thought Hindenburg planned to replace a democratic government with a ". . . cabal of junkers and generals, largely personal friends, which will have no chance of a parliamentary majority."⁴

With the appointment on May 31 of Franz von Papen as Chancellor, the British Socialists saw Germany taking another step to the Right. They believed, however, that although the Papen Government would have reactionary tendencies it would oppose the Nazis as well as the Socialists and the Communists. They also expected that there would be an early dissolution of the Reichstag as the new government could expect a defeat there

³"Prussia's Next Step," Daily Herald (London), April 26, 1932, p. 8.

⁴Daily Herald (London), May 31, 1932, p. 1.



very quickly. In a new election it was feared that the Nazis would make large gains once again and might possibly, with their Nationalist allies, be able to secure an absolute majority.⁵ Papen did dissolve the Reichstag within a few days and Germany entered another period of electoral chaos. The problem in Prussia continued also with rumors that the deadlock might be broken with the appointment of a federal commissioner. The Daily Herald felt this was merely a ploy to set up a dictatorship under the pretext of preserving order.⁶

The Labour Magazine examined the situation in Prussia in some detail in its June 1932 edition. The desire for a coup d'etat was strong among many of the Nazis, it said. A great number of the storm troops were becoming impatient with the effort to take over the government legally. They wanted to seize power immediately. However, as the Nazi vote increased the clamor for a coup lessened. The Communists held the key in the Prussian Diet. If they could be persuaded to forget their slogan that the Social Democrats were their arch-enemies then they might help vote down a Nationalist-Nazi Government. However, if they abstained it would mean the Nazis

⁵Daily Herald (London), June 1, 1932, p. 1.

⁶Daily Herald (London), June 4, 1932, p. 1.



and their allies would have an absolute majority.⁷

Throughout June British Labour thought the end of the German Republic was near and that civil war was imminent. It believed that it was Papen's plan to establish a military dictatorship which would lead to a restoration of the Hohenzollern dynasty. If the coming election failed to give a Right Wing majority, Labour thought it entirely likely that the Reichstag might be quickly dissolved again, and the new cabinet remain in office for years without the legislature. They also forecast that within a few months a majority of the new ministers would be removed and replaced by Nationalists and Nazis. However, Hitler himself would not be allowed to take an office as the Right Wing was using him to come to office with no intention of allowing him any power.⁸

It was feared that a civil war might break out over the question of the ban on Nazi uniforms by the Bavarian State Government. The Papen Government lifted the ban on uniforms imposed by Brüning. The Bavarian Government, however, refused to comply and continued to outlaw the wearing of uniforms. The Nazis refused to obey and riots and disorders broke out. Federal Government threats to call out

⁷Max Westhal, "Where is Germany Going?" Labour Magazine, XI (June, 1932), pp. 58-59.

⁸Daily Herald (London), June 6, 1932, pp. 1-2.



the Civil Guard if any attempt were made by the Federal
Government to lift the ban by force.⁹

During July as the election set for the last day of that month drew nearer, Labour's idea of what was happening in Germany became more and more uncertain. It thought for a while that Papen would be removed along with several members of his cabinet and replaced by Nazis who might be inclined to support the agreements entered into at Lausanne on reparations. This might have the affect, Labour believed, of splitting the Nazi Party, as several of Hitler's lieutenants, such as Joseph Goebbels and Gregor Strasser, had already begun to violently
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attack the agreement.

On July 19 an alleged Nazi plot to overthrow the Government was exposed. It was to take place election night if the results warranted it. If the Right Wing parties were to win a majority it was planned to make the ex-Crown Prince the head of the Government. Hitler would not join the cabinet but would remain as head of his party. It was then planned to abolish the Republican Constitution. If the parties of the extreme Right did not win a majority then Hitler intended to present

⁹Daily Herald (London), June 18, 1932, p. 9; June 25, 1932, p. 9; and June 27, 1932, p. 9.

¹⁰Daily Herald (London), July 12, 1932, p. 1.



an ultimatum to the Government. He would demand that the Government transfer all its power to the army and to his private army, the S.A. Should the Government refuse to obey, Hitler believed himself strong enough to resort to violence. The Right Wing leaders did not think the Labor movement or any other
¹¹
 opponent was strong enough to resist.

The takeover of the Prussian Government that Labour had feared took place on July 20. An editorial in the Daily Herald denounced the move because it set up a dictatorship in which Papen as self-appointed ruler held more power in Germany than had the Kaiser. With Prussia under control, the editorial said, it would be relatively easy to dominate the south German States. The main reason for the takeover was to gain control of the Prussian police force. The editorial believed the move could have been prevented and might still be reversed if the German working-class would unite to oppose it. Unfortunately the Communists refused to cooperate and were, therefore, responsible for the weakened position of German Labor. It was still not too late to stop Hitler, British Labour asserted, if the working-
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 class would put up a united front.

¹¹Daily Herald (London), July 19, 1932, p. 9.

¹²"Germany in Chains," Daily Herald (London), July 21, 1932, p. 8.



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As the election drew near and Hitler still had not made a dramatic gesture to gain control of the Government, British Labour began to question how much of a threat Hitler really was. W. N. Ewer reported that the S.A. was ready to move but Hitler was not able to make a decision. He claimed Hitler was a man of words and not action. He preferred to play politics, to join a coalition, and to become "respectable." Ewer was not sure whether or not Hitler's more fanatical lieutenants would allow him to do this. Many of them were tired of waiting and wanted action at any cost. The correspondent was not certain the Government could put down a Nazi putsch, as Papen claimed, for no one was sure where the army stood.¹³ In another article a few days later Ewer was even more positive that Hitler was losing control of his party. If he did not take decisive action in the next few days, Ewer said, he was finished. He might have ". . .a future as a useful mob orator of the Reaction--as a glorified Boy Scout leader, even as a respectable party politician. But the dream of a "Third Reich," with "Our Adolf," as its leader and dictator, of "heads rolling in the sand," are going to¹⁴ vanish rapidly."

¹³W. N. Ewer, "Hitler's Army Pressing for Instant Coup," Daily Herald (London), July 28, 1932, p. 1.

¹⁴W. N. Ewer, "Hitler's Last Chance to Seize Power," Daily Herald (London), July 28, 1932, p. 1.

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General Kurt von Schleicher, the Minister of War, was coming to be recognized during the last part of July as the real power in Germany. He was referred to as "a twentieth century Bismarck." It was reported that he had no intention of allowing Hitler to come to power. He found the Nazis useful in weakening the Socialists and the Communists and in helping to destroy parliamentary government. However, once they had served their purpose he meant to "crush them." If they attempted a coup he would order them fired on. Schleicher figured there would be no majority in the new Reichstag so he, as the head of the government, would be able to rule by decree. He planned to put a couple of "safe and gentlemanly" Nazis in his cabinet and to give a number of minor official jobs to other Nazis. This would leave Hitler and the other leading Nazis¹⁵ stranded with their organization split.

The results of the election were interpreted by the Daily Herald as fulfilling its prediction that the German people would crush Hitler's hopes of becoming dictator. "The wave of Nazi popularity," the newspaper said, "has been checked. . .the¹⁶ reactionary Papen-Schleicher dictatorship is likely to go on." There was talk that Hitler was planning to

¹⁵Daily Herald (London), July 27, 1932, p. 9.

¹⁶Daily Herald (London), August 1, 1932, p. 1.



present an ultimatum to the Papen Government demanding a Nazi Chancellor and Minister of Interior. In spite of the fact that the Nazi newspapers were talking big, Hitler, himself, the Daily Herald thought, had lost his momentum and was merely going through the forms demanded by his party. General Schleicher was in control of the situation, it was believed, and was acting while Hitler hesitated. Rumors said that the Government was going to ask the Reichstag for dictatorial powers and would need the support of the Nazis for that. They were willing to buy the necessary Nazi votes with a ministry or two.¹⁷

Although Labour thought Hitler had reached his zenith they admitted that he had done amazingly well in the polling and expressed shock that over twenty million people in Germany had voted for parties with revolutionary programs. Despite the fact that the revolutionary trend had been checked, Labour still saw much trouble for Germany in the near future.

The desire for equality of armaments was most alarming to Labour. It feared that if the Disarmament Conference did not soon find a plan to disarm the other nations to the level of Germany, then Germany would begin to rearm to their level. A Germany which was too poor to meet her reparation obligations was in no financial position to undertake a large rearmament

¹⁷W. N. Ewer, "The Reichstag May Never Meet," Daily Herald (London), August 2, 1932, p. 1.



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There were constant rumors during the latter half of 1932 that the Nazi Party was splitting because of Hitler's fear of exerting himself to demand the Chancellery. It was said that Hitler was afraid if he became Chancellor he might fail to improve conditions in Germany, and thus ruin himself and the party. Gregor Strasser, his second in command, reproached him for this attitude and threatened to split the party if he refused.¹⁹ In an interview with Hindenburg, Hitler refused to accept a position in Papen's cabinet as Vice Chancellor along with several ministries for his followers. He told Hindenburg he would only accept the Chancellorship, but he promised to take no illegal action and agreed to give his Storm Troops an eight day leave of absence, thereby ending the threat of a²⁰ putsch which was feared.

It was rumored that Hitler had suffered a nervous breakdown because of his inability to decide what course of action to follow, from the pressure on him to act, and his loss of prestige among his followers. It was believed that

¹⁸"Germany's Next Step," Daily Herald (London), August 2, 1932, p. 8.

¹⁹Daily Herald (London), August 11, 1932, p. 1.

²⁰Daily Herald (London), August 15, 1932, p. 9.



Strasser had taken over the party.²¹ This rumor was soon discounted, but it illustrated the low position to which Labour believed Hitler had sunk during the summer of 1932.

It was thought towards the end of August that if a Nazi were to become Chancellor now it would not be Hitler, but probably Strasser who was at that time carrying out negotiations with Brüning in an attempt to form a coalition between the Nazis and the Catholic Center Party for the Reichstag and the Prussian Diet.²² They did, in fact, form a coalition in order to elect a Nazi, Herman Göring, Speaker of the Reichstag. The Nazis were on their best behavior during the opening of the Reichstag²³ as they want to give Hindenburg no excuse to dissolve it. Nevertheless, Hindenburg gave Papen a decree dissolving the body to be used at his discretion. Papen planned to use it to forestall Hitler while he made a direct appeal to the Nazis, already discontent with their leader's hesitation. The Chancellor hoped a strong demand to rearm Germany, presented to the other nations at the Disarmament Conference, would rally²⁴ around him supporters from many of the nationalist parties. This move by Papen pushed the Nazis and the Center Party closer

²¹Daily Herald (London), August 26, 1932, p. 1.

²²Daily Herald (London), August 30, 1932, p. 9.

²³Daily Herald (London), August 31, 1932, p. 9.

²⁴Daily Herald (London), September 1, 1932, p. 1.



in their effort to adopt a program so that they could present the President with request that they be allowed to form a Government. The Center Party regarded the Chancellor, Papen, as a traitor to their Party, but would not form a coalition with Hitler unless he gave definite guarantees that he would respect the Constitution.²⁵ It was believed that Hindenburg would not accept such a coalition, especially as it was rumored that Papen was attempting to form a new party made up of Right Wing groups such as the Stahlhelm, the Crown Prince and his brothers, except Prince August Wilhelm who was a Nazi,²⁶ and most of the war-time generals. As September passed it became more evident that Hindenburg would not appoint a Nazi-Center coalition to replace the Papen Government.²⁷ By the middle of the month the dissolution of the Reichstag seemed near. Hindenburg asked the Nazi and Center Parties if they would support the Papen Government in view of the crisis caused by France's absolute refusal to consider Germany's demand for abrogation of the armament restrictions of the Versailles Treaty. When Hitler and Brüning refused, the Reichstag was dissolved the next day, September 12, but not

²⁵Daily Herald (London), September 1, 1932, p. 2.

²⁶Daily Herald (London), September 2, 1932, p. 1.

²⁷Daily Herald (London), September 8, 1932, p. 2.



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before the Reichstag voted down the Government. A brief dispute arose over which of the two acts took precedent. It was settled when Goring called a meeting for the next day. Papen threatened to send troops to occupy the building, so Goring withdrew the²⁸ Summons.

The election for the Reichstag was to take place on November 6; as the date approached it appeared to the British Labourites that the Nazis were increasing their violence in order to have the election postponed. The Nazis feared a loss of votes (the Daily Herald estimated up to two million) if the election was to be held on schedule. Most of those votes, it said, would go to the Communists as there was a great deal of²⁹ discontent among the Left Wing of the Nazis.

Labour interpreted the election as the turning of the tide for the Nazis. They estimated from the incomplete returns on election night that the Nazis would lose about twenty per cent of their July 1932 vote. Nazi hopes of breaking the³⁰ Reichstag deadlock were now shattered.

The November election did in fact do nothing to solve

²⁸Daily Herald (London), September 12, 1932, p. 1; and September 13, 1932, p. 1.

²⁹Daily Herald (London) November 5, 1932, p. 9.

³⁰Daily Herald (London) November 7, 1932, p. 1.



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the deadlock in the Reichstag. Papen's position was weakened by the election and almost all of the political parties were demanding his removal. However, he still remained a favorite of the President, and there was some speculation that the Reichstag might again be dismissed and Papen given dictatorial control by emergency decree.³¹ However, he resigned on November 17, largely because he had only the support of about ten per cent of the Reichstag which was not nearly enough. Hindenburg hoped that by dismissing Papen he would remove all the obstacles preventing Nazi and Center cooperation with the Government.³²

For the rest of the month Labour could not decide whether Hitler was on his way in or out. On November 19 the Daily Herald reported that Hitler was meeting with Hindenburg and that the chances were about even whether he would insist on being Chancellor or would agree to support a cabinet headed by a nominee of the President.³³ However, the same day a feature article by H. J. Laski appeared in this paper which stated that Hitler and the Nazis were finished. He said if they came into the cabinet they would be quickly submerged by

³¹Daily Herald (London), November 8, 1932, p. 9; and November 14, 1932, p. 2.

³²Daily Herald (London), November 18, 1932, p. 1.

³³Daily Herald (London), November 19, 1932, p. 3.



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the Right Wing forces and lose their Socialist appearance. If they attempted a coup d'etat they would be beaten by ". . . combination of General Schleicher and General Strike." He saw Hitler as a man of words who was afraid of action, and as a puppet used by reactionary big business. Hitler was a symbol of the discontent of Germany, but now he was proved a fraud. He was ". . . a cheap conspirator rather than an inspired revolutionary, the creature of circumstances rather than the maker of destiny." Laski concluded: "Accident apart, it is not unlikely that Hitler will end his career as an old man in some Bavarian village, who in the Biergarten in the evening, tells his intimates how he nearly overturned the German Reich."³⁴

Two days later the same paper was predicting that Hitler would be Chancellor within a week. This was due, it said, to a change in his position. He now tried to appear as a moderate to the old President. In an interview with Hindenburg, Hitler abandoned his claim to dictatorial powers and denounced the Nazi election violence. The main stumbling block now was his demand for a complete prohibition of the Communist Party. It was feared that this would only strengthen that group.³⁵ The following day it seemed again that Hitler was out, having been

³⁴H. J. Laski, "Hitler--Just a Figurehead," Daily Herald (London), November 19, 1932, p. 8.

³⁵Daily Herald (London), November 21, 1932, p. 9.

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"lured into a trap" by Hindenburg. He told Hitler in a ten minute interview that he would appoint him Chancellor if he could obtain ". . .a homogeneous, strong majority with a well-connected program." Hitler knew immediately that he had been tricked as this was an impossible task, especially in view of the fact that Hugenberg, the leader of the Nationalists, had told the President he would not support the Nazi-Center coalition.³⁶ It was rumored that Papen had been Hindenburg's chief advisor in drawing up the condition which Hitler had found impossible to accept.³⁷ The following day, November 24, it was reported that Hitler was ready to accept the Chancellorship at any price. Hitler had changed his demand that a cabinet must be supported by the Reichstag and advocated a Presidential Cabinet such as Papen had. Hitler wanted to head this cabinet, but was willing to accept all Hindenburg's conditions, including carrying out Papen's economic program and emergency decrees. This was the same program Hitler had been attacking for months. The reason for this sudden change, according to the Daily Herald, was that Hitler found his entire political and military organization on the verge of financial collapse. He could no longer pay salaries and feared a revolt and mass

³⁶Daily Herald (London), November 22, 1932, p. 1.

³⁷Daily Herald (London), November 23, 1932, p. 9.



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desertion. He knew he could only prevent this by securing places for his lieutenants in a new cabinet, and for the storm troopers jobs in the police or a so-called "voluntary working service."³⁸ The paper doubted that the President would accept his offer.³⁸ The next day Hindenburg gave a "clear and final" refusal to appoint Hitler Chancellor. By November 28 it was certain that Schleicher would head the new cabinet.³⁹ It was officially announced on December 2 that Schleicher would be appointed Chancellor. The Nazis announced they would fight him as they had fought Papen. Since the Nazis and the Communists held a majority in the Reichstag it was expected Hindenburg would dissolve it very quickly.⁴⁰ It soon began to be rumored that although the Nazis would publicly oppose the new Government, behind the scene Goring and Schleicher would work together⁴¹ and perhaps a dissolution would not be necessary.

Throughout the remainder of the year and on into January 1933 the Nazi Party was struck by a crisis that threatened to split it badly. The difficulty arose over dissatisfaction with Hitler's handling of affairs. The leader of the dissatisfied

³⁸Daily Herald (London), November 24, 1932, p. 9.

³⁹Daily Herald (London), November 25, 1932, p. 9.

⁴⁰Daily Herald (London), December 3, 1932, p. 1.

⁴¹Daily Herald (London), December 5, 1932, p. 2.

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faction was the second most influential man in the party, Gregor Strasser. British Labour believed that if Strasser left the party it would be so badly divided that its predominance in Germany would end.⁴² The Daily Herald reported Hitler was living in "hourly terror" of an attempt to remove him as leader of the party. Strasser was said to be in Rome seeking the support of Mussolini in his fight with Hitler.⁴³ It appeared to the British Socialists that the Nazi Party was beginning to fall apart. There were reports of mass desertions and of a large unpaid debt. They believed that if there were no great events in Germany during 1933 and if the Government could improve Germany's economic position and reduce unemployment, the Nazis would again fall to the second or third party in Germany, far behind the Socialist.⁴⁴ The trouble in the Nazi Party became so serious that by the beginning of 1933 there were reports of open warfare between Nazis and of Schleicher's idea of bringing Strasser into his cabinet as Deputy Chancellor to further split the Nazis.⁴⁵ The Daily Herald believed, however, that Hitler's chance of becoming Chancellor might actually

⁴²Daily Herald (London), December 9, 1932, p. 1.

⁴³Daily Herald (London), December 17, 1932, p. 9.

⁴⁴Daily Herald (London), December 27, 1932, p. 2.

⁴⁵Daily Herald (London), January 3, 1933, p. 3.

improve with the decay of his party. Previously he had been too powerful, but in January 1933 as he was losing supporters⁴⁶ he was becoming more willing to compromise.

As January went on the Schleicher Government became more and more unstable and soon there was speculation as to whom his successor would be. It was thought that Papen would again be appointed, but as he was "the most hated man in Germany" Hindenburg's advisors feared trouble if he were to once again head a government. As late as the day before he became Chancellor the Daily Herald was predicting that Hindenburg⁴⁷ would not appoint Hitler as his demands were still impossible.

Thus, up to the day before Hitler was to be appointed as Chancellor, the official organ of the British Labour Party was not sure whether he was on his way in or out. During the four years that the Nazis grew from one of the smallest to the largest party in Germany, Labour never really believed Hitler would be successful in establishing any kind of permanent dictatorship. They viewed the Nazis' growth with alarm and were duly shocked by the violence and extremes of Hitler and his followers, but they thought that if Hitler would come to power he would moderate these abuses. They believed the responsibilities

⁴⁶Daily Herald (London), January 9, 1933, p. 2.

⁴⁷Daily Herald (London), January 27, 1933, p. 1; and January 30, 1933, p. 1.

of office would make a respectable politician of him. They were certain that if Hitler attempted to abuse his power his Government would be brought down by the overwhelming power of the Socialists, the Trade Unions, and the working classes in general.

British Labour did not see Hitler as a strong, self-asserting dictator, independent of all pressure such as Mussolini, but as a weak, vacillating demagogue who was supported and ruled by reactionary big business in Germany. They were sure that if Hitler would come to office he would not be allowed to carry out any part of his revolutionary program that did not meet the approval of those behind him.

The Nazis had little or no affect on the Labour Party's foreign policy during this early period. This was mainly because the radical changes the Nazis called for were not part of official German foreign policy, but merely the campaign propaganda of an "out" party. Labour believed Hitler would have to modify many of his demands and threats if he ever presented them as official policy. It thought the enforcers of the Treaty of Versailles, especially France, would allow no unilateral changes in the Treaty. Thus, Labour thought if Hitler did come to power through some chance, his program would not be radically different from that of his reactionary predecessors.

PART II: CONFUSION AND VACILLATION, 1933-1936

1. The first step is to identify the problem or goal. This involves understanding the current situation and what needs to be achieved.

CHAPTER IV

HITLER CONSOLIDATES HIS POWER

British Labour greeted Hitler's advent to the Chancellery with a mixture of foreboding, ridicule, and a strong feeling or hope that he would quickly prove himself to be the incompetent ex-housepainter his enemies had so long claimed he would be. It felt he would not hold the office long. It was also believed a number of factors would keep Hitler in line. The first of these was the threat of general strike by the working classes. This was already being urged by the Communists. Hindenburg had only agreed to appoint Hitler as Chancellor if he would have men such as Papen, Konstantin von Neurath, and Franz Seldte in his cabinet. This would prevent him from following a purely National Socialist program. Hindenburg also insisted that Hitler should try to obtain the cooperation of the Reichstag and without expecting special powers under Article 48 of the Constitution. Frick, the new Minister of the Interior, gave assurance that if the Government were overthrown by a parliamentary majority, the Constitution would be respected. He also stated that the Nazi storm troops would not be incorporated in the police or the armed forces.¹

¹Daily Herald (London), January 31, 1933, p. 1.



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A feature article in the Daily Herald the day after Hitler came to power was entitled "Hitler--the Clown Who Wants to Play Statesman." The author wondered how such a ridiculous figure as Hitler with his "comic opera" background could really expect to be the ruler of a great nation such as Germany. His whole appeal was an illusion--"some trick in his voice, some vibrant nuance, gives him an almost hypnotic power over his listeners." Would Hitler last? The author could see nothing in the public career of "little Adolf Hitler" to indicate that he could escape the fate of his immediate predecessors.²

British Labour was alarmed very early by the steps Hitler took with regard to German Labor. On his first day in office he gave Hugenberg, the Minister of Economics and Agriculture, dictatorial powers over the workers' wages and insurance. He also dismissed the permanent Secretary of State at the Labor Ministry, Dr. Grieser, who was noted for his cooperation with the Trade Unions.³ The next day, February 1, Hitler announced two Four-Year Plans, one in agriculture and one in industry. He was vague in the details but did indicate that they would include forced labor.⁴

²Gordon Beckles, "Hitler--the Clown Who Wants to Play Statesman," Daily Herald (London), January 31, 1933, p. 8.

³Daily Herald (London), February 1, 1933, p. 1.

⁴Daily Herald (London), February 2, 1933, p. 1.



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As the Nazis' repressive measures grew during February they were met by a universal denunciation by British Labour. In spite of Hitler's promise to work within the Constitution, Labour realized a Fascist state was rapidly being established in Germany. It was particularly worried about the actions Hitler was taking to suppress the Socialists and the Communists --the two forces in Germany which Labour expected to stop Hitler.⁵

William M. Citrine, the General Secretary of the British Trade Union Congress, visited Berlin in February and reported back many examples of Nazi dictatorship and terror. Citrine believed that Hitler intended to retain power regardless of the results of the March 5 general election. He predicted it would be an election by intimidation as Nazis would take the place of regular police "to maintain order" during the election.⁶ British Labour looked on the entire election as a farce. Everyone knew what the results would be. The terror and repression used by the Nazis made it impossible for their opponents to run an effective campaign. The election would make no difference in Germany's political situation. Labour could see no possible way that Hitler could get a majority. Yet, it predicted, he

⁵ 'Germany's Perils', Daily Herald (London), February 24, 1933, p. 1.

⁶ Daily Herald (London), February 24, 1933, p. 13.



would carry on with or without the Reichstag and irrespective of the Constitution.⁷

The Reichstag fire, which took place February 27, was spotted immediately by Labour as a probable ruse by the Nazis to discredit the Communists.⁸

An editorial in the Daily Herald denounced Nazi terror and particularly that against the worker and warned that they would sooner or later turn against a government using such methods.⁹

On the eve of the election the Daily Herald again editorially denounced the German elections as a fraud which could in no way reflect the wishes of the German people. However, it saw a great deal of trouble ahead for the Hitler Government. The regime had begun with an unnatural union between the Junkers of the old regime and the Nazis. They had little in common except a joint hatred for Marxists, Jews, and foreigners. They had united to "crush the forces of democracy," but once they had gained full power there was little chance that they would not begin quarrelling among themselves. "A frantic

⁷H. R. S. Phillpott, "Secrets of Hitler's Silent Terror," Daily Herald (London), February 27, 1933, p. 9.

⁸Daily Herald (London), February 28, 1933, p. 1.

⁹"White Terror," Daily Herald (London), March 1, 1933, p. 8.



denunciation of Marxism will not serve any longer to hide a bankruptcy of policy," Labour exclaimed. From the moment that Hitlerism was in power the reaction began. Labour believed it would be a long struggle for the Germans to regain their freedom, but it saw no doubt of the outcome. The editorial ended with a sharp warning to Hitler concerning his foreign policy. "That there will be, while he is in power, no disposition in any other country to make concessions to Germany in the international sphere or to tolerate any rash adventures in the domain of foreign policy."¹⁰

The elections turned out much as Labour expected except that Hitler with his Nationalist allies won a slight majority. Labour did not yet recognize Hitler as the power in Germany, but still believed he and his followers were puppets controlled by the "barons and the generals of the old regime." There was a great deal of difference between the two groups' philosophies and there certainly would develop an internal struggle. However, it was thought that perhaps the struggle was already decided and Hitler had given up all of the revolutionary features of his program and had become the servant of the Prussian nobles and big business.¹¹ Hitler, it was thought,

¹⁰"Germany's Future," Daily Herald (London), March 4, 1933, p. 10.

¹¹"There is a Tomorrow," Daily Herald (London), March 7, 1933, p. 8.

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was only to rule temporarily. He would fall, Labour said, on the issues of the economic crisis and foreign affairs.¹²

Practically every day there was a warning of some kind that the German worker would not tolerate for long the Nazi abuses--that the day of reckoning was approaching. British Labour was looking for German Labor to stand up to Hitler in a united front that could have but one result--the downfall of the Nazi dictatorship.

In the two months following the general election of March 5, Hitler began to consolidate his power and to carry out a pogrom against the Jews. Labour was quick to attack the "Enabling Acts" proposed by Hitler and passed by the Reichstag on March 23. The "Dictatorship Bill," as it was called by British Labour, was opposed by those German Socialists who were allowed to attend the meeting of the Reichstag. British Labour felt their German colleagues showed great courage in opposing Hitler in spite of the persecutions and the danger involved.¹³

By April it appeared that perhaps Hitler's reign would be longer than Labour had anticipated. The "staying power" of

¹²Eric Siepmann, "Hitler Will Fall," Daily Herald (London), March 7, 1933, p. 8.

¹³Daily Herald (London), March 24, 1933, p. 3.



the Nazis was not altogether conditioned by the same factors that brought them to power--"unemployment, agricultural crisis, paralysis of trade, corruption and failures in industry, private and public finance." They were being helped by many who had not previously supported them. A great many non-Nazi Germans opposed the Republic and desired to return to the old way--Imperial Germany. The Communists, although they opposed old Imperial Germany, had also helped to overthrow the Republic. The Nazis also had foreign help "from the negotiation of the Peace Treaties on to the belated and clumsy reception of Germany into the League of Nations and the attitude taken to the Austro-German Customs Union. . . ." the outside world did a great deal to help the Germans". . . build up the psychology of unity in adversity, an excellent adjunct of extreme nationalism." The war guilt legend and the enforced disarmament of Germany, coupled with the slowness in the achievements of the disarmament negotiations, had fanned the flames.

Economic problems were still believed to be the one factor that could cause Hitler's downfall. Labour believed that even if conditions would improve economically in the rest of the world, Germany would not benefit because Hugenberg and

¹⁴Bjarne Braatoy, "German Labour in Eclipse," The Labour Magazine, XI (April, 1933, pp. 532-534.

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The Prussian Junkers were in control of the economic policy¹⁵ and they could only harm German industry and trade.

Hitler's persecution of the Jews brought the most alarm and the loudest protest from the British Socialists during the period directly following the German general election of March. The Labour Magazine credited Hitler's concentration on persecuting the Jews to the fact that this was the only part of his program that he was able to carry out. His other pledges, it claimed, were a ". . .mere demagogic humbug, just¹⁶ as Hitler's Socialism is a pure bluff." The Daily Herald and particularly its columnist Hannen Swaffer, was instrumental in suggesting and organizing protest meetings and a boycott of German goods. Swaffer, shocked by the seeming indifference of the Jews outside Germany to the plight of those in that country, criticized British Jews for their inaction and suggested a boycott by them (and the rest of the British) of all German products. He believed this was the most effective way of hurting¹⁷ Hitler as Germany needed all the trade she could get. This boycott did have an effect on German trade and in the years to

¹⁵"International Trade Union Notes, The Labour Magazine, XII (May, 1933), p. 4.

¹⁶"Circuses--but no Bread," The Labour Magazine, XII (May, 1933), p. 4.

¹⁷Hannen Swaffer, "I Heard Yesterday," Daily Herald (London), March 22, 1933, p. 4.



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follow it reduced appreciably the sale of German goods in
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To climax a series of local protest meetings during March and the first part of April, a gigantic rally was called by The National Joint Council of The Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party at Albert Hall for April 12. The nearly ten thousand people in attendance listened to speeches by the Labour leaders and unanimously passed a resolution protesting the
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 persecution by the Nazis of Jews, Socialists, and Communists.

In addition to the treatment of the Jews, another major concern of British Labour was the future of the Trade Union movement in Germany. There was a great deal of speculation and foreboding as to what was going to become of German Labor. It was realized by most that the union would not be allowed to remain unchanged. Some thought they would be reconstructed on
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 the Italian Fascist model. The more optimistic hoped they might be able to maintain some form of organization and unity
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 by dissociating their political ties. Although throughout

¹⁸Carl F. Brand, The British Labour Party, A Short History (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1964), p. 175.

¹⁹Daily Herald (London), April 13, 1933, p. 3.

²⁰Daily Herald (London), March 11, 1933, p. 1.

²¹Braatoy, Op. Cit., p. 531.

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March and April the trade unions were harassed by the Nazis, their newspapers were closed, their leaders arrested, and their offices raided, no move was made by the Nazis to dissolve the unions themselves. Even though the unions would be without power or influence, Labour at least hoped that by retaining some form of organization for the unions, unity would be maintained among the workers--the one group upon which British Labour could pin its hopes for the eventual overthrow of

²²Hitler. These hopes for the German trade unions were shattered in the early part of May. On May Day Hitler held a huge nation-wide festival for the German workers. Hoping to save their organizations the trade unionists cooperated fully, ²³although the Socialists split with them over the issue. At the rally Hitler announced the opening of the second phase of the National Socialist revolution--the "Socialist" part. This included the introduction of compulsory labor, providing work through either private employers or the State, and plans for a large public works program. Labour believed this new program would bring the predicted break between the Nazis and the Nationalists. Both sides had been using the other to achieve its own ends. Now, Labour believed, the time had come to see

²²Daily Herald (London), April 12, 1933, p. 15.

²³Daily Herald (London), April 24, 1933, p. 13.

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which had made the "shrewd calculation." Labour had by now changed its opinion of Hitler's strength and believed he would come out on top.²⁴ The following day, May 2, Hitler ended all speculation as to the future of the trade unions by seizing their offices and funds, arresting their leaders, and suppressing their periodicals. British Labour, although long dreading this move, was, of course, disturbed and denounced it as another example of the fact that there could be no compromise between "Hitlerism and free institutions of any kind." It still maintained, however, that the German worker would ". . . in time,²⁵ destroy Hitlerism and restore freedom to Germany."

With the rise of Hitler to power and his establishment of a firm dictatorship, foreign affairs began to play a major role in the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress's debates. The winter of 1932-33 was the watershed, although, of course, it was not recognized as such at the time, between the post-war period ending with the Depression and the pre-war period of Hitler. By early 1933 slow economic progress was being made and with the advent of Hitler in January, the issues of foreign policy and defense began gradually to replace

²⁴Daily Herald (London), May 2, 1933, pp. 3, 8.

²⁵Daily Herald (London) May 3, 1933, pp. 1, 8.

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domestic economic and social issues.²⁶

Labour's foreign policy in the late twenties and early thirties was full of "crosscurrents and confusion." Its various lines of thought developed from what it considered the causes of World War I. The main cause, Labour believed, was capitalism with its arms race and imperialism. This was supported by an excessive nationalism. How to prevent a recurrence of the disaster was a matter of disagreement with the party. One group believed in disarmament, pacifism, and war resistance, while the other wanted a strong organization to enforce peace.²⁷ This split would cause some dissention and disputes in the ranks as well as the leadership and it would be a couple of years before Labour was truly unified in its approach to foreign policy.

The immediate effect of the Nazi takeover and their brutalities was a basic change in the Labour Party's attitude to Treaty concessions for Germany. When Arthur Henderson took the Foreign Office in 1929 one of his major objectives was conciliation with Germany. By the time he left office in 1931, the effects of the Depression and the rise of the Nazis made con-

²⁶Alan Bullock, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin (2 volumes; London: Heinemann, 1960), I, pp. 511, 526.

²⁷Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 171.

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ciliation impossible.²⁸ Labour even after January 1933 felt it necessary to make concessions to Germany. It still believed the terms of versailles unfairly harsh and believed they must be corrected and Germany given real equality with the other nations before there could be any real hope for world peace. However, it opposed giving to Hitler's ". . .brutal dictator-²⁹ship the justice which was denied to democracy." There could be no territorial revision, the Daily Herald said, as long as the Nazi regime lasted, as no decent people would con-³⁰sider placing a minority under Hitler's rule. "Revision", to Hitler, the paper realized, was not the removal of injustices of the Versailles Treaty, but merely a polite name for³¹ the realization of territorial ambitions.

Thus, in the first months of Hitler's regime it seemed British Labour was taking a firm stand against Hitler in its foreign policy. Its position was not, however, as firm as it appeared at first. It would be a few years before Labour's policy would be uniformly solid against Hitler's aggressive

²⁸Ibid., p. 135

²⁹Daily Herald (London), April 13, 1933, p. 3.

³⁰"Listen Hitler!" Daily Herald (London), April 15, 1933, p. 8.

³¹"Fascism and You," Daily Herald (London), April 18, 1933, p. 8.



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In May 1933 exposé in the French press of Germany's violations of the disarmament provisions of the Versailles Treaty brought the question of German rearmament to the fore. The Disarmament Conference under the chairmanship of Arthur Henderson had the previous December promised Germany "equality of status" with the other nations in armaments. The Conference was looking for ways that equality in armament might be achieved through nations disarming to the level of Germany. Now it was feared that Hitler was using the inability of the Conference to arrive at a workable disarmament plan as an excuse to declare the military restrictions of the peace treaty null and void. Hitler's violation of the Treaty must be dealt with, Labour believed, through the League of Nations. Under no circumstances should Hitler's actions be allowed to stop efforts to disarm or cause the other nations to abandon their "equality with security" promise. ³² Labour was completely opposed to any sanctions of a military nature. A blockade would be illegal, it said. An occupation of the Rhineland as a punishment would be a disaster. Labour thought the Nazis would not back down and would resist such a move with arms. This would doubtlessly lead to war. Even worse it would unite the German people behind the Nazis, and would destroy any chance for the workers' revolt that Labour expected to take

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place eventually in Germany to overthrow Hitler and replace him with a Socialist State. Even if an occupation succeeded it would leave a bitterness that would upset the peace of Europe for many years to come.³³ Tensions over the rearmament question were reduced by a conciliatory speech made by Hitler in which he accepted President Franklin D. Roosevelt's proposal for a new, world non-aggression pact and said he was prepared, on certain conditions, to accept the more detailed plan of Ramsey MacDonald calling for no increase in German arms for a fixed and limited period. The three conditions set down by Hitler were: firstly, Germany was to have "qualitative equality," that is she might have any type of weapon which according to the other nations was essential for adequate national defense; secondly, that she must be allowed a period of about five years in which to convert her long-term army into a short-term militia; and thirdly, that at the end of the transitional period she would have the full equality of status promised her in December 1932. Labour did not find these demands unreasonable and believed that the Disarmament Conference could not successfully finish its work.³⁴ It did not, however,

³³H. N. Brailsford, "Germany Will Remember Broken Promises," Daily Herald (London), May 17, 1933, p. 8.

³⁴"Hitler's Offer," Daily Herald (London), May 18, 1933, p. 8.

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³³H. N. Brailsford, "Germany Will Remember Broken Promises," Daily Herald (London), May 17, 1933, p. 8.

³⁴"Hitler's Offer," Daily Herald (London), May 18, 1933, p. 8.

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think this speech reflected any real change in the basic foreign policy attitude of the Nazis, but rather it resulted from the isolated position in which Germany found herself after the Nazi takeover. It arose from ". . . tactical considerations and from opportunism" rather than from ". . . any innately peaceful disposition on the part of National Socialist policy. . . ." ³⁵ In spite of this Labour felt it was better to go along with Hitler, knowing full well his cynicism, than to risk the consequences that would result from a rejection of his offer. ³⁶

June brought a split between Hitler and his Nationalist allies and hope to the Labourites that this might further weaken the Nazi hold on Germany. Nazis raided the headquarters of the Nationalist Party and arrested over one hundred leaders. Its veteran organization and its "fighting ring", the Steel Helmet League went over to the Nazis in a body. ³⁷ Hugenberg, the leader of the Nationalists and a man who was instrumental in aiding Hitler's rise to power, was forced out of the cabinet a few days later after a brief attempt to defy Hitler

³⁵Rudolf Breitscheid, "The Foreign Policy of Herr Hitler," The Labour Magazine, XII (June, 1933), pp. 54-55.

³⁶"Hitler's Offer," Daily Herald (London), May 18, 1933, p. 8.

³⁷Daily Herald (London), June 22, 1933, p. 11.

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by refusing to resign, and his party was dissolved.³⁸

Labour predicted the next split would be within the Nazi Party itself. There was a great deal of difference between the two wings of the party. The "conservative" Nazis wished to use the party to stabilize the old order, to strengthen capitalism, and to rebuild a militant Imperial Germany. The "radical" faction wanted to begin the social revolution immediately.³⁹ By the middle of July there were disturbances breaking out among some of the storm troop units, that part of the party which tended to be the most radical in its demands for social change. They protested giving up the fight against capitalism and insisted that the anti-capitalist points of their original program be carried out. They also objected to the fact that their leaders were given high paying governmental posts while they got nothing but "festivals and torchlight processions." British Labour believed a showdown was very near between the two factions.⁴⁰

It was also in July 1933 that Arthur Henderson, the former Foreign Secretary of the Second Labour Government, the

³⁸Daily Herald (London), June 22, 1933, p. 11.

³⁹"Nazi Split Next, "Daily Herald (London), June 22, 1933, p. 8.

⁴⁰Daily Herald (London), July 12, 1933, p. 3; and July 18, 1933, p. 1.

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chairman of the Disarmament Conference, and the spokesman for the party in foreign affairs, issued a pamphlet setting forth Labour's foreign policy. Henderson said the international situation had worsened greatly since the Labour Government had left office, and the world situation was extremely grave. He listed the causes of for the state of fear and tension that existed in 1933 as the state of war in the Far East; menacing position of Germany in Europe; the distrust of Germany's neighbors; the rapid deterioration in relations and loss of confidence between some of the more important nations, particularly Great Britain and Russia; the economic crisis, accentuated by extreme forms of economic nationalism; the increase talk of war in Europe; and the unwillingness of heavily armed states to seek seriously a solution to the disarmament problem. He set down in some detail the basis of Labour's foreign policy. The central objective was "to abolish war by organizing peace." This was to be done through the League of Nations--"the League is the pivot of Labour's policy." He wanted the next Labour Government to pass a "Peace Act of Parliament" making it clear that Britain would settle all disputes by peaceful means, never use coercive measures except to resist aggression or when the "organized community of nations" has recognized that the use of force was unavoidable, and to take part in worldwide economic action to

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restore peace by isolating the peacebreaker. He went on to say that a Labour Government would strengthen the peace system by completing existing obligations, not by resorting to force; by undertaking drastic disarmament by rapid stages and through international agreement; by early abolition of weapons of aggression forbidden to Germany; by suppressing private manufacture of armaments; by the internationalization of civil aviation; by the limitation of budgetary expenditure on armaments; and by constructive measures of "moral disarmament." Henderson also believed there was an urgent need for economic and financial cooperation and planning on a world-wide scale. He proposed that a Labour Government would fight economic nationalism; would work to increase world consumption; and would try to organize world production for the use of all. This included equal access to the world's raw materials for all nations, especially those rare materials for which nations might be tempted to go to war. He wanted to try to draw both the United States and the Soviet Union into more participation in world affairs, especially on questions of peace and war. With Russia this would mean also friendlier relations commercially and politically and conclusions of a treaty of non-aggression and conciliation. For the troubled Far East, Henderson proposed "world action" to uphold peace and law. He wanted full cooperation with the International Labour Organization by

adoption of a general convention for a forty hour week and other measures to meet the problems caused by automation, machinery, and mass production in industry and agriculture. Finally he demanded full public knowledge of all international dealings--⁴¹
 "No secret alliances, treaties or engagements of any kind."

On the matter of revision of the peace treaties, Labour had long opposed many parts of these treaties and urged their change. In the pamphlet Henderson repeated this and said, without naming the Nazis, that even the objectionable clauses must be scrupulously observed" until they could be changed by "common consent." "The sanctity of law and contracts," he said, "is the very foundation of order and peace." However, he assured Germany that "this does not mean that the right of veto by one Party will indefinitely prevent the removal of obvious injustices." He pointed out that, in fact, the Treaty had undergone quite a bit of change in the previous ten years by general consent. The discriminations on German commerce imposed by Versailles, the occupation of the Rhineland, the reparation clauses, the unilateral disarmament of Germany had⁴² disappeared or were plainly destined to disappear.

⁴¹Arthur Henderson, Labour's Foreign Policy (London: the Labour Party Press, 1933), pp. 1-2, and 28.

⁴²Ibid., p. 23.

During the summer of 1933 a new Austro-German crisis arose. Labour, which had been sympathetic to the abortive Austro-German Credit-Anstalt, was now opposed to any type of union between these countries. It wanted the League to take action to stop Hitler's activities in Austria. In fact, Hugh Dalton, the Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the last Labour Government, proposed that Hitler be arraigned before the League of Nations. He wanted the Council of the League to consider Nazi aggressions against Austria and to set League machinery in motion to examine reports of German rearmament. He said the protection of Austria must not have to depend on the "secret pressure of Signor Mussolini." Dalton felt that if Hitler had nothing to hide he should welcome the opportunity to clear himself and his Government before the League. However, if he was threatening Austria and was rearming then it was best for the world to know it so steps could be taken to prevent war before it was too late.⁴³

The means of stopping Hitler should be through the collective security of the League, Labour believed. It was still disgusted with the League's failure to act in the Sino-Japanese war. This failure it blamed largely on the British

⁴³"Arraign Hitler!" Daily Herald (London), August 23, 1933, p. 8.



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Government's refusal to support any action. It demanded that if the nations were in earnest in their support of the League and the League's peace machinery, the League Council should be called immediately. The only alternative that Labour saw to League action was to let the situation drift to the point where war would be unavoidable.⁴⁴ The protection of Austria should be taken out of the hands of Mussolini and put into the hands of all nations through the League. Labour still believed, however, that there should be much economic aid and cooperation⁴⁵ between the Germans and the Austrians.

The Trade Union Congress' annual General Council meeting in September and the Labour Party's annual Convention in October both adopted resolutions condemning dictatorships and endorsed democracy. The T.U.C. Conference heard a report by W. M. Citrine entitled Dictatorships and the Trade Union Movement. Citrine had made several trips to Germany and had watched the growth and takeover of the Nazis. His report dealt with the suppression of the German Social Democratic Party and the trade unions, the confiscation of their property, the arrest of their leaders, and the abolition of collective bargaining and the

⁴⁴"Hitler's New Folly," Daily Herald (London), August 26, 1933, p. 8.

⁴⁵"Help for Austria," Daily Herald (London), August 28, 1933, p. 8.

right to strike. The report condemned both dictatorships of the Right and the Left, for both involved the suppression of opposition and freedom of speech. Thus, the trade unions should oppose all dictatorships and support democratic insti-

⁴⁶tutions. There was some opposition to this report, particularly from Aneurin Bevan, who objected to grouping Russia with the Fascists. He argued that as unemployment and poverty grew the foundations of democracy would be undermined from the Right, not from the Left. He said it was Capitalism, not Socialism, which attacked democracy. Hitlerism was merely a defense of Capitalism by violence when democracy threatened Capitalism.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the Citrine report was supported by a vast majority of the delegates. In addition to Citrine's report the presidential address and several other speeches condemned the Nazis abroad and Sir Oswald Mosley's Fascist at home.⁴⁸

The Labour Party Convention which met the next month was similar to that of the T.U.C. in its stand against dictatorships. It passed a resolution condemning all types of dictatorship and reaffirmed British Labour's faith in democracy.

⁴⁶Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 174.

⁴⁷Daily Herald (London), September 8, 1933, p. 11.

⁴⁸Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 175.

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It concluded, "Workers everywhere should strengthen the Labour Party--the spearhead of political power against Dictators, Fascist or Communist."⁴⁹ This resolution, as did the Citrine report, brought protests that it was too harsh on Russia.

Herbert Morrison answered the critics by declaring that if Labour was to cooperate with a dictatorship of the Left in order to defeat one on the Right it would be compromising its democratic principles. For if it justified one form of dictatorship it gave ". . .an equally moral justification for dictatorship from the Right in a Fascist direction."⁵⁰

H. H. Elvin, a Labour candidate, moved a resolution which expressed the Labour Party's concern over the destruction of democratic institutions in Germany and the unwarranted persecution of the Pacifists, Trade Unionists, Socialists, and Communists. It called on Britain to aid refugees and to provide funds to help the oppressed. It also asked all members⁵¹ of the Labour movement to boycott all German goods.

The Labour Conference also passed a resolution calling for war resistance and a general strike of all workers if war

⁴⁹The British Labour Party, "Democracy Versus Dictatorship," Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Conference, Appendix IX (Hastings, 1933), pp. 277-278.

⁵⁰Daily Herald (London), October 6, 1933, p. 15.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 15.

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should break out. This resolution supported by the active pacifist wing had been tabled at the T.U.C. Conference where the pacifist faction was not too strong. In its place there was passed a resolution calling for propaganda against war, but leaving the general strike to be called when the aggressor had been identified, when it should be called by the workers of that country. At the Labour Convention, Sir Charles Trevelyan of the Socialist League moved the resolution for a general strike. He argued that the League of Nations was ineffective as long as it was controlled by governments which were either skeptical or contemptuous of it. The only real force for peace was the labor movement. Hugh Dalton accepted the resolution for the Party's Executive Council as the temper of the conference seemed to demand it, but he was not enthusiastic about it. He knew Henderson was to speak later to set down the official view on foreign policy. Henderson said that Labour must base its foreign policy on the League and must make use of all economic, financial, and "other powers" in order to fulfill Britain's collective security obligations. Labour at its 1933 Convention was, thus, looking in two directions for peace. On one side it believed peace could be had through war resistance, while on the other side through the League and the use of sanctions. The acceptance of the war resistance resolution has been considered the zenith of the

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pacifist influence in the party.⁵²

The coming meeting of the Disarmament Conference, scheduled to meet in October 1933, was considered to be crucial by Labour. It saw the situation in Europe becoming graver with "the strutting provocations of Nazism." There was too much talk that war was inevitable, it said. War could be prevented if cool heads could be maintained and if aggressors knew that the League was ready and willing to use fully the machinery of sanctions against any nation breaking the peace. Also, a genuine achievement in arms reduction was necessary to ease the tension in Europe, it believed.⁵³

There were those who were saying the Disarmament Conference was useless as Germany would never agree to supervision. Labour said that the chance of failure made it that much more important that the Conference go on as planned. Germany must be given no excuse for pulling out of the Conference. All other nations must carefully live up to their pledges to Germany. On the other hand, it had to be made clear to Germany that justice and fair play did not imply weakness or condonation of aggression. All nations must be made to understand that

⁵²Brand, The British Labour Party, pp. 170-177.

⁵³"Guarding the Peace," Daily Herald (London), September 6, 1933, p. 8.

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even with disarmament any aggression could and would be quickly and completely checked by "the whole force of civilization."

"The removal of legitimate grievances, the repression of illegitimate adventures, are in international as in internal affairs the twin conditions for preservation of peace."⁵⁴

Labour was alarmed by the "attempts to exploit the jingoism of the Hitlerites" by those interests which would profit from a war scare and rearmament. The Disarmament Conference was endangered by this, and Europe was in danger of "sliding back to the old evil system of arms rivalry and the "balance of power."⁵⁵

When the Conference opened it appeared that a series of petty squabbles might disrupt it. In one instance Germany demanded that it be allowed a few "samples" of weapons prohibited to it by the Treaty of Versailles. France, supported by Britain and the United States, declared that this would be impossible. Labour condemned the whole matter as nonsense. Germany would have no appreciable advantage by having only a few samples of heavy guns or airplanes and France would have no appreciable advantage by denying them to Germany. The whole issue was just

⁵⁴"Difficult Problems," Daily Herald (London), September 7, 1933, p. 8.

⁵⁵"War Whispers," Daily Herald (London), September 11, 1933, p. 8.

a question of prestige, Labour said. It maintained that the Government that was big enough to give in on such an unimportant point would be the one to gain prestige.⁵⁶

With the beginning of the Conference, Arthur Henderson, its chairman, warned the British people that a real disarmament convention must be arrived at shortly or failure would have to be admitted. He attacked the isolationists on the grounds that in the modern world it was impossible to live apart on the hope that one's country was stronger than any rival or combination of rivals. Entering into alliances would be to abandon isolation. The doctrine of the isolationists not only ignored the facts of the modern world but were self-contradictory. Isolation, Henderson went on, was immoral for it would plunge the world back into international anarchy and that meant war. The League had been founded to put an end to international anarchy. Under the League's collective security, nations would not have to be heavily armed as they could count on the arms of the rest of the peace-loving nations to stop an aggressor. Henderson admitted the failures of the League in the previous two years had been grave but they were not due to any inherent defects in the League's peace machinery, but were the fault of of the governments responsible for working that machinery. He

⁵⁶"Don't Be Childish," Daily Herald (London), October 2, 1933, p. 15.



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set forth three things Britain must do if it were to save itself from a drift into war. Firstly, it must proclaim its faith in ". . .the ultimate possibility and necessity of a world commonwealth." Secondly, though the Peace Act of Parliament, proposed earlier by Henderson, it must incorporate into the law of the land its fundamental obligations as members of the League. Finally, it must take the initiative to make the League universal by bringing the United States and the Soviet Union into it.⁵⁷

It was obvious from the beginning that the Conference was in serious danger of failing. The German "observations" communicated to the other participants were not only unacceptable to the French, but also to the British. There seemed little likelihood that further conversations would produce any better results. Labour demanded that the "private talks" method be ended and the problems be brought back to the full Conference for frank and open discussion.⁵⁸

The worst fears of Labour were realized on October 14 when Germany walked out of not only the Disarmament Conference but also the League of Nations. This was the thing Labour had long feared and had warned would be the first step towards war.

⁵⁷Daily Herald (London), October 7, 1933, p. 15.

⁵⁸"A New Crisis," Daily Herald (London), October 7, 1933, p. 10.

[illegible]

CHAPTER V

COLLECTIVE SECURITY VERSUS WAR-RESISTANCE

The Labour Party put a great deal of the blame for Germany's withdrawal from the League and the Disarmament Conference on the British Government and particularly on Sir John Simon, the Foreign Secretary. Simon believing Germany was bluffing in her demands had made a speech in which he asserted that if Germany were treated firmly by a "united front" she would give in. Labour deplored this tactless approach. It showed, the Labourites believed, an astounding lack of understanding of the current public mind in Germany in which "equality of status" was an obsession. The demands of Britain and France that Germany should agree at once to disband the Reichswehr and to accept supervision, agree to the postponement for several years all thoughts of reduction of armaments by her neighbors, and even accept a token recognition of equal status were hard enough for Germans to accept. The demand that she "take it or leave it" by the former powers who "dictated" the Treaty of Versailles made it impossible for Hitler to accept it even if he wanted. The only result of Simon's "ultimatum" and the German answer was to give the Hitler Government new strength and prestige at home. The withholding of equality from Germany because of the Hitler Government was not valid, Labour argued. It was a handy excuse, but it had been denied to the

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Brüning and Papen Governments also. The opportunities to firmly establish peace offered by the Locarno Pact, by Germany's entry into the League, and by the Disarmament Conference were thrown away by the statesmen. Labour believed there was one chance to bring Germany back into the League and the Conference. That was to go on with the work of the Conference and to produce an agreement that gave genuine and substantial disarmament, thereby relieving Germany of her feeling of humiliation and inferiority and ending the menace of rearmament in Europe. Failure to do this, it believed, would lead to "new and suicidal wars."¹

With the deadlock that resulted in the Conference from the German withdrawal, Labour saw a drift in Europe back to the policies which produced World War I. Hitler had given the militarists of all countries the chance for which they had been waiting and now they were jumping at it. The cry was going up on all sides for more armaments, Labour said, and if something were not done soon it would lead to disaster. It called upon the people to show their disapproval of the current trend by supporting only Labour candidates in the coming by-elections.²

¹"Britain's Part in the Crisis," Daily Herald (London) October 16, 1933, p. 10.

²"Stop the Racket!" Daily Herald (London), October 24, 1933, p. 10.



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To a great many people in Britain it appeared that all chances for disarmament ended with the German walkout from the Conference. Labour, however, did not give up, in fact, could not give up its hope for some break in the deadlock. Disarmament was such an intrinsic part of its foreign policy it could not be abandoned easily. Labour, therefore, continued to search for new ways around the impasse at the Conference.

George Lansbury, the leader of the Labour Party, made an appeal shortly after the German withdrawal from the disarmament work to be carried on. Ultimatums were no way to get disarmament, he said. Although Britain opposed Fascism and the "brutal tyranny" of Germany, it was still a sovereign state and should be treated as such, Lansbury stated. He warned the Government that Labour would not support any increases in armaments nor would it support any attempts to apply penalties or sanctions against Germany.³

Labour supported a British plan to adjourn the Conference for several months on the condition that this period be used to redraft plans and to remove misunderstandings with Germany.⁴

The whole question of disarmament was tied in directly

³Daily Herald (London), October 20, 1933, p. 9.

⁴"Just a Chance," Daily Herald (London), October 24, 1933, p. 8.

with the strength of the League, Labour declared. The deadlock at the Conference was due only partly to the aggressive attitude of Hitler. More importantly it was due to a loss of faith in the peace-keeping machinery of the League. Armaments grew as fear that the collective action of the League would not be able to keep the peace. Labour called on the Government to show by words and actions that it fully supported the League. Only in this way, Labour thought, could the League be preserved as a force for peace in the world and could a new attempt at disarmament be made.⁵

For the rest of the year and well into 1934 Labour continued almost desperately to work for some type of arms settlement. It constantly berated the Government to do something to get the talks going again. Sir John Simon came under blistering attacks for not taking positive action to renew the disarmament talks and to strengthen the League. Labour charged that ". . .his handling of foreign affairs has been not merely inept in detail, but dangerous in tendency."⁶ The only thing keeping Germany from returning to the Conference, as Labour saw it, was not an unsolvable problem of disarmament, but was

⁵"Why Fear Has Grown," Daily Herald (London), November 1, 1933, p. 10.

⁶"A Record of Failure," Daily Herald (London), November 8, 1933, p. 10.



merely a matter of honor and prestige. Germany would be glad to come back, Labour believed, if she could do it without sacrifice of honor and prestige. Other nations wanted her to come back too, provided they were not forced to make such a sacrifice. The German complaint at bottom was that they were treated as inferiors, that they were "different" from other great powers. If the other powers would stop thinking of Germany as an ex-enemy to be faced by a "united front" and if Germany would stop being so oversensitive and would start acting as though she were an equal, then the main problem would be solved and the Conference could get on with its work.⁷

In January 1934 Britain presented a memorandum on Disarmament to Paris and Berlin. It provided that Germany should gradually rearm and the other powers gradually disarm until they reached the same level. Labour supported this plan feeling it was probably the only one that would work at that time. The Daily Herald urged France and Germany to give it serious consideration as it provided a good chance and perhaps the last chance to arrive at some agreement.⁸ The German press welcomed the memorandum as an attempt to solve the problem, but its approval

⁷"Clear Up the Mess," Daily Herald (London), November 11, 1933, p. 10.

⁸"One More Chance," Daily Herald (London), February 1, 1934, p. 10.

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was cautious and non-committal. The French press, on the other hand, found it totally unacceptable. Labour hoped this did not reflect the thinking of the French Government and found reason to believe it was merely an attempt to make the French Premier, Edouard Daladier, change his views.⁹ Unfortunately the official views of neither the German nor the French Governments gave much hope that the British memorandum would be accepted. The Germans said the amount of rearmament it proposed was inadequate and the French explained that under the existing conditions they were not prepared to make any arms reductions.¹⁰

In March 1934 the French sent a note to Britain, and Germany a note to France. Both showed the impasse that had been reached and which had to be removed if the Conference were not to fail. The French note declared there must be no rearmament of Germany and that the Versailles limitations must be enforced. The German note said that the Versailles figures were no longer acceptable. France must realize, Labour warned, that neither Britain nor Italy would agree to help enforce Versailles. The issue was no longer rearmament or no rearmament for Germany, but controlled or uncontrolled rearmament.

⁹"Awaiting an Answer," Daily Herald (London), February 2, 1934, p. 10.

¹⁰"Murky Outlook," Daily Herald (London), February 13, 1934, p. 8.



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Britain and Italy were willing to concede and Germany willing to accept, a limited and controlled amount of rearmament. If France would face realities and also accept this, then some
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 agreement could be reached.

A few days later France sent another disarmament note in which she declared she would sign no agreement unless Great Britain would agree to some form of action against any nation which exceeded the armaments allotted to it by the agreement. Labour said it might accept this proposal if the type of sanctions were made clear and if the nature of the agreement were such that it brought real disarmament, that it were such that there could be reasonable expectation that Germany could loyally carry out its provisions, and that all obligations were "with-
¹²
 in the framework of the League."

Labour put most of the blame for the continuing deadlock during the spring of 1934 on France. France's refusal to budge from her position of no rearmament for Germany without a guarantee that Britain would take part in penalizing any signatory country which violated the agreement exasperated Labour. The question, it maintained, was not whether or not Britain

¹¹"The Arms Deadlock," Daily Herald (London), March 19, 1934, p. 10.

¹²"What Does France Mean?" Daily Herald (London), March 24, 1934, p. 10.

would guarantee the execution of a convention, but whether a convention could be arrived at, at all. France had rejected plan after plan. Labour suggested it was time for France to make a proposal that might be acceptable to all including Germany.¹³

The negotiations between the governments trying to find some plan to present to the Conference were ended on a sour note with France placing the blame for the breakdown on Germany's announcement of greatly increased defense estimates. The General Commission of the Conference was scheduled to meet soon and Labour admitted it would find itself in a most difficult position. It could not condone Germany's withdrawal from the Conference and the League and to rearm as she pleased. At the same time, it could not be turned into a Conference for devising ways of enforcing the military clauses of Versailles. The Conference had no choice but to stick to its task of devising a convention for the "general limitation and reduction of armaments." It must also honor its promise to Germany of equality of status. The job was made more difficult by the fact that the convention must be one that Germany could honorably accept even though she played no part in its framing.¹⁴

¹³"Issues at Geneva," Daily Herald (London), April 11, 1934, p. 10.

¹⁴"Closing the Door," Daily Herald (London), April 19, 1934, p. 10.

After the short session of the Conference in June 1934 adjourned, talk of an immediate disarmament agreement stopped. Labour slowly realized it was not possible at that time to reach an agreement. Labour continued to desire disarmament, but gradually it ceased to be a major part of its program.

As it became obvious that disarmament was not to be, the governments of Europe turned more and more to rearmament. Just as the failure of the disarmament plans depressed Labour, the rapid increases in rearmament programs, particularly Britain's upset it. By late 1933 Labour was aware of a growing pressure from some political and military circles for an increase in arms, and it was determined to oppose all these efforts for several reasons. Firstly, Labour opposed an increase in armaments because this would undermine the already weakened Disarmament Conference. Secondly, it would cause another arms race which had been one of the major causes of World War I, and would lead inevitably to another war, Labour believed. Thirdly, it would weaken the League as rearmament was part of the isolationist mentality which opposed the League's collective security approach to maintaining world peace. Labour saw the armament capitalists and the military as the force behind the pressure for rearmament. They were, Labour said, using Hitler as an excuse to push for rearmament. They had feared for years the restraints that a disarmament convention would put on them.

This is a blank, aged, cream-colored page, likely an endpaper or flyleaf of a book. The paper has a slightly textured appearance with some minor creases and discoloration, particularly along the edges. The left edge shows the binding of the book, and the overall tone is a warm, off-white or light beige.

Now they used Hitler and the deadlock at Geneva to support
 their claims that the national defense must be strengthened. ¹⁵

As winter 1933 came on, Labour became more and more
 alarmed about the rate of rearming that was beginning to spread
 through-out Europe and Japan in the East. The British Govern-
 ment's Service Estimates had increased sharply in 1933 and were
 expected to be even greater in 1934. Every government was
 claiming it was in danger of attack and it could only be safe
 if it were better armed. ¹⁶ The Government, Labour claimed, was
 only paying lip-service to the cause of disarmament. The
 ministers were showing in their speeches "unmistakable evidence
 of a hankering after stronger fighting services." Labour
 planned to call upon the Government when Parliament reassembled
 to make a clear statement of its intentions regarding armaments.
 Labour demanded a "clear disavowal of the warmongers" and wanted
 a clearly outlined program for peace and disarmament. ¹⁷ Sir
 John Simon's statement did little to reassure Labour. It claimed
 he ". . .merely assured the House of Commons that it [his

¹⁵"Stop the Racket!" Daily Herald (London), October 21,
 1933, p. 10.

¹⁶"The mad Race," Daily Herald (London), October 10,
 1933, p. 10.

¹⁷"No More War," Daily Herald (London), November 2,
 1933, p. 10.

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foreign policy] had been beyond criticism and beyond reproach." Labour did not agree. It said that the two years he had been Foreign Secretary had been ". . .two years of reverses and defeat for the cause of peace, for the cause of disarmament, for the cause of international¹⁸ co-operation."

Dissatisfied with Simon's statement Labour introduced a censure motion in the House of Commons. In the debate Sir Stafford Cripps, a Labour member, attacked the Government's rearmament program. He charged that the present amount of spending was considerably higher than that spent before the war at the height of the arms race, even when an allowance was made for the difference in money value. This was an unwarranted financial burden on the taxpayers. The only good thing that could be said about Britain's rearmament, he asserted, was it had not been allowed to grow as rapidly as some of the other countries. A move to try to get the Government to commit itself on a number of points was made by including a number of proposals in the censure motion. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, avoided most of these in his answer to the Labour motion. He said nothing about Labour's proposals for the abolishment of all weapons forbidden to Germany, for suppression of private arms manufacture, for international

¹⁸"A Record of Failure," Daily Herald (London), November 8, 1933, p. 10.



inspection of arms, and for immediate reduction on arms expenditure. To the idea that air bombing be abandoned he said it had to be retained for police purposes. He agreed with the proposal for the internationalization of civil aviation, but said it could not be immediately undertaken. He scoffed at Labour's proposal for an international police force. Cripps was questioned by the Conservatives about his statement that Britain was bound to support any League's collective security action if necessary. They asked by what means Labour proposed to pursue collective security. Cripps said by economic boycott or armed force. When asked if Labour planned to call a general strike if Britain went to war, Cripps assured the House that a strike would be called only ". . .to prevent this country from acting contrary to its obligations." The ¹⁹censure motion was defeated 409 to 54.

To the Government's demand that the air force be increased, Labour argued that the leader of the Tories, Stanley Baldwin, had himself said earlier that it would be impossible to stop an enemy air attack. No matter how many airplanes Britain had some of the enemy would get through. Labour deplored the idea that the only defense for a country was an ²⁰offense that could kill more women and children than the enemy.

¹⁹Daily Herald (London), November 14, 1933, p. 2.

²⁰"Defending the Country," Daily Herald (London) November 29, 1933, p. 10.

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George Bernard Shaw had a little different view of the effects of large air forces. He said large cities would surrender when threatened with large scale destruction. Therefore, the next war would be ridiculously short and would end with ransoms, reparations and indemnities cancelling each other after a squabble in Geneva, ". . .and the most disgraceful and inglorious war on record will peter out in general ridicule." It was foolish, he said, to protest against the multiplication of bombers as they were "angels of peace."²¹

By the spring of 1934 some Tories were calling for the abandonment of the Naval treaties and for a naval building program. Labour, of course, objected to any and all proposals of this type. Besides the tremendous cost of such a program, it protested that it would increase distrust and fear among the nations of the world. "Swollen armaments are no safeguard of peace, but a provocative of war," it exclaimed.²²

There were only two types of international systems possible, Labour said: the collective system and the old system of alliances. The collective system was based of two ideas. The first was that every nation should pledge itself to abstain from

²¹Bernard Shaw, Are We Heading for War? (London: The Labour Party Press, 1934), pp. 3-4.

²²"Towards War," Daily Herald (London), May 3, 1934, p. 10.

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the use of force, and to settle disputes by peaceful means. The second provided that any state breaking the peace should be met by the united strength of the rest of the nations of the world. Even the strongest nations would not dare to go against such opposition. The other method was that of alliances and counteralliances. This method was the old one²³ that had never succeeded in preserving peace.

To those who were suggesting some type of alliance must be formed to strengthen Britain militarily, Labour answered that this was the job of the League. Although, it admitted, the League was weak at that time it was the only basis upon which a genuine and effective collective security system could be built. Britain, it said, must have nothing to do with sectional alliances, groups, or coalitions of any kind outside²⁴ the League framework.

W. N. Ewer more or less expressed Labour's view on the likelihood of war in Europe. Ewer, who had just returned from the Continent where he had made an extensive study of the Fascist government, answered "No" and "Yes" to the question of the probability of war. He said no power in Europe, including

²³"Keeping the Peace," Daily Herald (London), June 29, 1934, p. 10.

²⁴"Alliance or League?" Daily Herald (London), May 5, 1934, p. 10.

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Germany, was arming with the aim of "a" war. None of the European countries was preparing to attack its neighbors. The "melodramatic view" that Hitler was getting ready to overrun Europe, Ewer said, was ". . .as silly as the melodramatic view . . .that the Soviet Union was getting ready to overrun Europe." Germany was rearming because she was afraid, and Ewer believed it was easy to understand the position of the Germans. They still remembered the occupation of the Ruhr and the attempt to dismember post-war Germany with the founding of the Rhineland Republic. They heard their neighbors saying they could not safely disarm under their present level and the Germans realized that they must be far below the "safe level." The French too felt threatened by the attempts to arm by a people who had invaded and occupied their territory twice within fifty years. Therefore, the rearmament in Europe stemmed from a lack of security rather than a deliberate plan of aggression by any one state. Ewer answered "Yes" to the question of war when looked at from the angle of a slow drift caused by the rearmament and economic conditions. The arms race and the alliance system had always brought war in the past and was likely to do so again. The fact that Germany and Italy were two great powers without colonies was also likely to be the cause of war. They were both looking for outlets for their industrial surplus and were seeking markets and fields for investment. They were

looking chiefly in the Balkans for these. Ewer felt the most likely European war in the near future would be between Germany and Italy for control of the Danube and the Balkans. That or a war between Italy and a Balkan alliance resisting her penetration. This area was a much greater danger spot than the Franco-German frontier or the Polish corridor.²⁵

Meanwhile, Labour was still looking for cracks in the wall of German and Nazi solidarity at home and it was finding many. With every crack it saw hope for an eventual crumbling of the Nazi power structure. In October 1933 Ewer saw a great deal of unrest in Germany, particularly among the Nazi storm troopers. This dissatisfaction was due to the failure of the Nazi officials to better the economic conditions of their followers. Ewer also saw a split in the Nazi hierarchy developing with Göring and Alfred Rosenberg on their way out.²⁶ In an interview Lion Feuchtwanger, a leading German novelist living in exile, told the Daily Herald there was a spirit of revolt and anti-Hitlerism in Germany, but it was made ineffectual and powerless as much by the weak and yielding policy of other nations toward Hitler, as by Nazi terror and concentration

²⁵W. N. Ewer, "Will There Be a New War?" Daily Herald (London), June 8, 1934, p. 15.

²⁶W. N. Ewer, "Give Us Bread, Or--," Daily Herald (London), October 27, 1933, p. 15.

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camps.

In January 1934 the plebiscite for the Saar was just a year away and Labour began to worry about its outcome. Until Hitler took over there was little doubt that the Saar would wish to return to Germany, and Labour certainly favored that choice. However, it appeared in early 1934 that it might not be best for the Saar to return to a Germany under Nazi control. Certainly, Labour believed, a great number of Socialists, Communists, Catholics, and Jews would oppose return of the Saar in view of the Nazi treatment of their comrades in Germany. The League must take firm action to see that the Nazis not be allowed to use their usual methods of influencing the election outcome. The rights of those opposed to the Nazis had to be
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protected.

January 1934 brought the first anniversary of Hitler's rise to power and Labour had a great deal to say about that year. Hitler's only success in carrying out his promises was in fulfilling his pledge to destroy democracy. In his first year, Labour claimed, Hitler had effectively destroyed all
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traces of freedom. Nazi economic policy had been a dismal

²⁷A. L. Easterman, "Germany Will Not Stand It for Long," Daily Herald (London) December 11, 1933, p. 10.

²⁸"Nazi Terrorists," Daily Herald (London), January 15, 1934, p. 8.

²⁹W. N. Ewer, "One Year of Hitler," Daily Herald (London) January 30, 1934, p. 8.

failure. Foreign trade for 1933 was one-third less than in 1932 and seventy-five percent less than in 1931. During these same years most of the democratic countries in Europe showed a slight upward trend in trade.³⁰

Labour particularly abhorred the treatment given the German working class and the trade unions by the Nazis. It found grim irony in the fact that Hitler chose May Day for the day his new Labor Code was to become effective. The code placed the workers completely under the control of their employers and the state. They lost all rights to organize in trade unions, as well as the right to strike. Labour could only again warn Hitler that such actions would lead to the eventual destruction of his government. It called on all believers in democracy, in the meantime, ". . .to give no quarter to the insidious agents of Fascism."³¹

Hitler was now showing his true colors, Labour claimed. In the days before he came to power he talked like a real revolutionary. His National Socialism, although not Marxist, was in a real sense Socialist in its aims. Now that he had attained power it was evident that he planned to carry out no

³⁰"Failures of Fascism," Daily Herald (London), January 20, 1934, p. 10.

³¹"Executors," Daily Herald (London), February 20, 1934, p. 8.

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socialist reforms. He was handing Germany's economy to the big industrialists, the men who had supported his movement financially. It was these men, not Hitler, who were the real dictators of Germany.³²

The British Socialists found signs of unrest in the German working class. In May 1934 elections were held in the factories for workers' representatives under the new Labor Law. In a great many cases, in spite of pressure and propaganda, the Nazi candidates were rejected in favor of "neutrals." The Nazi leaders were divided over how to handle the workers. Goebbels wanted to placate them with new promises. Goring wanted to threaten them with even harsher means of punishment.³³

Ewer, who spent several weeks in the spring of 1934 touring Europe observing Fascism at work, gave a rather dismal picture of Germany and Nazism in a series of articles for the Daily Herald. He found an undercurrent of opposition to Hitler, but everyone was afraid to speak of it to anyone but his closest friends. He found the Nazi propaganda crude and that few people paid any attention to it.³⁴ Germany was a land of apathy, Ewer reported. People were taking no interest in the

³²"Nazi Dupes," Daily Herald (London), March 15, 1934, p. 8.

³³Daily Herald (London), May 21, 1934, p. 1.

³⁴W. N. Ewer, "Country of Dreadful Silence," Daily Herald (London), May 23, 1934, p. 10.



Nazis, Hitler, or what the Government was doing. Ewer contrasted Germany with Russia. There, he said, the Government made every attempt to get the people enthusiastic about new programs. In Germany there was none of this. The Government tried to explain nothing. It merely flung endless slogans at the public which were practically meaningless. Nazism's glamor was disappearing and it had become a "bore". This did not mean, Ewer said, the end was near for Hitler. The S.A. might be bored, but it was still loyal. Any serious attack on the regime would rekindle its enthusiasm. It was because the Nazis' power was so complete, and that there seemed nothing that could be done about it, that Germany and the Nazis themselves were bored and
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apathetic.

Ewer also found that the Nazis were the heads of the various ministries, but the old bureaucracy ran Germany. They treated the Nazi system in the same way they treated the Weimar system. Very rapidly the Nazis in the main administrative posts were being tamed and controlled by their departments and the economic interests with whom they had to deal. The army, he found, was the most independent of the groups in Germany. It tolerated no interference from the Nazi Government just as it

³⁵W. N. Ewer, "Germany is Just Bored!" Daily Herald (London), May 24, 1934, p. 8.

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had allowed none from the Republic. General von Fritsch, the Inspector-General, was the real power in the army and perhaps the man who held the key to Germany's future. "He might become a Napoleon; he might become a Monk; he might just go on with his job. But he is a man to watch."³⁶

The failure of the Nazis to solve the economic problems would be their undoing, Ewer predicted. He would not go so far as to prophesy collapse, but even Government spokesmen were warning of a hard winter ahead, and were calling for new self-sacrifice for the sake of the nation. He saw at least a chance for a revolution as Nazism decayed.³⁷ The Nazis' brutality and terror had been suffered by the Germans for nothing. After a year of Hitler there was no sign of regeneration or rebuilding. The economic situation was even more desperate than before. Nazism had revealed itself as "an instrument for subjecting the German people to the greedy will of the industrial barons and the agrarian Junkers." The S.A. having done its work was now being thrown aside and was told to find jobs if it could. If the storm troopers resisted or even protested the weapons which they used against others would be used against them. The

³⁶W. N. Ewer, "The Old Gang Still Rules in Germany," Daily Herald (London), May 29, 1934, p. 14.

³⁷Ibid., p. 14.



Reichswehr and the Stahlhelm would be only too happy to undertake the suppression of the Brownshirts and the Hitler Youth. The Daily Herald believed every sign suggested Germany was ". . heading straight for a military-financial dictatorship." However, it said, "bayonets cannot solve social and economic problems. A Reichswehr dictator must fail as Hitler has failed." ³⁸

The Blood Purge of June 30, 1934 surprised Labour only in its size and brutality. Labourites had long predicted a split in the Nazi ranks and had said the the S.A. would be discarded, but they had expected nothing of the scope that the purge turned out to be. Hitler had started something which in the end would bring his destruction, they said. The terror that had been started within the party would leave no member, including Hitler himself, secure. It was, Labour said, the beginning of the end for the Nazis. ³⁹ Behind the whole affair were the men of the old regime--the Junkers and the generals. Hitler had turned on his own followers to please this group and in doing so had sold himself for the sake of power. He was now completely dependent on them. He had been ". . .the tool of men who were equally unscrupulous but far more clever than he."

³⁸"Nazism in Decline," Daily Herald (London), June 12, 1934, p. 10.

³⁹"Heads in the Sand," Daily Herald (London), July 2, 1934, p. 8.



He and his followers had successfully destroyed freedom and democracy in Germany. The S.A. was, therefore, no longer of any use to the "old gang" and had been destroyed. Hitler would be retained until he had exhausted his usefulness and then he too would be pushed aside and probably shot.⁴⁰ Ewer reported Hitler suffered from an acute persecution complex and it was being used by the "Reichswehr Cabal" to clear out Hitler's own men who might be obstacles to them. Oskar von Hindenburg and Otto Meissner, the private secretary to every President since 1918, were members of this group. They were looking for someone to take Hitler's place. It probably would not be Goring, Goebbels, or Papen. Rudolf Hess, the Secretary of the Nazi Party, was the most likely dark horse candidate. There was no loyalty left among the Nazi leaders since the Blood Purge, Ewer said, so it would be no problem to divide them against one another. He would not be surprised, Ewer stated, within a short time to see Hess as acting Chancellor and a new purge under way. If so Goring, Goebbels, Robert Lay, and the rest of the top Nazis would go. Goebbels was the one possible exception as he had "a keen eye for the winning side."⁴¹

⁴⁰"Old Gang on Top," Daily Herald (London), July 3, 1934, p. 10.

⁴¹W. N. Ewer, "Hitler's Afraid of His Big Bad Nazis," Daily Herald (London), July 13, 1934, p. 15.



The day before President Hindenburg's death Hitler combined the offices of President and Chancellor. Hindenburg died August 2, 1934 and on August 19 a plebiscite was held in which Hitler's decision was confirmed by an overwhelming majority. Labour said this vote did not represent the true mind of Germany. The terror and coercion produced the large majority. However, it admitted, a free election would not have voted down Hitler. That might come, but not for awhile, Labour said. In the meantime Hitler's regime was strengthened by the move. But the regime was now Hitlerism not Nazism. National Socialism was dead and Hitler had survived it but at a heavy price. The old revolutionary Hitler was gone and was replaced by an "Ersatz-Hindenburg." He was doomed "reverently to wear the mantle of the old Field-Marshal, to carry out the policies of the old Field-Marshal." He would have to accept the superiority of the army, to recognize the authority of the aristocracy, and to prepare for the restoration of the monarchy.

Through the winter of 1934-35, the economic situation grew steadily worse in Germany according to Labour observers, and the British Socialists took great satisfaction in pointing to the inefficiency and failure of the Nazis in this area. In August 1934 there was already a shortage of potatoes and farmers

⁴²"Hitler's Doom," Daily Herald (London), August 20, 1934, p. 8.



were selling their animals as there was not enough fodder to keep them. A meat shortage was expected by winter.⁴³ Germany's inability to pay foreign debts, both political and trade, reflected the increasing chaos and poverty in Germany, Labour declared. Real wages had fallen in Germany since Hitler had come to power. The cost of living had risen from 117.4 in January 1933 to 122.9 in August 1934. Real wages had fallen about one percent. There was still a large number of unemployed and the number was artificially shrunk by not counting certain classes of unemployed.⁴⁴ The export trade which had been so large was by August 1934 in ruin. By February 1935, in spite of ever effort by Hjalmar Schacht, the Minister of Economics, the German exports had declined even more. They were less than one-third what they had been in 1929 when the Depression began. At the same time imports, which were held steady for a long time by tight restrictions, were increasing.⁴⁵

On the whole the German economy seemed very unhealthy

⁴³Ellen Wilkenson, "Berlin: What Next?" Daily Herald (London), August 10, 1934, p. 8.

⁴⁴"Fruits of Hitlerism," Daily Herald (London), August 31, 1934, p. 10.

⁴⁵"German Trade," Daily Herald (London), February 18, 1935, p. 10.

and chaotic, and growing worse not better. Labour still thought it would be this factor that would eventually bring down the Hitler Government.

The attempt by the Austrian Nazis to overthrow Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss' Government was obviously backed by the Hitler regime, Labour declared. Labour had no particular love for Dollfuss who had only the previous February broken the back of the Austrian Socialist by force, but it opposed vehemently any Nazi Government in Austria. It expressed deep sympathy for the Austrian people who were caught in the middle of this struggle.⁴⁶ The independence of Austria was a League problem and should not be left to Italy, France, or any other single country. The Treaty of St. Germain stated that the ". . . independence of Austria is inalienable otherwise than with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations." Labour demanded the nations act only through the League in settling this matter.⁴⁷

Labour welcomed Hitler's speech of August 6, 1934, in which he "preached the virtue of peace," because it helped to to ease tensions in a Europe which badly needed soothing words.

⁴⁶"In Tragic Vienna," Daily Herald (London), July 26, 1934, p. 8.

⁴⁷"Perils of Austria," Daily Herald (London), July 27, 1934, p. 8.

However, Labour was not sure it could completely trust Hitler's words, but said it was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt if he would back up his words with actions. It would like to see Germany stop exciting "terrorism and civil war" among her neighbors, and to really show his good intentions Hitler might release those he was holding in his concentration camps.⁴⁸ His continued talk of peace Labour found hard to reconcile with "the intensive militarist teaching in the schools and the military training of the young men throughout Germany." If Hitler really meant peace, Labour asked, why was he holding tens of thousands of Pacifists in prison for advocating peace? It found it ". . . strange that what is virtuous coming from the Fuehrer is criminal when uttered by an ordinary citizen."⁴⁹

The Saar plebiscite scheduled for January 13, 1935 occupied a great deal of Labour's attention during the fall and winter of 1934. Hitler, it believed, feared a heavy anti-Nazi vote there. There was much agitation led by Max Braun, the Socialist leader in the Saar, for a vote to remain under the League. The Socialists, Communists, Jews, and Catholics all had good reason to oppose a reunion with Nazi Germany. To-

⁴⁸"Now Prove It," Daily Herald (London), August 7, 1934, p. 8.

⁴⁹"Safe for Him," Daily Herald (London), September 13, 1934, p. 10.

gether they made up seventy percent of the population. Hitler's declaration that there was religious freedom in Germany while designed to win over the Catholics seemed to Labour to be having little effect.⁵⁰

The Labourites opposed vigorously the French suggestion that British troops take part in an occupation of the Saar both before and after the plebiscite. It was necessary that the vote in the Saar be a free choice, but the vote should be decisive, and the League Council should respect the wish of the majority. The idea that the territory should be kept from Germany no matter what the vote was would do nothing but lead to a new Franco-German war which would also drag in Britain.⁵¹

George Lansbury, the Labour Party leader, hurried to see Sir John Simon, the Foreign Secretary, to obtain his assurance that British troops would not be used in the Saar. Simon promised they would not and added that the French Government had promised that the arrangements it had made were purely precautionary, and that the German Government had given "a solemn assurance" there was no danger of an invasion of the Saar and reported the steps it had taken to insure that there would be none.⁵²

⁵⁰"Saar Opinion," Daily Herald (London), August 27, 1934, p. 8.

⁵¹"Saar Danger," Daily Herald (London), November 6, 1934, p. 12.

⁵²"Saar Pledges," Daily Herald (London), November 6, 1934, p. 10.

Labour supported whole-heartedly the suggestion that an international police be used to maintain peace in the Saar during the period of the plebiscite. Here was the perfect opportunity to demonstrate in miniature the whole basis of Labour's foreign policy philosophy--a League action using the collective system. This would prove, if given a chance, that world problems could be settled in a peaceful, orderly fashion if the two nations concerned were willing to accept "the common rule" and to subordinate their particular interest for the common good, and if the other nations were willing to fulfil "certain functions" and to accept "certain responsibilities."⁵³

Max Braun warned the readers of the Daily Herald the Saar must not become part of Germany again. He cited the fact that the Saar was dependent upon Lorraine for the sale of coal and as a source of iron ore for its industry. If the Saar became part of Germany the French would probably turn to other sources for their coal, while the Saar would have trouble selling coal in Germany as most industry in southern Germany ran on hydraulically produced electricity. France would not sell iron ore to Saar industries knowing it would be used for German armaments. Also France was not particularly anxious to take too much ore out of Lorraine as the deposits were believed to be good for

⁵³"It Can Be Done," Daily Herald (London), December 7, 1934, p. 10.

only sixty more years and so there was a desire on the part of the French to conserve as much as possible. More important than economic factors, he said, was the religious and political side. Many in the Saar were willing to renounce their Fatherland rather than forfeit their political and religious freedom. The Saar, Braun warned, was just the first step in Nazi foreign policy to bring all small neighbors under her influence. Switzerland, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, and Austria were also threatened. The Nazis were not motivated by a desire to rectify the injustices of the Versailles Treaty. They were driven by the old spirit of Pan-Germanism which sought to unite all German-speaking peoples, even against their wills, into one empire. For the peace of Europe, he concluded, the Saar must remain under the League of Nations.⁵⁴

Labour warned against loose talk in both Britain and France that the three British regiments moving through France to the Saar during December showed that the entente was still in being, that Britain still stood at the side of France, or that it was "just like 1914 again." It was nothing of the kind, Labour said. These soldiers were on an errand of peace not war. They showed Britain was playing her part in a system

⁵⁴Max Braun, "If the Saar Votes for Hitler," Daily Herald (London), December 21, 1934, p. 8.

of collective security. They were policemen of the League.

After the Saarlanders voted overwhelmingly to return to Germany, Labour said it had known all along this would happen. Now the transition to German rule must be made smoothly. Hitler must realize the eyes of the world would be upon him and his treatment of the minority in the Saar who opposed him would do much to determine future relations between Germany and the free nations. Hitler spoke of the settlement of the Saar question as being "a first and decisive step on the way to a gradual reconciliation." Labour hoped he and the other leaders of Europe would indeed take the subsequent steps, but immediately⁵⁶ not gradually.

Labour deplored the fact that the Saar settlement, which it believed had been handled so well, might be destroyed by last minute squabbling caused by France. France, it seemed, was raising new and trivial demands which could cause a great deal of bitterness. Labour urged the date be fixed immediately for handing the Saar back to Germany, and that it be done in a⁵⁷ spirit of good will.

⁵⁵"1934 Not 1914," Daily Herald (London), December 22, 1934, p. 8.

⁵⁶"The Saar Vote," Daily Herald (London), January 16, 1935, p. 8.

⁵⁷"Stop This Folly!" Daily Herald (London), January 17, 1935, p. 8.

At home Labour continued to worry over the fact that Britain seemed to be slipping further away from the concept of collective security through the League towards alliances, particularly with France. The issue arose over a visit by Louis Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, to Britain. Labour did not put too much faith in Baldwin's pledge that "the Government does not contemplate making any arrangement with France without consultation with the League with reference to mutual action in the event of hostilities breaking out in Europe." It believed "the publicity given to the intrigue. . . had for the moment, 'spoiled the game.'" But, Labour warned, the danger was still there.⁵⁸ Labour remained highly suspicious of the Government's actions. If it was not changing its foreign policy, Labour asked, why were the generals and diplomats holding secret discussions with the generals and diplomats of other countries. Labour thought "something was up" and called on the Government to make a full foreign policy statement in Parliament, clearing up such questions as what was its attitude towards the League, and its attitude towards suggestions of "close cooperation with other powers."⁵⁹

⁵⁸"So Far, So Good," Daily Herald (London), July 7, 1934, p. 10.

⁵⁹"No Secret Diplomacy," Daily Herald (London), July 10, 1934, p. 8.



As the talks with Barthou went on, Labour became increasingly uneasy. The Government, it felt, although the ministers did not admit it openly, was coming to look on the League as "an amiable but useless" organization "underserving of effort and irrelevant of reality." The French Government also, it feared, had the same attitude. Labour disliked the current talk of "regional pacts of mutual assistance" and of the "more vague, more dangerous assurances of loyal cooperation." It was said these were the only alternatives to a system of alliances, but Labour believed they could easily turn into just that with a "little secret diplomacy" and "a few military conversations." It went on to say again that the only workable system was that of "collective pooling of security under the League."⁶⁰

Baldwin in a speech supporting an increase in the air force said, "When you think of the defense of England you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover, you think of the Rhine." Labour was puzzled as to exactly what he meant by this. If he was speaking of Britain's obligations under the Locarno Pact, then why was it necessary to call for an increase in the air force or any armaments. One of the major facets of collective security was to make large armaments for single nations unnecessary. It seemed more logical to the Labourites

⁶⁰"League or Groups?" Daily Herald (London), July 11, 1934, p. 8.



that the Government had made a secret military agreement with France. The only circumstances under which the public would sanction cooperation with France, they declared, would be in defense "of world law under the League of Nations against an outlaw." The British people would not tolerate a secret alliance with France outside the League, they said.

Lord Davies, the President of the Commonwealth Society, in an article in the Daily Herald insisted an international police force was necessary and practical. The questions raised against it, such as who would command it, how would it be financed, of whom would it be constituted, were questions which had been resolved during the war. Was not what was possible in war possible in peace?, he asked. Why could the nations not organize to preserve peace, rather than organize to make war?

At the annual meetings of the T.U.C. in September 1934, and the Labour Party in October, the leaders of the party, the T.U.C., and the parliamentary party presented a statement, War and Peace, to the two gatherings. It stated the war-resistance resolution of the previous year, which call for a general strike in case of war, was not enough, as it did not include

⁶¹Lord Davies, "Security Without Arms," Daily Herald (London), August 16, 1934, p. 8.



Labour's policy of preventing war by organizing peace. The statement also included a reaffirmation of the party's faith in the League and the collective system. It made a distinction between the use of military force in a war of aggression and its use in defense of collective peace. It said,

Labour is emphatically opposed to any form of aggressive war, but we recognize that there might be circumstances under which the Government of Great Britain might have to use its military and naval forces in support of the League in restraining an aggressor nation which declined to submit to the authority of the League and which flagrantly used military measures in defiance of its pledged word.⁶²

Labour found the idea of using force unpleasant, but had to face the fact that the "final guarantee" of peace was the readiness to use force in the last resort against an aggressor. The true efficacy of the collective system lay in the "overwhelming probability" that no nation would dare risk facing the united forces of the whole world and would, therefore, refrain from committing aggression. There must be no doubt that the sanctions would be of a "crushing and irresistible character."⁶³

At the T.U.C. Convention there was a great deal of debate over the "abandonment" of the general strike. Those opposed to the resolution claimed it was a betrayal of the party's "hatred of war and determination to fight it." The supporters of it

⁶²Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 178.

⁶³"Peace and Force," Daily Herald (London), September 7, 1934, p. 10.



said it was not fair to put the burden of war-resistance completely on the trade unions. It was the duty of every citizen to try to keep his country out of war. The advocates of the general strike overlooked, those for the resolution said, that outside of three or four nations in Europe there were none capable of initiating an effective strike. British Labour could strike if it wished, but there was little likelihood that Britain would be an aggressor. The real danger spots in Europe were Germany, and because of its situation, Austria. Here general strikes were impossible. The idea of the general strike was not being abandoned, but as Ernest Bevin argued, each incident had to be judged on its own, and there should be no definite commitment on what Labour would do.⁶⁴

At the Labour Party Convention in October War and Peace, which had been accepted by the T.U.C. the month before, was presented for the approval of the delegates. Arthur Henderson introduced the report with a speech which was to be his last before that body.⁶⁵ He spoke mainly of the League, and emphasized the need for honoring all obligations to it. He stressed again his idea for an Act of Parliament which would make the renunciation of war "an essential part of the British

⁶⁴Daily Herald (London), September 7, 1934, p. 13.

⁶⁵Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 179.

Constitution." Britain would reject the right of making war as an instrument of national policy, and would agree to submit all disputes to some form of peaceful settlement. Labour's ultimate goal was a "collective world commonwealth." "Loyalty would in the future, under Labour rule, be to a world state through which the eventual abolition of armed forces would be secured." He believed the people of Britain should be citizens of the world before they were citizens of Great Britain. The Conference pledged the party to stand by the League in any war action taken against an aggressor. The Labour Party Conference supported the stand taken by the T.U.C. on the question of the general strike. The report stated that, "The responsibility for stopping war ought not be placed on the Trade Union movement alone. Every citizen who wants peace and every other section of the Labour Movement must share the responsibility of any organized action that might be taken to prevent war."⁶⁶ The main opposition came from members of the Socialist League. They attacked it on the grounds that it was useless to rely upon a League of capitalist-controlled countries and that Britain should encourage disarmament by example. The Conference accepted the War and Peace resolution by a vote of 1,519,000 to 673,000.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Daily Herald (London), October 3, 1934, p. 1.

⁶⁷Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 179. Hugh Dalton, The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931-1945 (London: Frederick Muller LTD, 1957), pp. 53-55.



In September 1934 the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations. This was something which Labour had long desired. It believed the Russians' entry and the closer cooperation of the United States offset the loss caused by Germany and Japan's withdrawal from the League.⁶⁸

Although Labour had long sought Soviet participation in the League, the previous March it rejected the first of several attempts by the British Communist Party to join with it in a "United Front" against fascism. On behalf of the Nation Executive of the Labour Party, Henderson wrote a letter to the Communist Party leader in which he turned down their request for united action on the grounds that the Communist Party did not believe in Parliamentary democracy and that Labour would weaken its principles by cooperating with an anti-democratic group.⁶⁹

Labour did its best to stop what it called "war-talk" or "panic-mongering." It accused all the European leaders of using such propaganda for their own ends. Hitler and Mussolini were dependent on such talk for their political lives. Fear of an enemy made their people accept the dictatorship for the sake

⁶⁸"Geneva's Future," Daily Herald (London), September 19, 1934, p. 10

⁶⁹Daily Herald (London), March 3, 1934, p. 13.



of national unity. The other governments also used it to promote their rearmament programs. The governments of France and Britain were faced with public opinion opposed to either the armaments themselves, the heavy expenditure of armaments, or both. To excuse their new, expensive programs, the leaders had to persuade the people that there was a real and grave danger of war. Labour feared the constant talk of war would make the coming of one easier.⁷⁰ The British Government was afraid, Labour maintained, to come right out and declare it was rearming. Public opinion would not allow it and it would quite likely topple the Government.⁷¹

The Government's drift away from the collective security principle became more obvious to Labour when Baldwin in a speech at Glasgow in November 1934 declared that, "a collective peace system, in my view, is perfectly impracticable to-day." This, coupled with an appeal in his talk for more armaments, as they were the only guarantee for security, disturbed Labour greatly.⁷² To make things even more troubled, word leaked out that France and the Soviet Union were about to conclude a military agreement

⁷⁰"This Mad War Talk," Daily Herald (London), November 12, 1934, p. 10.

⁷¹"The Panic Mongers," Daily Herald (London), November 28, 1934, p. 10.

⁷²"Peace and the League," Daily Herald (London), November 26, 1934, p. 10.



against Germany. Labour did not accept the argument that this was a war-preventing alliance. It believed Germany would seek a counter-entente and the world would be on its way to a repetition of 1914.⁷³

In late 1934 the famous Peace Ballot to gauge Britain's outlook in foreign affairs and particularly towards the League was undertaken with whole-hearted cooperation of Labour. This would demonstrate once and for all, it believed, where the public stood, and it was sure the people would support the Labour position in foreign policy. The Tories attacked the Ballot as "party politics of the lowest kind," but Labour dismissed their mud slinging efforts to discredit it on the ground it would completely disrupt their trend in foreign policy away from disarmament, arbitration, and collective security.⁷⁴

It was several months before the final results could be compiled, but Labour could see from even the partial results that the Ballot would be in its favor. The poll reached 11,500,000 persons, about half of the electorate. The wording of some of the questions has been criticized and the sampling was not as scientific as it might have been, but the answers

⁷³"Reviving Past Evils," Daily Herald (London), November 24, 1934, p. 10.

⁷⁴"Ballot for Peace," Daily Herald (London), November 13, 1934, p. 10.



because of their number provided a significant expression of public opinion. There was practically unanimity in favor of the League, of a disarmament agreement, of abolition of national military aircraft, and of prohibition of private manufacture of armaments. On the question concerning the League and collective security the vote was 11,157,040 in favor of membership, 357,460 against, and 113,256 abstained; for economic and nonmilitary sanctions through the League to stop aggression the vote was 10,088,312 for, 638,211 against, and 801,242 noncommittal; for the use of military measures, if necessary, 6,827,699 favored them, 2,364,279 opposed, and 2,435,789 abstained. The results appeared to confirm that the majority of the electorate favored Labour's foreign policy.⁷⁵

In the first months of 1935 the rearmament question again dominated Labour's thinking. W. N. Ewer, in a feature article in the Daily Herald, explored the entire question of German rearmament. The unilateral disarmament imposed by Versailles created a situation that could not possibly last. There were from the beginning only four possible ways out of it. Firstly, there could be a general disarmament to the Versailles level, as was "half-promised" in the Treaty. Secondly, the powers could forcibly make Germany observe the

⁷⁵Brand, The Labour Party, p. 180.



military clauses. Thirdly, there could be an agreement by the victorious powers either to free Germany to rearm like the rest of the nations, or that she and the other powers should be subject on equal footing to limitations. Finally, there could be a refusal by Germany to be bound any longer by either the Versailles or any other unilateral limitation. It became obvious soon after the war, Lwer said, that none of the powers had any intention to disarm to the Versailles level. The abortive occupation of the Ruhr by France and Belgium showed that the second method would not work. The failure of the Disarmament Conference ruled out the third method. This meant that the only alternative open to Germany was the fourth--which she was beginning to follow. Lwer answered the argument that Germany under the Nazis was different than other nations as shown by her brutal treatment of her minorities, by saying the two points were unrelated. Just because a nation mistreated its minorities did not mean it was about to attack its neighbor. He admitted there was something to the argument that Germany was more dangerous because it was a nation with "lost provinces," but even here, he said, there were many nations with lost territory which did not use force to regain it.

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76W. K. Lwer, "Face These War Scare Facts--wisely," Daily Herald (London), December 3, 1934, p. 10.

Labour called upon Germany to "tear away the veil of secrecy" surrounding her military preparations. Secrecy⁷⁷ breeds suspicion and suspicion breeds fear, it said.

In early February 1935 an Anglo-French meeting was held in London to try to decide what to do about Germany's rearming. Labour pleaded with the Conference not to lose what might be the last good chance to reach an agreement with the Germans. Germany, it said, should be negotiated with as an equal and⁷⁸ not have terms dictated to her. The talks resulted as Labour wished. There was no Anglo-French plan which was presented to Germany in a "take-it-or-leave-it" manner. Rather Germany was invited to take part in conversations designed to reach a "general settlement freely negotiated." Labour was cautiously optimistic that Germany might accept the invitation and an agreement might at long last be reached.⁷⁹ The next day the German press stated it "definitely regards the London proposals as a basis for negotiations." While this was not an official reply, Labour believed it reflected the thinking of

⁷⁷"Veil of Secrecy," Daily Herald (London), January 3, 1935, p. 8.

⁷⁸"To-day's Talks," Daily Herald (London), February 1, 1935, p. 10.

⁷⁹"Opening the Door," Daily Herald (London), February 4, 1935, p. 10.

the German Government. Now, Labour urged, Britain and France must have patience while Germany studied the proposals. The negotiations could take several months, it warned. It cautioned the French Right Wing press not to try to undermine the negotiation expecting that their failure would result in an Anglo-French air convention. The British people, it said, would not stand for a conversion of the proposed air convention, which was to be a part of the collective security system, to a "one-sided alliance."⁸⁰

The German answer seemed to open the way for negotiations, especially on the question of the air convention. However, between the time of the London meeting and the German answer, the French appeared to be shifting their position on the suggested procedure and Labour hoped this "embarrassing situation"⁸¹ would not ruin the chances for an agreement.

On March 4, 1935 Prime Minister MacDonald presented in the form of a White Paper the Government's apology for rearmament. He argued that more armaments were needed to "preserve peace, to maintain security and to deter aggression." Labour said it would do nothing of the kind. It repeated its position

⁸⁰"So Far, So Good," Daily Herald (London), February 5, 1935, p. 8.

⁸¹"German Answer," Daily Herald (London), February 16, 1935, p. 10.

that a new arms race would bring no security or peace, only
⁸²
 fear and war.

The main effect of the White Paper, Labour claimed, was to "complicate the diplomatic situation, to make the coming conversations more difficult, and the chances of their success more remote." The comments on it in the British conservative press, Labour said, could do nothing but arouse German resentment. The Paper was described by the Tory's press as a "stern word" and a "warning" to Germany. She was accused of "treaty breaking" of "aggravating" the situation and of tending to "produce a situation where peace may be in peril." No matter what their views, such statements on the eve of a visit to Berlin by the Foreign Secretary and the coming negotiations was a serious blunder in tact. Now the first step of
⁸³
 the diplomats must be to undo the harm that was done.

Hitler's announcement on March 16 that Germany no longer considered herself bound by the military restrictions of Versailles came as no surprise to Labour. This was something, it said, it had expected and warned of for a long time. The armament race had been on for some time, but now, in March 1935,

⁸²"New Arms Race," Daily Herald (London), March 5, 1935, p. 10.

⁸³"Premier's Bad Error," Daily Herald (London), March 6, 1935, p. 10.

the masks were coming off everywhere. The British White Paper gave Hitler the pretext he needed, but the French decision to double the term of military service, the Russian increase in her army from 400,000 to 900,000 men, Mussolini's boast that if necessary he could put 8,000,000 men in the field, all played their parts. Germany must, henceforth, be considered again a fully armed great power. However, Labour said it was no time for panic. The fact that the Versailles system--the attempt to insure security and peace by keeping one European Power in a condition of military inferiority to the rest--had broken down. It could only be restored by another war. Now there was only two possible steps. Either the nations of Europe could step up the arms race to try to keep ahead of each other, which would lead only to bankruptcy and to war, or they could start over in an attempt to secure disarmament. "Sanity can turn it [Hitler's declaration] from a great disaster into a great opportunity." "Hitler's declaration should be taken as a challenge not to further rearmament, but to a new and serious effort to secure all-round disarmament."

⁸⁴"Give Peace a Fresh Start," Daily Herald (London), March 18, 1935, p. 10.

CHAPTER VI

OLD PRINCIPLES SHAKEN

The renunciation of the military clauses of Versailles by Hitler disturbed Labour not because it objected to the result, it had long favored doing away with such sections of the Versailles Treaty, but because it was done unilaterally by Germany without the consent of the other nations or the League. Labour hoped some good would come from this action. It might very well clear the way for an arms settlement now that a major stumbling block had been removed and now that Germany had the "equality of status" she had so long sought. Europe must recognize Germany's full equality without reservations. Germany must take her place in the "comity of nations" without arrogance, but with a readiness to "contribute generously to the common task." If this were done then there should be no reason why an effective peace system could not be built.¹ Germany's return to the League was fundamental to the whole peace structure of Europe, Labour insisted. However, if Germany refused to return, the League had to go on without her, even at the risk of appearing against her.² Because Labour believed Germany had to be

¹"Past or Future," Daily Herald (London), March 22, 1935, p. 12.

²"Note to Berlin," Daily Herald (London), March 19, 1935, p. 10.

given every encouragement to return to the League, it opposed France's efforts to raise the question of German rearmament at Geneva. France's sole purpose in this, Labour claimed,³ was to make it more difficult for Germany to return.

By late March 1935 with the purpose of the Stresa meeting (scheduled for early April) still unknown, Labour urged the Government to use this meeting to make clear to the rest of Europe that Britain stood completely behind the League, and was ready within the League's framework to undertake security commitments and to give guarantees of mutual aid wherever European peace was threatened.⁴ As the Stresa meeting got underway, it appeared to Labour that British foreign policy was now once again on the right path--a return to Geneva through Stresa. The meeting between France, Italy, and Britain would not produce a three-power pact, Labour hoped, but rather these three nations would work out a scheme to strengthen the collective security machinery of the League.⁵ Much of Labour's optimism about the change in the Government's attitude towards the League was based on a speech by Baldwin

³"The Main Purpose," Daily Herald (London), March 21, 1935, p. 10.

⁴"Stand by the League," Daily Herald (London), March 29, 1935, p. 12.

⁵"Stresa to Geneva," Daily Herald (London), April 8, 1935, p. 10.

in which he reversed his position on collective security as stated the previous November in his Glasgow speech. In that speech he had declared the collective security system was "impracticable." In April at Llandrindod Wells he said, "As one who has been studying and working on this question through many years, I am driven to the conclusion that the last way we have of ensuring peace is by some means of collective security, and to that end, inside the League of Nations, the whole of Europe must get together to devise the means by which this great end can be achieved."

At first glance, it appeared to Labour that Stresa had accomplished something positive. It did call for "creating an impregnable system of collective defense. . ." in which ". . .Germany will be invited to take part freely and equally." The recognition of Germany's equality was the first step to a collective peace system. Labour congratulated the Government for its role in securing the decision to do this. However, Labour wondered, what should the rest of Europe do if Germany refused the invitation? It urged the other nations to go on without her, for not to do so would be giving Germany a veto over all security measures. This, Labour said, was "equality

⁶"Britain and Stresa," Daily Herald (London), April 11, 1935, p. 10.

run mad." On the other hand, just because Germany chose not to join in a security pact, the other nations were not justified in undertaking anti-German measures.⁷

Labour believed Europe would regret one of the decisions reached at Stresa. This was the one to ask the League Council to study the question of applying penalties to States which violated or repudiated treaty obligations. This, Labour said, was obviously directed at Germany and was an attempt to prevent further "whittling away" of the Versailles system without the consent of the victorious powers. The League, it said, was created to enforce peace not to enforce treaties. The League only had power to impose penalties for one crime--"making war in violation of Covenants." The League had no power or right to take any action against a state which did not overstep that line. The problem in expanding the League's power to enforce treaties would be that it would apply to all countries and all treaties. This would bring a revolutionary change in the whole structure of international law and would push the concept of collective security far beyond its original intent. It would also call for machinery for revision of treaties as the League must have that power if it would be expected to fairly enforce

⁷"Equality for All," Daily Herald (London), April 13, 1935, p. 10.

them. Labour certainly did not oppose such developments in the power of the League, but it did not believe the Government favored such a plan and so it wished to make the implications clear as it believed the Government did not fully understand what it had proposed. Once such a reform of the League had been begun, Labour said, it would have to be carried to the end. It could not just be directed against Germany by enforcing⁸ only Versailles.

The events at the League Council meeting in April crushed Labour's hopes that the Stresa decisions would bring Germany back to the League. The "three Stresa Powers" presented a resolution formally condemning Germany's unilateral breach of the Versailles military clauses, and the Council passed it. This virtually destroyed any chance of Germany's return, although the door was still technically open. Labour warned against two possible results of Stresa. Germany's decision to remain aloof from the League could not be allowed to prevent the rest of the world from continuing to build up a collective system. Secondly, the security system must not be allowed to degenerate into a mere system of anti-German coalitions or into a "holy alliance" system in which the Stresa powers would use

⁸"Geneva's Problem," Daily Herald (London), April 15 1935, p. 10.



Germany's actions to establish a joint dictatorship over European affairs. Any security system had to be kept under the control of the League as a whole, it declared.⁹

By the end of April Labour had come to look on Stresa and the League Council meeting as a turning point in the European system and Britain's foreign policy. It was now clear, Lwer said, that a rival policy to the pre-Stresa policy of a "general settlement" by "free negotiations" was being advocated in Britain, as well as France, Italy, and Russia. The basis of this new policy was the assumption that there was no point in trying to negotiate with Hitler's Germany. He would never make an agreement, or if he did, keep it. He was planning and preparing for an aggressive war and the only wise course was to build, as rapidly as possible, a series of barrier treaties, supported by adequate armaments. A Triple Entente came out of Stresa. Britain had gone there with its policy still based on the League, and returned with it based on the new Entente aiming at consolidation of all possible forces against the "German danger." At Geneva this new Entente was seen in action. The three powers worked together in promoting each other's interests. Further evidence that there was some defense agreement was found in the fact that since Stresa French enthusiasm

⁹"Germany's Next Step," Daily Herald (London), April 18, 1935, p. 8.

for an Eastern Pact had declined. If France could count on British and Italian aid, her need for Russian help lessened. Ewer saw it not only as a Triple Entente against Germany, but also as an attempt to replace the League with Mussolini's idea of a junta of big powers which would dictate European policy. The plan, Ewer said, was unworkable in the long run, but its effects could be very harmful. It would drive Germany farther into a dangerous isolation, it would weaken the League,¹⁰ and it would produce a great deal of insecurity in Europe.

Labour welcomed the Franco-Soviet Treaty of mutual assistance against aggression which was signed in May 1935. It was within the framework of the League, and invited all nations, including Germany to join it. It made war less likely, Labour said, ". . .by the simple but essential process of increasing the forces which will be thrown against aggression." These forces could not be created "out of nowhere." Each nation had to make its contribution. Labour called on the British Government to follow the lead of France and Russia by declaring what contribution it was willing to make to keep the peace. No use of force by the League would really be effective without British¹¹ participation, Labour warned.

¹⁰W. N. Ewer, "Drifting into a New Triple Entente," Daily Herald (London), April 24, 1935, p. 8.

¹¹"A Peace Pact," Daily Herald (London), May 6, 1935, p. 10.

The Labourites believed that in light of the Franco-Soviet and the Czecho-Soviet Treaties of Mutual Assistance which were drawn up in May 1935 along with the Franco-Polish and Franco-Czech Treaties of Alliance, Germany would have to join in new talks. The "Eastern Pact" which Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Baltic States and the Soviet Union "all seemed inclined to join," was one of "non-aggression and non-assistance." The non-aggression pledge added little to the pledges already taken under the Covenant and the Kollogg Pact, but the pledge not to aid an aggressor under any circumstances was a valuable supplement to the Covenant. However, Labour deplored the fact it was to be a regional pact. It could see some validity to the arguments for regionalism when a pledge of military assistance was involved, but in the Eastern Pact there was no military commitments. Therefore, there was no reason why it should be restricted and should not include all of Europe or the rest of the world.¹²

By May 1935 it seemed there was going to be serious trouble over Italy's ambitions in Ethiopia and it was going to involve the League. It appeared, Labour said, because the Abyssinian question was not brought up at Stresa that Mussolini believed this implied that Britain and France were prepared to

¹²"Europe's Next Step," Daily Herald (London), May 18, 1935, p. 10.

give him a free hand in Africa. It also appeared that he figured the League would back down in the face of an Italian threat to resign. Labour warned Mussolini he had miscalculated on both counts. The British in no way condoned his plans for Abyssinia, nor would it be possible for the League to back down. An Italian withdrawal, it admitted, would weaken the League, but failure to act would destroy it. Labour said that if Italy did proceed it was "unthinkable" that Britain would not carry out her obligations to the League.¹³

By July 1935 the Italians and the French were expressing dismay respectively over the British opposition to Italy's ambitions in Abyssinia and the Anglo-German naval agreement,¹⁴ in the light of the Stresa agreement. Both accused Britain of bad faith in breaking away from the "Stresa Front." The problem was, the British Socialists said, that France and Italy viewed the Stresa front as something very close to a military and diplomatic alliance. They were angered when they discovered Britain did not. This resulted from the fact they both went into the Conference knowing for what they were aiming, while Britain, as usual, did not. They believed MacDonald and Simon

¹³"A Word to the Duce," Daily Herald (London), May 24, 1935, p. 10.

¹⁴The Anglo-German Naval Agreement will be discussed later in this chapter.

were talking about the same thing they were when they spoke of the "supreme importance of Anglo-Franco-Italian solidarity." When MacDonald assured the British people upon his return he had made no new commitments, the others regarded this as referring only to binding legal commitments to go to war in defined circumstances. "They believed that morally the British delegates had committed themselves to solidarity, to a united front, to whole-hearted support of French and Italian diplomacy, to a policy of approving any action which Rome or Paris might take." They believed after Stresa this would be the dominate British policy. Labour warned that Britain could not continue to fluctuate between Stresa and the League, between a Triple Entente and collective security. It also warned against the new attempt to define "collective security" as "a network of pacts and ententes in which the Covenant is an unimportant item." "Mutual assistance" and "Regional Pacts" were just new phrases to cover what in reality was the old system of alliances. Britain had to choose immediately which course it wished to follow. If it were interested in maintaining world peace, the course would have to be through the League, as the "'spirit of Stresa' is the antithesis and the negation of the 'spirit of the Covenant.'" ¹⁵

¹⁵W. N. Ewer, "Not-So-Quiet on the Stresa Front," Daily Herald (London), July 10, 1935, p. 15.

In his first speech as Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare declared the Government's loyalty to the League and its principles. Labour, however, was not satisfied. It demanded that the Government do more than just pay lip-service to the League. Why, it asked, in the light of the Italian threat to Abyssinia, was the Government not trying to organize collective security through the League to preserve peace? Instead Hoare was admitting the "need for Italian expansion" and spoke about the possibility of invoking the 1906 Treaty, which would have divided Ethiopia into spheres of economic influence.¹⁶

In September Hoare made what Labour declared to be "the most momentous speech ever delivered at Geneva." In it he proclaimed Britain was ready to fulfill her "collective obligations in defense of the League." This covered not only Abyssinia, Hoare made clear, but any case of aggression upon any member of the League. The French Government announced that "loyalty to the League is the supreme principle of its foreign policy."¹⁷

Labour at the same time was embarrassed by a split over

¹⁶"Loyal to the League," Daily Herald (London), July 12, 1935, p. 10.

¹⁷"Crisis at Geneva," Daily Herald (London), September 11, 1935, p. 8.

foreign policy within the party ranks. In spite of the fact the Trade Union Congress in September 1935 approved the policy of collective security "in the full knowledge of all that it entails" by a vote of 2,962,000 to 177,000, a minority of the party opposed action through the League. Labour hoped to make it clear that this minority was very small and certainly did not reflect the attitude of the vast majority of the Labour Party, the T.U.C. or the British people in general. The dissenting group was made up of two factions. The first, the Pacifists, opposed the use of force under any circumstance. Labour warned them the choice was not between "the use of force or the avoidance of it, but between the use of force to destroy law and commit a crime, and the use of force to uphold the law and prevent a crime." To the other faction which opposed the League on the grounds that its actions were "capitalistic and imperialistic," Labour answered that if the purposes of capitalism and imperialism were to "preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of one of the weakest and most helpless League members" then these forces deserved less "denunciation than we believed."

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A number of important Labour leaders broke with the

¹⁸Ibid., p. 8.

party over this issue. These included George Lansbury, Sir Stafford Cripps, and Lord Ponsonby. The latter two resigned their positions on the National Council of Labour but did not leave the party. Labour told the "anti-Labour Press" that its attempt to make the difference within the party seem a serious split was misleading. There was always room within the party for "free and open discussion," but it pointed out the Margate declaration fully supporting collective security passed by an overwhelming majority at the Trade Union Congress in September 1935 and represented the true feeling of Labour.

In early October 1935 at the Labour Party Conference held at Brighton, the supporters of the League had their showdown with the Pacifists. The foreign policy resolution provoked a long debate between the two groups. The League supporters accused the Socialist League and the ultra-Pacifists of joining the British Fascists and the Independent Labour Party in taking the side of international anarchism. They all opposed for various reasons an effective world law and government. They likened the enforcement of collective sanctions in international affairs to supporting the police at home. "To refuse sanctions is to disperse the police force and hand the

¹⁹"Currents of Opinion," Daily Herald (London), September 20, 1935, p. 10.

world over to criminals."²⁰ Labour admitted the debate at the Conference injured the party. It made it appear, it claimed, to the electors that Labour was less loyal to Britain's League obligations than was the Government. The one point that saved Labour's reputation was that the National Council of Labour had not waived from the beginning to the end in its support of the League, so much so that Cripps and Ponsonby felt obliged to resign from it.²¹ The resolution passed 2,168,000 to 102,000. This, Labour said, established once and for all where it stood on foreign policy--the only method of preventing war was a world combination against aggression.²²

Throughout 1935 and early 1936 the British Communist Party tried twice to win the approval of the Labour Party for a "United Front" against Fascism. At the 1935 Trade Union Congress a resolution to this effect was rejected. The Congress agreed that it opposed both Fascism and war, but this negative agreement was not enough. The two parties were poles apart on the question of democratic government, and this fundamental

²⁰"Is It Law or Anarchy?" Daily Herald (London), October 1, 1935, p. 10. Dalton, The Fateful Years, pp. 65-69.

²¹"Labour and Sanctions," Daily Herald (London), October 2, 1935, p. 10. Eric Estorick, Stafford Cripps: Master Statesman (New York: The John Day Company, 1949), pp. 123-127.

²²"The Basis of Peace," Daily Herald (London), October 3, p. 10.

difference made an agreement impossible.²³ In January 1936 Labour rejected another Communist proposal for cooperation. It attacked the Communist leaders as "fickle, underhanded and unashamedly opportunists." For fourteen years before 1934 the Communists had attacked the League, the Parliamentary system, democracy and the Labour Party and its brand of Socialism. Now, Labour said, the Communists wished to join in the ranks of "the defenders of democracy." Labour questioned the value of uniting with such "hysterical muddlers incapable of taking a consistant line." Even if the Communists were sincere in their wishes to cooperate with Labour the fundamental difference remained. They were still revolutionaries advocating the establishment of a class dictatorship, and as such they had no place in the Labour Party.²⁴

In October 1935 Baldwin became head of the Government and immediately dissolved Parliament and set the new general election for November 14. Labour had a great deal of optimism about its chances for gaining a large number of seats if not a majority. The National Government had a very poor record in domestic affairs and so it hoped to win votes by adopting the

²³"United Front," Daily Herald (London), September 5, 1935, p. 8.

²⁴"United Front," Daily Herald (London), January 24, 1936, p. 10.



Labour Party's role of appearing as the champion of the League, it charged. Public opinion was naturally directed to foreign²⁵ relations at this time because of the Abyssinian crisis.

The Peace Ballot of the previous spring had proven to the Government that the British people supported Labour's position on foreign policy. Labour warned the voters that the National Government was just a resent convert to support of the League--if a convert at all. It pointed to the Government's poor record of working with and through the League during the previous four years. Even at the present time, it said, there was a large number of Government supporters who were openly hostile to the League. It was very much afraid that after the election the Government would revert to its old ways of ignor-²⁶ing and weakening the League.

Labour made foreign policy its number one campaign issue in its election manifesto, a Programme of Peace and Social Reconstruction. It put forth its usual stand, calling for a firm collective peace system; an end to the war in Abyssinia; to be followed by renewed negotiations for all-round disarmament. It promised to maintain "such defense forces as are necessary and consistent with our membership in the League."

²⁵Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 184.

²⁶"Back to Simon," Daily Herald (London), October 22, 1935, p. 10.

The best defense, it said, was not through heavy increases in armaments, but in organization of collective security and arms reduction. It proposed that all nations negotiate a complete abolition of air forces, effective international control of civil aviation, and the creation of an international air police force. It wanted the abolition of private arms manufacturing and private trade in arms. Labour, also, promised to seek to prevent wars by removing economic causes through "equitable arrangements for the international control of sources of supply of raw materials, and for the extension of the mandate system for colonial territories."²⁷

The result of the election was disappointing to Labour. It had expected if not to win control of the Government, at least to put itself in a position to make its influence felt in Commons. Although it increased its members by about one hundred over its 1931 representation of 52, it was still in the minority by 247 seats even with the rest of the opposition. Actually these figures did not give a true picture of the election which was, in fact, much closer. The Government received approximately 11,500,000 votes to slightly under

²⁷"Labour Party Election Manifesto," Daily Herald (London), October 26, 1935, p. 1.

10,000,000 for the opposition, of which Labour got 8,325,260. The system of territorial constituencies made the Government victory seem greater than it was. Each Government seat represented 27,102 votes, while each Labour seat represented²⁸ 54,060.

With the election over, it did not take the Government long to begin to move away from the League in the eyes of Labour. The leak of the Hoare-Laval agreement in December made it plain the Government was not conducting its foreign policy through the League in the face of the Italian aggression. Labour claimed the Government had in the matter of a few hours "betrayed the League and Abyssinia, and the British name, and the British people." It demanded the Government "drop and abandon completely and forever the Hoare-Laval plan." Labour insisted the Government return to supporting League action and cooperate with it in setting up an effective sanc-²⁹ tion plan which would force Mussolini to give up his aggressions.

Throughout the rest of the year and until the fall of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, in May, 1936, Labour continued its fruitless attempts to get the Government and the League to impose meaningful sanctions on Italy by stopping

²⁸Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 184.

²⁹"It Must Not Pass," Daily Herald (London), December 12, 1935, p. 10.

important war materials such as oil and steel. In June the Government announced it was abandoning all sanctions against Italy and Labour devoted Sunday June 23 to a giant protest rally in Hyde Park, and the Parliamentary Party denounced the Government's actions in Commons.³⁰ The League had been discredited and weakened by the Abyssinian affair, but Labour was not yet ready to abandon its foreign policy of action through the League.

Labour's main interest in relation to Germany itself between March 1935 and March 1936 was with regard to Germany's rearmament program and its effect on Britain's program.

Labour tried to talk down the "scare-mongering" which it believed was part of the campaign of the British and other European governments to justify their rearmament programs. War, it said, was not imminent nor inevitable. There were fewer causes for war in Europe in the spring of 1935 than at any time since 1919. The war talk besides being untrue was very dangerous. It was creating in Europe a feeling of panic and was turning men from seeking peaceful solution to preparing for war.³¹ "Europe is scaring itself into danger," Labour claimed.

³⁰Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 195.

³¹"Poisonous War Talk," Daily Herald (London), April 23, 1935, p. 8.

At the end of April 1935 Germany announced she was going to build submarines. Labour, although disapproving this move, stated it was Germany's right as an equal power in the world community. Those who denounced Germany's action did so in terms that suggested they wished to perpetuate the Versailles system. This system was dying and Labour urged patience during the phase of "dangers and strains and fears." It admitted Germany's methods made it difficult for those groups in Britain who supported her equality, but Labour would not let this drive it into the position of defending the Versailles system. As the system died the precarious security which it provided would vanish and would have to be replaced, preferably by the system of collective security under the League.³²

Labour found continual hope in Hitler's peace speeches. In May 1935 Hitler stated his position on settling Europe's problems and Labour urged the Government not to reject them without very careful consideration. The speech could well be the first step to new negotiations. Hitler had declared that Germany, while insisting that the door be left open for revision, accepted the territorial settlement of Versailles, unless changed by agreement. He would adhere to the Locarno

³²"Germany and Britain," Daily Herald (London), April 30, 1935, p. 10.

Treaties "including her acceptance of the 'onerous burden' of keeping the Rhineland demilitarized as a contribution to European peace." He also offered to make treaties of non-aggression with his neighbors and of non-assistance to an aggressor. Labour found his conditions for return to the League as "not insurmountable." It believed his offer to disarm at the same rate and in the same quality as the other nations was a useful step towards a new disarmament conference, as was his offer to limit the Germany navy to thirty-five percent of the British navy, which would also leave it inferior to the French navy. The only weakness in his plans was that they excluded Russia. This was a serious gap which would have to be overcome if there was to be real peace. On the whole, however, Labour found Hitler's proposals encouraging.

Labour criticized the Government's reply to Hitler's speech that it would give it "serious consideration" as too vague. The British people wanted to know precisely what the Government was going to do about his offers, it said. It also regretted the timing of the Government's announcement that the air force was to be trebled as rapidly as possible. This seemed to Labour a comment on Hitler's speech and threatened to nullify his offer

³³"Hitler's Speech," Daily Herald (London), May 22, 1935, p. 10.

for disarmament and to give impetus to the arms race.³⁴

Labour could not understand the Government's position on rearmament and particularly on an air pact. Labour's first objection was that the proposed pacts were not based on the League and in fact were designed to operate completely outside of it. Secondly, they were based on the assumption some air force had to be retained. Labour asked why? Why not abolish all military aircraft or at least all bombers? Hitler had offered to abolish them if the other governments would also. The main obstacle was the British Government. By the Peace Ballot, of which the results were almost complete at this time in the spring of 1935, it appeared the British people favored nearly six to one the abolition of all military aircraft. In light of this, Labour could not understand the Government's reluctance to go ahead with some plan to end the threat of air warfare.³⁵

The Anglo-German naval talks in June 1935 brought real hope to Labour that at last some steps were being made towards an arms agreement with Germany. It was willing to accept even an informal understanding until a new naval convention could

³⁴"Reply to Hitler," Daily Herald (London), May 23, 1935, p. 10.

³⁵"Outlaw the Bomber," Daily Herald (London), June 1, 1935, p. 10.

work out a solution to the naval restrictions of Versailles. Hitler, it said, had made "a notable contribution to the cause of armament limitation." His voluntary agreement to restrict the new German fleet to thirty-five percent of the British fleet would rule out a renewal of the Anglo-German naval race of the pre-1914 period. It should also increase the chances of bringing France and Italy into a new naval limitation agreement to replace the expiring treaties.³⁶ When the results of the agreement were known, Labour was generally pleased. Criticism of it on legalistic grounds was easy and was certain to come from some quarters, but the essential thing was not the agreement itself, but the fact Hitler voluntarily and unilaterally agreed to keep his fleet within certain limits. Germany had done her part, while renouncing the Versailles limitations, she had accepted a new limitation, Labour said. It was now up to the other powers to do their part in eliminating competitive shipbuilding as a cause of European insecurity.³⁷

Labour's attitude soon changed about the peace contribution the treaty made. As it quickly became evident the treaty was not going to bring further disarmament, Labour

³⁶"The Navy Talks," Daily Herald (London), June 4, 1935, p. 10.

³⁷"The Naval Pact," Daily Herald (London), June 19, 1935, p. 10.

became convinced the treaty was causing uneasiness and fear among the other nations of Europe that Britain's policy was to strengthen Germany as a balance against Franco-Soviet influence, to avert naval competition with Germany, to avoid a struggle over colonies by giving Germany a free hand in the East, and to encourage German and Japanese aggression against Russia. By October 1935, at its annual convention, the Labour Party branded the treaty as "a further step in the disintegration of the collective peace system of Europe."³⁸

In late June 1935 Labour set down its attitude for relations with Germany to clear up the misunderstandings and misrepresentations of its policy. It said, "That there can be neither condonation nor palliation of the brutalities of Nazism is self-evident. But those who would deduce from this that Nazi Germany should be treated as a parish nation, as a public enemy in the comity of nations, are surely allowing feeling to destroy judgment." If this were applied to Germany it would have to be applied to all dictatorships and international anarchy would result. To the argument that Germany should be treated as a menace to civilization because of her leaders'

³⁸ Elaine Windrich, British Labour's Foreign Policy (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1952), p. 127. Miss Windrich in her account neglects to show Labour's initial favorable reaction to the Treaty and gives the impression that Labour vigorously opposed it from the beginning.

glorification of war and their philosophy of aggression, and that no concessions could be made to her least it increase her strength, Labour answered that a system of repression of one nation could not lead to lasting peace and would "aggravate the very evils and dangers it professes to cure." The two principles which Labour proposed to use in guiding its relations with Germany, as with any other nation, was firstly, to insure that Germany or any other state would not be able to make war without having to face the united forces of the rest of the world, and secondly, to treat her while she kept the peace, with "perfect justice: to remove the last vestiges of inequality which goads her: to give equitable remedy to her every reasonable grievance."³⁹

By January 1936, while contending that the Government's new armaments program would be too costly, Labour admitted that it was not unconditionally opposed to any increase at any time. However, its main reason for opposing the arms estimates was not the estimate itself, but the foreign policy that made it necessary. This policy was leading to increasing arms competition and not to peace. Under the collective security system there might be times, Labour admitted, when it would be necessary for Britain to increase her arms in order to carry

³⁹"Germany," Daily Herald (London), June 28, 1935, p. 10.

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out her part in enforcing peace. However, three things were necessary before Labour would give its complete support. Firstly, there must be evidence the collective system really needed strengthening. Secondly, a demonstration of League loyalty by a British initiative to extend sanctions. Thirdly, a straight declaration that Britain would work for world disarmament as soon as the collective system was "vindicated" by the restoration of peace.⁴⁰

In a speech on the third anniversary of the Nazi takeover, Hitler spoke again of Germany's desire for a "basis for real peace. . .so long as her honor is not slighted." Labour replied that there could be no peace as long as Germany remained outside the "general system of co-operation and of collective security." It contended that Germany no longer had reason to feel inferior in status to other great powers. Hitler said the territorial settlement of Versailles could stand but the "moral humiliation" of it had to be removed. Labour assured Germany that the British people and Government were ready to "do anything possible to remove any 'moral humiliation' which Germany may still feel and to secure her

⁴⁰"New Arms Programme," Daily Herald (London), January 30, 1936, p. 10.

that equality of status to which she is entitled." Labour also believed the other European countries, including France, were willing to "heal those wounds of Versailles." However, it asked that Hitler be more specific as to just what was necessary for the "vindication of Germany's international honor. . . ." It also asked that Hitler make a contribution to peace. It complained he always spoke of a settlement in the West and never the East. It was the east of Europe which was the most unrestful and as long as the Nazis maintained their program of eastward expansion there could be no real peace in Europe.⁴¹

A meeting was scheduled in the first week of March 1936 of the League Committee which had been studying the question of imposing new sanctions on Italy. Labour hoped that at long last effective sanction might be brought against Mussolini. Unfortunately the meeting was threatened with disruption by France. It was rumored France feared some German move in the Rhineland in response to the Franco-Soviet Pact of the previous May, and was unwilling to further alienate Italy in the face of this new danger. Labour abhorred this as it believed it would greatly weaken the League. The League's actions in the Abyssinian war must not be interfered with by the threat of trouble elsewhere, Labour said. The nations of the League

⁴¹"A Word to Hitler," Daily Herald (London), January 31, 1936, p. 10.

would destroy it, Labour warned, if they sought to subordinate its actions to their own particular interests and national policies.⁴²

When, on March 7, Hitler did reoccupy the Rhineland militarily, Labour cautioned that the crisis had to be handled with care to avoid war. It dismissed the German contention that the Locarno Treaty had already been broken by the Franco-Soviet Pact. This, Labour said, was a complicated legal question, but hardly convincing. Nevertheless, Germany's other argument that one-sided demilitarization was "unfair, intolerable, and grossly in contradiction to the solemn promise of 'equality of status' given in 1932" carried much weight. It was too much to expect, Labour asserted, that Germany would be content to accept a system which left her richest and most vital industrial areas undefended, while France was able to line her side of the "common frontier with aerodromes and forts and garrisons." This was not equality of status, Labour argued. This did not, however, justify the violation of the treaty in such a manner. The debates over which country was right was useless now. The fact was that a Germany army was in the Rhineland and what was Europe going to do about it? There were really only two possibilities, Labour believed. The first

⁴²"Confusing the Issues," Daily Herald (London), February 29, 1936, p. 10.

was to take advantage of the opportunity offered by Hitler for negotiating a new Locarno, a series of Eastern non-aggression pacts and a return of Germany to the League. The other choice was to go to war with Germany to force her out of the Rhineland. The idea of imposing sanctions through the League was out of the question since Germany had not "had recourse to war." Negotiations were the only solution, as the British people, Labour asserted, and most likely the French people, would not stand for a war to keep "German troops from garrisoning German towns."⁴³

Labour was pleased with the way the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, responded to Germany's action. Eden promised to examine "clear sightedly and objectively" Hitler's offer to negotiate a new series of pacts. Labour hoped France too would take a reasonable attitude to the situation. A refusal to discuss the problem would not remove the Germans or restore the Locarno Pact. It would merely leave troops in the Rhineland and France without any guarantees. France should not count on a military alliance with Britain if no new Locarno should be drawn up. It was out of the question, Labour warned. Germany, on the other hand, might have recovered her freedom, but she

⁴³"Seize the Chance," Daily Herald (London)
March 9, 1936, p. 10.

had shaken confidence in the value of her word. Locarno, unlike Versailles, had been signed freely, and Hitler had promised to observe it. Germany should not be surprised if for a period of time she might be "looked at a little dubiously and regarded as in some measure on trail."⁴⁴

The National Council of Labour invited the Bureau of the Labour and Socialist International and the Executive of the International Federation of Trade Unions to meet in London as soon as possible to discuss what international labour should do in light of the Rhineland crisis. The Conference took place March 20-21. It approved a declaration condemning Hitler's action and warned that aggression could not be stopped by "moral appeal." It stated that aggressors could only be stopped by "an overwhelming superiority of force" and that "National armaments should now be regulated with this end in view." The Labour Party as well as the nation as a whole did not become aroused as it had in the Abyssinian affair and Hugh Dalton told Commons the people would not support military action or even economic sanctions to drive the Germans back across the Rhine. The Government which "needed no holding back" was willing "to go on talking until the danger past."⁴⁵

⁴⁴"The Door is Open," Daily Herald (London), March 10, 1936, p. 10.

⁴⁵Alan Bullock, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, Vol. I: Trade Union Leader, 1881-1940 (London: Heinemann, 1960), p. 581.

The Rhineland incident caught Parliament about to begin debate on the Government's defense estimates. The incident did not alter Labour's opposition to the Government's bill, despite the fact Bevin and Dalton warned their party that the situation was grave.⁴⁶ Attlee followed the traditional Labour line in denouncing the estimates. He said the Government was abandoning the attempt to "build up a new world system based on the rule of law: and was returning to the old belief that security could be had by national armaments. The Government paid lip-service to collective security, used the need to strengthen its ability to aid the League to enforce its decisions as an excuse to rearm, but in reality its whole emphasis was on national defense. It was looking at European problems from the point of view of isolation. It had entered, in fact, into an arms race that must inevitably end in war. This drift had been going on since Labour left office in 1931, and the National Government shared in the responsibility for it. The Government made its position even weaker by not taking a definite stand on either isolation or collective security, but vacillated between the two positions and so had no policy of its own. Now faced with a situation largely of its own making the Government was asking for a blank check to increase

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 580., and Dalton, The Fateful Years, pp. 89-93.

its armed forces enormously. Attlee reaffirmed Labour's traditional policy of full support for the League and for collective security to resist aggression. He called on the Government to take the lead in trying once again to find a way to avert a war by a conference of nations. The main cause of the world's discontent was economic. "Extreme nationalist movements thrive on the soil of economic discontent," he said. It was the place of the more prosperous nations of the world to take the lead in trying to develop the economic interests of all. The discontented states should state openly what they needed and the other states should in a spirit of "sensible international co-operation" try to find a way to fill their needs.⁴⁷

The three years following the Nazi rise to power saw the beginning of changes in Labour's foreign policy. After Nazi Germany left the League and the Disarmament Conference in October 1933, Labour hoped for a time she could be brought back if the powers would recognize her as an equal and give in to her reasonable demands. By the spring of 1936 Labour realized the chance for a successful disarmament agreement was very poor. While it continued to vote against the British Govern-

⁴⁷C. R. Attlee, "Arming for Disaster," Daily Herald (London), March 9, 1936, p. 10.

ment's rearmament program, it was doing so by 1936 largely as a protest against the Government's foreign policy. Even then leaders such as Dalton and Bevin were beginning to urge the party drop its opposition and to recognize the seriousness of the situation and the need for rearming. Labour was still basing its foreign policy on collective security through the League of Nations, but by 1936 the loss of Germany and Japan and the failure to stop Italian aggression in Ethiopia had greatly weakened that body. Within the party the struggle between the Pacifists and those favoring collective action through the League was won by the latter group and so the war resistance through a general strike was quietly dropped as a major plank in Labour's platform. Hitler's actions in foreign affairs during this period, with the exception of his indirect support of the abortive Nazi coup in Austria, were aimed at destroying the unfair restrictions of Versailles. Labour objected to his unilateral method and believed the other powers should have been consulted, but it could not object to the results as it had long favored such changes. It hoped with the removal of these grievances Germany would begin to cooperate again in trying to insure peace. Labour was shocked by the internal activities of the Nazis and did what it could to help the Nazi's victims, but it refused to let this interfere with its attitude in foreign affair--that is to the point where it

wished to treat Germany as a pariah to whom there should be no concessions whether just or not.

PART III: REORIENTATION AND FIRMNESS, 1936-1938

CHAPTER VII

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: THE TURNING POINT

In the days following the immediate crisis of the Rhine-land occupation, Labour was hopeful that some good might yet come from the incident. It hoped Hitler was sincere when he promised Germany had no aggressive intentions toward her neighbors, and was willing to negotiate a new Locarno Pact. It even went so far as to believe Germany might now be willing to return to the League.¹ Labour also hoped Britain and France had learned their lesson and would in the future be willing to work more closely with the League to strengthen collective security, and seek more sincerely a disarmament agreement. The lack of these had brought on the crisis,² it said.

Labour was soon to be disappointed as it quickly became evident Hitler was not going to cooperate seriously in new negotiations. His replies to proposals made by the Locarno powers were so vague and without counter-proposals that they seemed to widen rather than narrow the breach. Labour cautioned Germany about the danger of misinterpreting Britain's attitude. It stressed that Germany had not received justice since the war

¹"Plea for Sanity," Daily Herald (London), March 16, 1936, p. 10.

²"Hitler's Chance," Daily Herald (London), March 20, 1936, p. 10.

and the German demands for equality were just, but the Hitler Government had given much cause for the apprehension and suspicion of the rest of the world. This suspicion of German motives and intentions was a fact the German Government would have to take into account. If Hitler wished to arrive at an agreement with the rest of the world, he had to restore confidence among the other nations in Germany.³

The British Socialists by the end of March had more or less resigned themselves to the fact that nothing fruitful was going to come from Hitler's declaration he would negotiate new treaties to replace those he had broken.

The Spanish Civil War, which began in July 1936, brought immediate sympathy for the Republican Government from Labour. It feared that if Spain was to fall under fascist rule as had Germany and Italy all Europe would be threatened. It thought the Republican forces would be able to win if either there was true non-intervention, or if the British and French Governments would treat the Spanish Government in the accepted way of international law. That was to treat it as a legally recognized government which was attempting to put down internal revolution. In more specific terms this meant the British and French Governments had a perfect legal right to allow arms and supplies to

³"Widening the Breach," Daily Herald (London), March 25, 1936, p. 10.



be sold and shipped to the Spanish Government. These two alternatives, either establish true non-intervention or treat the legally recognized Republican Government as it should be under international law, would be the major concerns of Labour in the Spanish problem. It continually urged the Government to follow one or the other depending on the actions of the other European powers, particularly Germany and Italy. The active intervention of Germany, Italy, and Russia made the issue more than just a Spanish problem. It became an international dilemma which threatened the peace of all Europe. Labour favored the French proposal of non-intervention at first because it believed this was the best way to preserve neutrality and to prevent the war from spreading.⁴

From almost the beginning Labour suspected Hitler was working to upset the policy of non-intervention. German newspapers during August undertook a violent campaign against the Soviet Union for allegedly sending arms to Spain. Labour feared this meant Hitler was setting the groundwork for some type of German intervention. Labour urged the British and French Governments in case this did happen to drop what would then be a "one-sided and improper embargo against the Spanish Government."⁵ Soon after this, however, Germany did agree to

⁴Brand, The British Labour Party, pp. 198-199.

⁵"Ominious Signs," Daily Herald (London), August 24, 1936, p. 8.

the embargo against arms to both sides in Spain as did the other major powers and a committee was set up to find ways to enforce it.

With the establishment of the Non-Intervention Committee, Labour believed perhaps trouble over Spain could be avoided. It did not take long before it was apparent Germany and Italy were violating their pledges of non-intervention. However, at the Trade Union Congress meeting in September and the Labour Party Convention in early October the extent of this aid was not yet known, and although the delegates did not like doing it, they voted by large majorities to support the non-intervention course because it was the most expedient. A minority of the National Council opposed non-intervention, but the majority supported it because the only other alternative carried the threat of war. Arthur Greenwood asked the convention if it was ". . . prepared to have the battle between dictatorship and democracy fought over the bleeding body of Spain?"⁶

By November it was obvious Hitler had broken the non-intervention agreement and was supplying the rebels with airplanes as well as other arms.⁷ The crisis worsened as Germany

⁶Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 199.

⁷"No Complaint," Daily Herald (London), November 16, 1936, p. 10.

and Italy recognized the Franco side as the legal government of Spain. Labour fear that now Hitler might carry out his threat to attack the Spanish fleet if any more German ships carrying supplies to the rebels were stopped. Non-intervention had now become a farce, Labour said, and it was up to the British Government to find some other alternative. It suggested the Government call for an immediate meeting of the League Council. It hoped the League would be able to take some action to ease the situation.⁸

By the end of the year it was known the German "volunteers" in Spain were in fact part of the German army acting under orders from Hitler. This, said Labour, was an invasion of Spain by the Reichwehr, and went far beyond merely supplying arms to the rebels. It believed Hitler was doing this to "whip up flagging popular enthusiasm by some 'foreign adventure.'"⁹

The Labour Party began to turn against non-intervention, at least in the manner in which it was being applied by the British Government. It denounced the ministers for their hasty unilateral action. The imposition of an embargo before a final agreement with the other powers had been reached was a blunder.

⁸"League Must Meet," Daily Herald (London), November 20, 1936, p. 10.

⁹"Hitler's Choice," Daily Herald (London), December 28, 1936, p. 10.

Labour believed the Government repeated this blunder in January 1937 when it prohibited volunteers from going to Spain. Again the Government did it without a firm agreement for similar action on the part of the Fascist powers. This, Labour warned, would in no way stop the German and Italian troops from going to Spain, and would, in fact, make it more difficult to bring Hitler and Mussolini to an agreement on total non-intervention. ¹⁰

The early part of 1937 brought renewed hope that an effective non-intervention agreement might yet be accepted by all powers. Negotiations dragged on for several months, and finally in April Labour believed a victory had been won when a Spanish non-intervention control plan was accepted by all the major powers. Labour hailed this as possibly the first step back towards a policy of collectivism. It even hoped now that the powers had cooperated to restrict the war, they ¹¹ might cooperate to end it.

Labour again quickly lost its optimism about the chances for any real non-intervention. Germany and Italy continued to keep their "volunteers" in Spain in spite of the agreement.

¹⁰"A Foolish Blunder," Daily Herald (London), January 11, 1937, p. 10.

¹¹"A Success for Europe," Daily Herald (London), April 16, 1937, p. 12.

Labour was particularly shocked and disgusted by German bombing of civilian populations, their refusal to stop, and in fact, their attempt to justify it on the grounds of military necessity. Such action, Labour said, only put Germany outside the "law of nations" and increased world distrust of her.¹² Germany's "barbarism" in Spain continued to be a point of denunciation for Labour throughout the remainder of the war. The bombardment of the Spanish town of Almeria by German planes and ships for the alleged attack on its warship Deutschland brought a sharp attack by Labour. It wondered what right Hitler had to demand equality of status and treatment when he failed to give any proof of "equality in civilization and equality in behavior."¹³

By the end of June 1937 it was apparent to Labour that Germany was planning to use the alleged torpedo attacks on her warships as an excuse to justify acts of violence against the Spanish. Labour demanded that if Germany really had a case and was sincere in her desire for peace she should be willing to submit the dispute as Spain suggested to a third party for judgment.¹⁴

¹²"Warning," Daily Herald (London), May 5, 1937, p. 10.

¹³"A Word to Germany," Daily Herald (London), June 2, 1937, p. 10.

¹⁴"Bad Signs," Daily Herald (London), June 22, 1937, p. 10; and "Whither Germany?" Daily Herald (London), June 24, 1937, p. 10.

By the end of June Labour declared non-intervention was impossible. This was because Germany and Italy refused to take part in any system of control or would not even agree to any control which did not include them. Non-intervention without effective control was useless. Labour called on the Government to warn the fascist powers that an end of control meant an end of the embargo. It said, ". . . a situation cannot be tolerated in which the rebels can draw from abroad all the munitions they need while the legal Government is denied its legal rights."¹⁵

During the summer of 1937 Labour became impatient with the British Government's unwillingness to make a definite move to counter Fascist aid to Franco. The Government did warn Germany and Italy that unless controls were established the embargo would have to end. This pleased Labour, but the lack of action on the part of the Government to carry out its threat annoyed it.¹⁶ The Government's plan in July 1937 by which it hoped to continue non-intervention was received by Labour "without enthusiasm and with much misgiving." It feared while the Government was trying to patch up the old plan Fascist aid would continue. It also was afraid that the Government might be preparing to compromise by accepting the

¹⁵"Control is Dead," Daily Herald (London), June 30, 1937, p. 10.

¹⁶"Time for Thought," Daily Herald (London), July 1937, p. 10.

Fascist demand for recognition of Franco. Labour would oppose both, it said, and would accept non-intervention "strictly and fairly enforced or ended." No new plan would be considered unless it filled the gaps that under the existing setup favored

¹⁷ the rebels. In a debate in Commons over this issue Attlee accused Eden and the Government of giving into the dictators and trying to please them. He said it was obvious that Franco was dependent on outside support. Eden in turn accused Labour of picking on small points, of abandoning their peace stand, of giving no detailed criticism, and of making the job of the ¹⁸ Government harder.

The details of the British Plan were released in mid-July. It called for removal of the naval patrols and their replacement by officers stationed in Spanish ports to carry out the functions preformed by the patrols. The rest of the control system was to function as before with the land control to be restored immediately. A committee was to examine possibilities of controlling aircraft flying to Spain. Limited recognition of belligerent rights were to be given both parties as soon as the committee was satisfied substantial progress had been made in the withdrawal of "volunteers." Withdrawal was to be approved

¹⁷"New Plan," Daily Herald (London), July 7, 1937, p. 10.

¹⁸Daily Herald (London), July 15, 1937, p. 1.

in principle at once, and a commission set up to make and supervise the arrangements. The British Government was to discuss with both sides the various points for which their consent would be needed. Labour had much criticism for this plan. It doubted that the consent of both of the belligerents could be obtained, and said the plan did not provide for what to do if either or both refused to agree. It also objected to the trade of limited recognition for withdrawal of volunteers. The real problem, it said, was not in the plan itself, but that the international atmosphere made any plan impossible. All past plans had failed because the Fascists lacked the necessary "spirit of international cooperation." Until that was established no plan would work. Labour demanded the Government stop wasting time on ingenious plans that would surely fail because of lack of cooperation. Rather it should frankly recognize non-intervention had failed and the right to buy arms should be immediately restored to the Spanish Government and the whole Spanish question should be referred to the League of Nations.¹⁹

These demands by Labour to abandon one-sided non-intervention continued throughout the summer of 1937 until September when it seemed again that there might be some hope for interna-

¹⁹"Plan and Spirit," Daily Herald (London), July 15, 1937, p. 10.

tional cooperation to settle the problem. The cause for this new optimism was the Nyon Anti-Piracy Agreement. Nine nations met at Nyon near Geneva with Italy and Germany not in attendance. They set up a naval patrol in the Mediterranean to deal with the mysterious submarine attacks that were taking place against shipping to Spain. The patrol was given authority to attack any suspicious submarine in the western Mediterranean. This was soon extended to give the patrol the same power against aircraft. It also authorized the patrol to come to the aid of neutral shipping attacked by warships whether in Spanish territorial waters or not. The greater part of the patrol was made up of the British and French navies. On September 30 Italy²⁰ joined the patrol. Labour fully supported this as a working example of what collective security could do if used properly. It hoped the success of this venture, or the very fact it could²¹ be arrived at at all, would lead the nations back to Geneva.

The Nyon agreement proved to be merely the one bright spot in the gloomy Spanish policy of the British Government. Rather than continue the firm step taken at Nyon by standing up

²⁰Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1961), pp. 475-478.

²¹"All for All," Daily Herald (London), September 14, 1937, p. 10; and "Partners for Peace," Daily Herald (London), September 16, 1937, p. 10.

to the Fascists on other issues concerning Spain, the Government continued to try to rebuild the authority of the Non-Intervention Committee. Labour constantly urged the Government to abandon that bankrupt policy and to recognize the legal Government's right to buy arms.

Labour did what it could to aid the Spanish Republicans. It raised funds for medical aid, and for milk for the children. It sent clothing, maintained a base hospital, and brought several thousand Spanish children to the safety of Britain. Many young British Socialists volunteered to fight in Spain. In spite of the aid they sent, most Labourites felt frustrated that more could not be done. One later said, "Even the very best British bandage is not very much use against a German gun."

This continued for another year and a half. Labour tried until the last to get the Government to take a more positive stand by selling arms to the Spanish. When on February 27, 1939 the British Government unconditionally recognized the Franco regime, Labour bitterly denounced the shameful betrayal of the legal Spanish Government.²² In the meantime Labour's attention, like that of the rest of the world was drawn away from Spain by the Austrian and Czechoslovakian crises of 1938.

The matter of collective security and the League of

²²Brand, The Labour Party, pp. 201-202.

Nations continued to be a major concern of the Labour Party and more particularly how to strengthen it and even how to get the powers moving again in the direction of collective defense through the League. It was during this period too that Labour began to resign itself to the fact that collective security as it envisioned it was at least temporarily dead and it began reluctantly to accept substitutes.

During the crisis that followed the Rhineland occupation, the Labour Party warned Pierre Flandin, the French Foreign Minister, that the French had better not take an uncompromising stand against Germany that would prevent a new Locarno or a German return to the League. If France did this in hopes of forcing an Anglo-French alliance, it was basing its plans on false calculations. The British people, Labour said, were willing to support a truly collective system of defense, but would not be drawn into alliances.

Labour was very suspicious that this was exactly what the Government was attempting to do. In response to a speech made by Anthony Eden in late March in which there were hints that an alliance of some type with France might be in the offing, Labour declared this would be a betrayal of the collective security principle. The Government had never favored the League,

²³"Widening the Breach," Daily Herald (London), March 25, 1936, p. 10.



it said, and was now attempting to relegate it to second place while the old unsuccessful Anglo-French alliance was again made the basis of British foreign policy. It warned the Government the British people would not support such a policy. They wanted the opposite--"a sturdy organization of collective security through the League of Nations."²⁴

This renewal of efforts to swing the Government fully behind the League and to strengthen it as the best means to preserve peace through collective defense continued throughout the spring of 1936. In April Attlee declared it would be better if Locarno was not renewed as Hitler was offering to do. Not that Labour opposed the obligations it imposed, or the pledges of mutual assistance, or the staff talks, but it objected that Locarno was built on too narrow a base. The League, he said, could offer all of these advantages, but on a larger scale with more chance for success if the powers would only back it fully. Abyssinia, he declared, was proof of what could happen when a League action received less than full support. All military cooperation must not be divided in the future, but must be achieved through the League.²⁵ In answer to the critics

²⁴"League or Alliances," Daily Herald (London), March 27, 1936, p. 10.

²⁵"Locarno Failings," Daily Herald (London), April 7, 1936, p. 10.

who said the League had failed, that it was powerless to stop aggression as proven by Abyssinia and the Rhineland crisis, Labour answered it was not the League that had failed, but the nations. The League principle had not failed because it had never been tried. In fact, because the nations had refused to use the League's machinery as it should have been used the efforts to stop the Italian's aggression had failed. About the future of the League it was still hopeful. "Setbacks and difficulties, disappointments and there have been, there will be," it said. "But the League cannot fail, because its principles are lastingly right. And a world which turned from the League would be forced, as certain as morning, to return to it, because nowhere else could it find the essentials of eternal peace."

The Ethiopian war continued to plague the Labour Party throughout the spring and summer of 1936. With the new session of the League about to begin in early May, Labour issued a declaration calling for increased sanctions. By that time it seemed the fall of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, was all but certain. Labour insisted this was merely symbolic and militarily meant little. The war was not over, it said, Italy had not yet won and the League had not yet lost. Mussolini

²⁶"The League Can't Fail," Daily Herald (London) April 20, 1936, p. 10.

would surely use the opportunity provided by the capture of Addis Ababa to set up a puppet government and to declare the war over. Fighting was sure to go on in the highland and the League Council must not fall for Mussolini's bluff. Sanctions must be increased and under no circumstances should they be removed. They had to continue ". . .to help the Abyssinians, to vindicate the League, and to stigmatise the outlaw."²⁷

Labour blamed France and Britain for Italy's success in Ethiopia on the grounds that had they acted strongly through the League Mussolini could have been stopped. In that case there would have been no Rhineland crisis either as Germany would not have dared to have moved had the League's prestige and power still have been in tact. Britain was particularly to blame as had she taken a firm stand she could have forced France to follow her lead.²⁸

By June 1936 Labour was even more discouraged about any likelihood of further action in Ethiopia. As the session of the League Council drew near, it appeared it was going to put off again any decision on Abyssinia. This must not be done, Labour warned. To put off firm action again would only serve

²⁷"Future of Sanctions," Daily Herald (London), April 23, 1936, p. 10.

²⁸"Who Shall Answer for this Crime," Daily Herald (London), May 4, 1936, p. 10.

to strengthen Mussolini while further weakening the League. This policy of delay was particularly humiliating to the League, it believed, after the promising start it had made to stop Mussolini the previous October. Now this was all gone and much of the blame rested on the shoulders of the British Government.²⁹ By the middle of the month it was known that Eden would ask that sanctions be lifted when the Council met. This Labour denounced as an unjust and unnecessary "unconditional surrender to an aggressor." It was "an ominous and terrible precedent," Labour said, which did more than just give Mussolini more than even he had expected in Abyssinia. It showed the world aggression paid and that Britain would not stand behind her League obligations.³⁰ Labour tried to rally the people to pressure the Government to change its position. It held demonstrations and public meetings on Sunday June 28. Great numbers of people turned out, and this was followed by a Labour supported campaign to flood the Government with letters and telegrams to urge it to support the continuation of sanctions against Italy.³¹ These protests did not have any noticable effect on the Government's policy. On

²⁹"Still Waiting," Daily Herald (London), June 2, 1936, p. 8.

³⁰"The Pass Sold," Daily Herald (London), June 19, 1936, p. 10.

³¹"The Public Speaks," Daily Herald (London), June 29, 1936, p. 10.

July 4, 1936 sanctions were lifted by the League Council.

The tremendous let down to Labour caused by the failure of collective security led it to a rather significant shift in its attitude towards universal collective defense during the spring and summer of 1936. It began to turn to other, more narrow approaches to the security dilemma. When the French Popular Front came to power in May 1936, Labour declared its first and most important duty was to help in forming an all-European security pact. Britain too must make clear that it was willing to accept "military responsibilities to withstand aggression."³² A short time later Labour expanded its new idea for the reforming of the collective security system. In the light of the failure of the League to act quickly and effectively against Italy, Labour suggested nations unable or unwilling to support wholeheartedly collective action should be eliminated from responsibility to act and also from the right to make that decision. One power should not be allowed to veto the actions of the rest by its unwillingness to act. Each nation in the League should be asked, Labour said, just what it was willing to do for the League. They should then be grouped according to their response so that every danger point would be adequately covered by the military guarantee of some group. Economic

³²"The Fight for Peace," Daily Herald (London), May 4, 1936, p. 10.



sanctions would remain universally binding. These regional security pacts would then be within the League, but would include only groups that were willing to act--that is nations which found their interests threatened. In the light of the failure of universal military sanctions this arrangement would be a far better compromise than returning to the anarchy of the pre-war period, Labour insisted. This it hoped would gain the support of enough nations in a region so a potential aggressor would still be faced with the certainty of defeat if he violated another's rights.³³

Labour, reacting to the experience of the economic sanctions fiasco against Italy, also wanted a League reform to make economic sanctions, the "first line of resistance to aggression," not only a binding and universal obligation for all members, but applicable in advance of aggression and to make the boycott complete rather than partial.³⁴

By the end of the Sixteenth Assembly of the League which adjourned in July 1936, Labour was admitting the League was at its lowest ebb and as it stood its position as a force for peace was almost useless. The defeat over Ethiopia had caused it to

³³"What Sort of Reforms?" Daily Herald (London), May 5, 1936, p. 10.

³⁴"The Last Chance," Daily Herald (London), June 15, 1936, p. 10.

lose faith in itself. The bigger states, Ewer said in the Daily Herald, had become cynical while the smaller states were disillusioned. It was apparent from the Council debates, he said, that the attempt to restrain an aggressor by economic sanctions would never again be tried. In the future no economic sanctions could stop aggression unless accompanied by military sanctions. This, he believed, was very unlikely. The whole idea of the League had at least temporarily been destroyed. To be effective as a peace-keeper the action against an aggressor had to be so strong and so certain that he would not dare to take a chance on it. As the situation stood in the summer of 1936 any would-be aggressor knew League action was not only uncertain, but very improbable. He, therefore, no longer would take the League into serious consideration in his calculations. ³⁵

As Labour's entire philosophy towards foreign policy was based almost exclusively on the League, it undertook a serious, almost desperate, campaign to prompt the British Government to take the lead in rebuilding it. It believed the majority of the British people supported its foreign policy, and, therefore, appealed to them to bring pressure on the Government. The world, it said, could not get along without the League as war

³⁵W. N. Ewer, "Faith is Lost in the League," Daily Herald (London), July 8, 1936, p. 17.

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was almost certain without it.

The first necessary step in revitalizing the League was to bring Germany and Italy back into it. Labour supported Eden's offer to separate the Covenant from the Treaty of Versailles to make it easier for Germany to re-enter. Labour demanded that Eden stand firm otherwise, and not let Germany and Italy dictate terms to the League.³⁷ The German and Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War and their recognition of the Franco Government made it even more imperative that a special session of the League be called, Labour believed. It wanted Germany and Italy invited to the session so a real solution could be found. Labour, thus, was not yet willing to work through any other international means other than the League even though it admitted the League had been rendered useless during the previous war. It hoped a League success in solving the Spanish problem would restore much of its lost prestige.³⁸

By the end of the year Labour had reached the point where it was willing to fully accept regional alliances but hoped they might be brought under the League. It welcomed the announcement

³⁶"Back to Geneva," Daily Herald (London), September 21, 1936, p. 10.

³⁷"Towards a New League," Daily Herald (London), September 28, 1936, p. 10.

³⁸"League Must Meet," Daily Herald (London), November 20, 1936, p. 10.

in November 1936 that Britain would defend France, Belgium, and Egypt should they be victims of aggression. It also approved France's reaffirmation of the Franco-Soviet Pact, as well as the closer relations between Britain, France, and Poland. It saw these developments as the beginning of a new peace movement, and urged they continue and move to a "higher level." That "higher level" was, of course, to bring them under the League. While it believed the pact even outside the League was necessary and useful in the face of the threat of war from the aggressive Fascist states, it thought that for a truly lasting peace they needed to work under the authority of the League. The reasons for this were two. Firstly, in order to cover all of the danger spots something more comprehensive was needed, particularly in Eastern Europe. Here the lack of any guarantees of assistance against aggression offered great temptations to the "warlike Governments." Czechoslovakia was in particular danger, Labour believed. Unless it were soon given League guarantees of assistance, there was a real danger it might be attacked and if this happened "a European war would certainly arise." The British guarantees to France and Belgium made a war in Western Europe unlikely, but if one began in Eastern Europe it would soon spread to the West. The second reason these agreements should be brought under the League was to prevent the impression they were "alliances based on the denial of

right and refusal of legitimate redress to 'dissatisfied'
Powers."³⁹

Labour answered Hitler's complaint that these new guarantees and pacts were endangering Germany's security by encirclement, by arguing that his actions had brought this on and if his aggression would stop there would be no threat to Germany. Labour said that although it deplored his method it had excused his treaty breaking in the past because it believed he was only seeking justice for Germany. His violation of the rights of Spain, however, was an entirely different situation. This was an act of unprovoked aggression which destroyed Hitler's argument that Germany would cease to be the disturber of peace when she had achieved equality of rights. This action in Spain coupled with the economic crisis in Germany caused many to believe Hitler was attempting to whip up public enthusiasm at home with a foreign adventure. This, together with Germany's refusal to cooperate in European peace efforts, caused great suspicion and was the cause for these new guarantees. Germany, Labour said, was welcome to join any of the pacts she wished, but to base a pact solely on German cooperation would give her a veto power over them. These pacts were little enough, but to repudiate them would destroy the little security Europe had.

³⁹"New Hope for Peace," Daily Herald (London), November 30, 1936, p. 10.

Labour urged that these pacts be continued and if possible brought under the League as a comprehensive European pact of mutual assistance. At the same time efforts should not lag in trying to persuade Germany to join. It should be made clear that all grievances would be considered and all injustices redressed. The Labourites wanted, in particular, the British economic offer of September 1935, to discuss the question of raw materials, to be considered at a conference in the near future. This, they believed, would do much to alleviate the tensions in the world caused by competition for raw materials. ⁴⁰

Rumors that the Berlin-Rome Axis was breaking up in the spring of 1937 caused new hope for Labour, but for somewhat different reasons for them than for most others. It did not welcome a quarrel between Germany and Italy over Austria, Labour said, as quarrels between great powers were always dangerous and could easily lead to a general war. It also deplored the hope of some that such a quarrel would make a rebuilding of the Stresa front possible and thus complete the encirclement of Germany. This, Labour declared, was equally dangerous. The reason it found the weakening of the Axis desirable was it proved once again that alliances even when based on similar ideologies were unstable and unreliable. It proved

⁴⁰"Hitler's Choice," Daily Herald (London), December 28, 1936, p. 10.

the only way a country could really guarantee its security was⁴¹
by basing it on a genuine collective defense system.

Labour agitation for a return to the League continued during the summer of 1937 even though (or perhaps because) it was becoming more and more obvious the powers were moving away from it. It was not dead, Labour insisted, in spite of its failures in Manchuria and Abyssinia. These were not due to failure of the League's machinery, it said in its standard argument, but because that machinery had not been used. It pointed out the League was still doing such good in such areas as stopping illegal drug traffic, combatting disease and many other important but unspectacular activities.⁴² Labour also said the League still represented the majority of the world's people. Fifty-eight members represented 1.5 billion people while non-members only 350 million. The United States would cooperate with it, Labour believed, if it were strengthened. To do this it must have machinery to settle international disputes and for preventing war. This would mean organizing in advance economic and financial action by which aggression could immediately be opposed. Oil, it said, was the key to collective

⁴¹"Trouble in the Axis," Daily Herald (London), April 23, 1937, p. 12.

⁴²Bernard Moore, "Is the League Dead?--No!" Daily Herald (London), May 4, 1937, p. 10.

peace and must be included in all sanctions.⁴³

The Lyon Anti-Piracy Agreement in September 1937 was proof, Labour alleged, that if nations would only cooperate collective security would be practical and effective. It wondered why the nations would not apply it in other areas.⁴⁴

Labour's hope for a return to the League received a blow in the King's Speech at the Opening of Parliament in October 1937. For the first time in years the Government did not mention that Britain's foreign policy was based on the League. This seemed to make it official that the Government had dropped it as "a world instrument to be taken seriously."⁴⁵

By the end of 1937 Labour was all but ready to admit this itself. In a Daily Herald editorial entitled "Alive but not Kicking" it confessed the League was "tragically weak." It could not yet shake off the League completely because it said despite its failures "the moral, the intellectual and the political principles upon which the League is based are right."⁴⁶

⁴³Philip Noel-Baker, "The Only Real Insurance for Peace," Daily Herald (London), August 13, 1937, p. 8.

⁴⁴"Partners for Peace," Daily Herald (London), September 16, 1937, p. 10.

⁴⁵"Dropping the League," Daily Herald (London), October 27, 1937, p. 10.

⁴⁶"Alive but not Kicking," Daily Herald (London), January 26, 1938, p. 8.

Since the League was so weak Labour considered the Anglo-French defense pact and the Franco-Soviet-Czech defense pact as "props of peace." However, Labour still insisted the door must remain open for Germany to join these so they would remain "open defense confederations" and would not degenerate into anti-German power alliances.⁴⁷

In December 1937 there was talk that Hitler was attempting to mediate between Japan and China. Labour attributed his motives to the fact Japan's aggression was pushing China and the Soviet Union closer and he did not want to see the Soviets have any friends. He wanted China to enter the Anti-Comintern Pact, and, therefore, was bound to try for peace terms not too unjust to China. Labour believed China might be willing to listen to Hitler now that the Brussels Conference that had tried to settle the dispute between Japan and China had failed. It deplored the fact that Britain, the United States, France, and the Soviet Union had not supported one another in a collective policy in the Far East. It felt sure Japan would have backed down in the face of such a powerful coalition. As it was these powers would not even promise to stand by the French if she was threatened with attack for allowing arms to go through Indo-China to China.⁴⁸

⁴⁷"Germany and Peace," Daily Herald (London), December 3, 1937, p. 10.

⁴⁸"His New Role," Daily Herald (London), December 3, 1937, p. 10.

Labour by the end of 1937 had reached the point where, although it still wished to work through the League, it recognized the world organization's current impotency and was willing to accept other measures of security. In light of the growing seriousness of the European situation it had come to the point where it was willing to accept defense alliances. It hoped these would be open and within the League and urged this on the Government, but it did not insist on it any longer or make it a condition for its support.

During the period between the remilitarization of the Rhineland in March 1936 and the Austrian crisis of February-March 1938, Labour struggled with its dilemma of whether and to what degree it should yield on its principle of disarmament to the expediency of preparedness in the face of Fascist aggression.

Even after the Rhineland crisis Labour believed disarmament together with collective security were the keys to world peace. It blamed the current world problems and especially the Rhineland incident on the arms race. Even if new security agreements were reached there would be no real peace until the anxiety, the continual threat, and the heavy competitive expenditures of the arms race were checked. An agreement on armament was, thus, an essential part of any peace settlement that might be worked out. Labour by 1936, however, held no hope that disarmament could be achieved at a low or even a moderate level.



The level would have to be high, it said, in the face of the current world situation. But it believed an agreement at any level was better than none at all because it would at least stop the race. It insisted any arms agreement must include international inspection and control. The breaking of such an agreement must result in the refusal to supply the offending country with "arms, munitions, loans, credits, minerals, oils or other essential war materials."⁴⁹

Labour, although it favored some increase in British armaments to a level that would ". . . maintain the Services at a level necessary to defend the country and others against law-breakers" the size depending on the international situation, continued to vote against the estimates.⁵⁰ Attlee explained this was not a vote against the defense budget but a vote against the Government's foreign policy which had made the increases necessary. It was customary, he said, for the Liberals and Labour to vote against the service estimates. It⁵¹ was understood that it was not a vote against all armaments.

At the Labour Party Conference in October 1936 the party

⁴⁹"Arms," Daily Herald (London), March 19, 1936, p. 10

⁵⁰"Opposition to Arms Budget," Daily Herald (London), July 29, 1936, p. 8.

⁵¹C. R. Attlee, As It Happened (New York: The Viking Press, 1954), p. 139.

declared its adherence to the principles of collective security and to the maintenance of the rule of law through the League. Britain's level of rearmament must be to the level to enable her to do her part in the League's collective defense system. The level would vary according to the world situation. It attacked the Conservatives for having no correlation between their foreign policy and their rearmament plans.⁵² A split developed over the resolution presented by Hugh Dalton to the Labour Convention on the issue of rearmament and whether or not Labour should vote for it in Parliament. The resolution recognized that because of Fascist aggression and rearmament, especially the very rapid rearmament of Germany, Britain too had to rearm. It reserved the right, however, to criticize and to decline to accept responsibility for the Government's purely competitive armament policy.⁵³ The split, although not too serious, was over whether the party should abandon its policy of automatically opposing the service estimates. Dalton believed Labour should no longer take the responsibility of opposing any increase in Britain's military strength. Attlee insisted the resolution did not infer support for the Government's program, but it reaffirmed Labour's international policy of collective security and

⁵²Daily Herald (London), October 5, 1936, p. 13.

⁵³Dalton, The Fateful Years, p. 101.

its willingness to raise or lower the level of armaments in accordance with the requirements of that system. He said the Parliamentary Party would reserve the right to vote for or against any specific bill. The resolution was passed.⁵⁴

Labour changed its objections to the Government's rearmament policy during the next few months from opposing rearmament itself to opposing the government's method of financing it. The program called for rearmament to be financed by a loan. This would shift the greater burden of the cost to the worker because it would cause inflation, Labour charged. It should instead be financed through taxes on those who could afford to pay them.⁵⁵

Labour continued to criticize the Government for not relating its arms program to a positive foreign policy. Unless rearmament were coupled with "a vigorous policy for defending international law and redressing national grievances" it would be dangerously insufficient and would only postpone trouble. Britain might be able to avoid defeat when trouble came, it said, but it would not prevent trouble from arising. The Government's White Paper on rearmament failed to present a program for rebuilding the League and for creating international

⁵⁴"Labour's Arms Vote," Daily Herald (London), October 7, 1936, p. 10

⁵⁵"Paying for Arms," Daily Herald (London), February 2, 1937, p. 12.

conditions in which the League might be made to work again, the Socialists declared. They did not object to the rearmament proposals of the Paper, but the fact that it ignored these other factors. Labour believed the Paper showed the Government had lost interest in "a just settlement of world problems," but rather intended to concentrate on its own defenses and let the rest of the world get by as best it could. This policy only accelerated the arms race and did nothing for reestablishing
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 peace.

Labour in voting for the Defense Estimates in July 1937 broke the tradition it had followed in the previous years. The decision was in line with the arguments of Dalton at the Party Conference the previous October. Labour emphasized the vote in no way reflected approval of the Government's foreign policy. It would continue its consistent opposition to the policy for which it blamed in large part for the "tragic deterioration of the international situation since the last Labour Government." However, it said, faced with the growing Fascist menace no peaceful nation could fail to prepare for its own defense and for the defense of democracy. It cited the example of the Soviet Union and France as to other peaceful nations which were being forced to rearm. Labour, therefore,

56 "No Policy for Peace," Daily Herald (London), February 18, 1937, p. 12.

was "prepared not to stand in the way of the provision of the instruments of defense." Labour voted for the estimates, but resolved "to insure that the instruments of defense shall be used to strenghten the authority of the League and thus to secure peace."⁵⁷

At the Trade Union Congress in September 1937 and the Labour Party Congress in October, the party had to defend its new position on rearmament against attacks by the Pacifist minority. At the T.U.C. meeting Labour's position was attacked as a "surrender" to the Government and an "abdication" to it so it could go ahead without "electoral anxiety and without opposition, with its general foreign policy." The National Council denied these charges. It insisted there was nothing more the Government would have liked than Labour's continued opposition to strengthening the nation's defenses. It knew Labour could make little headway in attacking its foreign policy so long as Labour's own policy was to oppose any increase in the country's defense system. The people, it insisted, wanted rearmament and it was Labour's duty to give it to them, but at the same time to convince them "it is only a temporary and evil necessity, which can be made to give way to disarmament by world agreement

⁵⁷"Labour and Defense," Daily Herald (London), July 23, 1937, p. 10.



if only British policy is generous and courageous enough."

The Congress passed a resolution by a vote of 3,544,000 to 224,000 that said: firstly, the next war could be prevented, the arms race stopped and the League of Nations made strong again if a Labour Government soon came to power; secondly, such a Government must be strongly equipped to defend the country, play its full part in collective security, and resist intimidation by the Fascist powers; thirdly, until the time that such a Government has eased the international situation the present program of rearmament could not be revised.⁵⁹ The same resolution was passed the next month by the Labour Party Conference⁶⁰ by a nine to one majority.

Although of minor importance during this period Labour continued to worry about the safety of Austria and Czechoslovakia and to oppose the anti-Soviet orientation of many of the western powers, particularly Germany, Italy, and Britain.

Labour wished to believe Hitler's claims during 1936 that he had no intention of attacking Austria, but it remained skeptical about whether he could be trusted. It warned Hitler that it would be a grave error to attempt to annex Austria, as

⁵⁹"TUC Solid for Defense," Daily Herald (London), September 11, 1937, p. 1.

⁶⁰Daily Herald (London), October 8, 1937, p. 11.

a Nazi coup would destroy completely any chance for a settlement which Hitler claimed he wanted. It would force the rest of Europe to regard the Third Reich not as a suitable partner in a European system, but rather "as a deliberate, constant,
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 and incorrigible disturber of the peace."

The Nazi-Austrian Non-Aggression Pact of July 11, 1936 came as a pleasant surprise to British Labour. It believed the pact did much to ease tensions in central Europe. It objected to those who might oppose it on the ground that it would strengthen Germany's influence and power because, it said, that was a short range view based on the "crude" idea that if Germany was surrounded by unfriendly states on all sides she could be controlled. This view, it claimed, was based ultimately on the belief it was wiser to prepare for war than to try to remove the likely causes of it. This treaty was a step towards removing one of these causes. Labour, however, could not bring itself to unconditionally accept the pact. Although it looked good on the surface, because of the British Socialists' lack of trust in Hitler they preferred to reserve final judgment until his real motives could be determined.
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⁶¹"Austria," Daily Herald (London), April 30, 1936, p. 10.

⁶²"Hitler's Coup," Daily Herald (London), July 13, 1936, p. 10.

Hitler's general intentions in eastern Europe and particularly in Czechoslovakia were still a matter of speculation for Labour during 1936 and 1937. As Germany and Italy began to draw together in 1937 Labour saw them as the two main trouble-makers in eastern Europe. It stated, that when left alone after World War I the former powder keg of Europe had become remarkably calm and their differences were being gradually worked out. Labour doubted that Hitler and Mussolini would be able to reach a permanent agreement because of their rivalry to control Austria. These two powers, it was believed, would play for the favor of the Little Entente powers. The Labourites believed probably Yugoslavia and Rumania could be easily won over by Germany. The former because of its fear of Italy and a desire for a German market for its agricultural goods, and the latter because of its fear of Russia. Labour said that if Czechoslovakia could thus be isolated from her allies she would be open to direct attack from Germany. Whether Hitler would follow such a policy, which was so likely to bring war to Europe, Labour said, depended mainly on the internal condition of Germany and no one could say what that was. It insisted the survival of Czechoslovakia was vital as she was the only true democracy in eastern Europe.⁶³ In June 1937 a minor incident between

⁶³Wedgeood Benn, "If Hitler Marches East. . .," Daily Herald (London), January 6, 1937, p. 8.

Germany and Czechoslovakia was played up so much by the Nazi press that Labour was afraid Hitler would present Czechoslovakia with demands she could not possibly meet. Labour urged both sides to submit the incident to an independent investigation before it developed into something neither side could control as in 1914.⁶⁴

Labour worried a great deal about Hitler's attitude towards the Soviet Union. His refusal to deal with Russia was a major source of unrest in Europe. Even worse was Hitler's hysterical attitude wherever Bolsheviks were concerned. This was tolerable when he was just a leader of a fanatical party, but as the head of a great country there could be no place for it. It was obvious that he was not sane when it came to Jews and Communists, Labour believed. This lack of sanity led other statesmen to wonder if it did not go further and if he could be negotiated with at all.⁶⁵ Hitler's refusal to make a settlement with Russia would spoil the chances for a general agreement in Europe, Labour said. Hitler, thus, had brought on his own isolation in Europe and his complaints of encirclement were absurd. The rest of Europe, Labour asserted, could not be

⁶⁴"Whither Germany?" Daily Herald (London) June 24, 1937, p. 10.

⁶⁵"Hitler's Mind," Daily Herald (London), September 12, 1936, p. 8.

expected to make no effort towards security and peace just because Hitler did not like Communism. If European efforts to avert war could not be made with German assistance they must be made without it.⁶⁶

The German-Italian Protocol of October 1936 and the Anti-Comintern Pact concluded in late November 1936 between Germany and Japan were most ominous signs to British Labour. They were ". . . a most menacing step forward in the now unconcealed Fascist drive against the Soviet Union." Hitler's intentions were obviously aggressive for if he really wanted peace he would not continue to refuse to join the Eastern Pact between France and Russia, to rejoin the League, or to enter into a Western Pact. The fact that he rejected these and chose to join a "closed and exclusive alliance" Labour found very disturbing. It warned Britain of the danger to the British Empire if it were faced by a "triple alliance of 'dissatisfied' Fascist Powers flushed with victory over the Soviet Union." The answer to the problem, it stated, was not in building a counter-alliance. This would only increase the dangers. Instead Britain should take the lead in reconstructing the League which would offer peaceful redress to all grievances and one that⁶⁷ could enforce its decisions through collective force. Labour

⁶⁶"Hitler's Threat," Daily Herald (London), September 15, 1936, p. 10.

⁶⁷"It is Our Plain Duty," Daily Herald (London), November 26, 1936, p. 10.

believed in 1937 that the most important aspect of Nazi diplomacy was to isolate Russia. Labour thought Hitler would be willing to sacrifice Franco if this would create a split between the western powers and the Soviet Union. This was what it seemed to Labour he was doing in October 1937 when Germany and Italy dropped their objections and reservations to a non-intervention plan offered by the West to which Russia was in disagreement. By siding with the West they hoped to divide the anti-Fascist block. Labour warned that London, Paris, and Moscow must be more careful in their negotiations to prevent Soviet isolation, as this would be a serious blow for peace in Europe.⁶⁸

In spite of Labour's demand that Britain cooperate with Communist Russia, the British Socialists steadfastly continued to refuse to cooperate with the British Communists. A resolution at the annual Labour Party Congress at Bournemouth in October 1937 approved 1,730,000 to 373,000 an executive report which called upon all members of the party to refrain from any further joint activity with the Communist Party and the Independent Labour Party.⁶⁹

⁶⁸"Be Wary," Daily Herald (London) October 28, 1937, p. 12.

⁶⁹"The Door is Open," Daily Herald (London), October 6, 1937, p. 10.

The Nazi-Italian alliance was not taken too seriously in the beginning by Labour. While it was being negotiated the Daily Herald predicted it would "come to nothing." The Labourites believed there were too many differences between the Italians and the Germans to allow them to form any sort of a close relationship.⁷⁰ Even after the alliance had been signed Labourites did not believe it could last long. W. N. Ewer reported that the Germans did not think much of the Italians and particularly Hitler was not very fond of Mussolini. They remembered Italy going over to the Allies in World War I, and that Mussolini had been one of the chief supporters of that move. More recently there was the Italian support of Austria against the Nazis. Had it not been for Ethiopia Mussolini would still be "anti-German, anti-Hitler and anti-Nazi," Ewer said. He predicted that the union would not last another two years.⁷¹

Labour during this period between the reoccupation of the Rhineland and the Anschluss continued its basic attitude towards Nazi Germany's internal policies. It continued to deplore the violence and brutality of the regime. It still made

⁷⁰Bernard Moore, "The Marriage Will Not Take Place," Daily Herald (London), October 29, 1936, p. 14.

⁷¹W. N. Ewer, "How Long Before the Divorce?" Daily Herald (London), September 29, 1937, p. 8.

much of the failure of the Nazis to solve the problems of Germany and predicted still that these would be its downfall, but reluctantly admitted this downfall would probably not be in the immediate future. Labour maintained still that Germany must be treated fairly and equally and that her complaints be listened to and legitimate attempts should be made to rectify them even if the rest of the world despised the way the Nazis treated their fellow countrymen.

On the second anniversary of the Nazi purge, the Daily Herald in an editorial reflected on Germany's internal situation. Although the Nazis tried to ignore it and encouraged the German people to forget it, the rest of the world must not forget that it was a regime based on mass murder and constant terror. The filled concentration camps and the suppression of all freedoms lent little weight to Hitler's protestations of a desire for peace. Until Hitler gave some positive proof he had nothing but peaceful intentions internationally, Labour said it could not believe he would not also use murder and terror in external policy as well.⁷² Now, Labour asked, could the rest of the world expect Germany's external policy to differ from its internal policy? Could people of other nations expect better

⁷²"Things to Remember," Daily Herald (London), July 1, 1936, p. 10.

treatment than Hitler gave his fellow Germans?⁷³ This characteristic of the Nazis came to the surface in Spain. The German naval bombardment of Almeria in May 1937 proved to Labour that Nazi leaders under "nervous stimulus. . . react not as sane, adult men, but as neurotics, or savages--violently, spasmodically, and dangerously, and brutally." This showed that it was dangerous to expect to deal with Germany as one dealt with other nations. Germany's intentions might be excellent, but "her emotions and her nerves are obviously still uncontrollable, her reflexes unpredictable and violent." If Hitler expected equality of status and treatment, Labour said, he must first give proof of "equality in civilization and equality in behavior."⁷⁴ Labour, thus, began to change its position that German internal affairs should in no way effect how they acted internationally or how they should be treated by other nations. The Nazis' actions in Spain seem to have been the factor that prompted this change.

Labour believed it was internal conditions that would ultimately bring down Hitler, a modification of the theory it had held since the Nazis became a threat in Germany that the

⁷³"Hitler's Terror," Daily Herald (London), October 30, 1936, p. 12.

⁷⁴"A Word to Germany," Daily Herald (London), June 2, 1937, p. 10.

proletariat would first, prevent the Nazis from coming to power, and then after the Nazis had taken over that the workingmen would quickly overthrow him. When this failed to materialize Labour modified the idea to that eventually when conditions became bad enough the workers of Germany would rid themselves of the Nazis. While this expected revolution never came about Labour continued to believe economic conditions were the key to the stability of the Hitler regime, and, therefore, kept a close watch on the German economy for signs of weakness.

During 1936 and 1937 the German economy still seemed very weak and unstable to British Labour. It pointed particularly to Hitler's admission in September 1936 that it was still impossible to raise the wages of the German worker. However, Labour did not accept Hitler's and Financial Minister Hjalmar Schacht's excuse that this was due to the fact Germany had lost her colonies. Rather Labour insisted it was the economic policies of the Hitler regime itself that caused the serious economic situation there.⁷⁵ A further sign of the economic deterioration came in January 1937 when food rationing was introduced in Germany. It was obvious now, Labour said, that the German was having to sacrifice butter for guns.⁷⁶

⁷⁵"Weak Nazi Excuse," Daily Herald (London), September 10, 1936, p. 10.

⁷⁶"Short Rations," Daily Herald (London), January 2, 1937, p. 8.

George Edinger reported to the Daily Herald in May 1937 after a trip to Germany that unrest and dissatisfaction were growing in Germany. He found many Germans worried about the lack of freedom and many of them were saying so privately. The Nazis had lost a great deal of popularity and support since 1933, he said.⁷⁷

The treatment of the Jews, of course, was still a major complaint of the Labour Party. It deplored Hitler's policy toward this group and insisted he must modify his position before there could be any real understanding between the British and the Germans. It warned Hitler he was only hurting himself if his mission was to make Germany a great and respected power. It pointed out that his abuse of this defenseless people was only a mark of inferiority and not greatness—that it won him not respect but contempt.⁷⁸ Labour temporarily saw a ray of hope in Hitler's attitude and policy toward the Jews in January 1938. He had confiscated a particularly revolting issue of Der Stürmer, Julius Streicher's anti-Jewish newspaper. At long last, Labour said, Hitler was listening to his ambassadors who had been warning him of the effect his anti-Semitic policies

⁷⁷George Edinger, "Revolt Begins in Germany," Daily Herald (London), May 3, 1937, p. 10.

⁷⁸"Jew Baiting," Daily Herald (London), July 6, 1937, p. 10.

was having in other countries. It hoped this was a sign that he was beginning to soften his harsh policy.⁷⁹ This hope was very short-lived as a few days later the ban on Der Stürmer was lifted and it was learned that it had been suppressed not for its anti-Semitic articles, but because of an unrelated article⁸⁰ of which the Government did not approve.

In the first days of 1938 Labour had other reasons to believe Hitler might be mellowing. His speeches were much better than earlier ones. They were quieter, more controlled, and less provocative. The old "bluster, fury, and hysteria" seemed to be gone, Labour said. The German sense of being oppressed and held down by the rest of the world which had grown in Hitler to the point of a persecution complex seemed less acute. What was needed next, it proposed, was some positive action to confirm this. It suggested a German withdrawal from Spain, or a "self-censorship" of Mein Kampf to remove the sections which threatened Russia, or perhaps a statement on how the League might be revised to make it acceptable so Germany might⁸¹ rejoin.

⁷⁹"Worth a Cheer," Daily Herald (London), January 24, 1938, p. 8.

⁸⁰"German Jews," Daily Herald (London), January 29, 1938, p. 8.

⁸¹"Steadying Down?" Daily Herald (London), January 12, 1938, p. 8.

The fifth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power at the end of January 1938 found Labour guardedly hopeful that the Hitler regime might have reached its zenith and was on its way down. At the time it admitted Hitler's hold was fairly secure and a revolutionary movement of any serious proportions in the near future was unlikely. Nevertheless, it believed, he would not be able to achieve all of his aims without war and any but a brief war in which he was immediately successful

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would bring revolution.

Hitler's purge of his top army generals in February 1938 suggested to Labour Hitler's hold on Germany was not as strong as had been thought. It said he would have to disband half the army to root out everyone who thought as the purged officers did. It would take months to Nazify the army and to heal the wounds caused by the dismissal of these generals. In the meantime the army was not his only source of trouble. The Germans were growing tired of the Spanish involvement. Germans were being killed and money spent on a cause in which most had no interest. They were also beginning to feel "that they have put their money on a loser." Labour found the industrialists were cooling in their enthusiasm for the Nazi as Göring expanded state control over private enterprise. There was no real unity

⁸²Harold Laski, "Five Years of Hitler," Daily Herald (London), January 29, 1938, p. 8.

in Germany, even among the Nazi Party which was torn by internal rivalry. Because Hitler had destroyed all the organizations which might prove a potential replacement for his regime the hope the Nazis would soon be replaced was ". . .pleasant to believe. . .but not what the facts will support."⁸³

During this period Germany began to make much ado of her lost colonies. Hitler and Schacht tried to blame Germany's economic problems on the fact that Germany had no colonies.⁸⁴ The Nazis stepped up agitation in some of their former colonies, particularly the one in Southwest Africa, during 1937.⁸⁵ Labour did not believe the South African offer to discuss the colonial question with Germany would be accepted. Germany, it said, did not want to discuss colonial problems, it wanted its old colonies back. Hitler needed the excuse of lack of colonies to appease the German workers. Impartial discussion would only expose the weakness of his excuse. The Nazis wanted colonies not for economic reasons as they claimed, but for reasons of prestige, glory, and military power.⁸⁶

⁸³"Germany Wobbles," Daily Herald (London), February 7, 1938, p. 10.

⁸⁴"Weak Nazi Excuse," Daily Herald (London), September 10, 1936, p. 10.

⁸⁵"Nazis in Africa," Daily Herald (London), April 3, 1937, p. 10.

⁸⁶"Why Nazis Want Colonies," Daily Herald (London), September 15, 1937, p. 8.

The Labourites believed Germany would soon make a formal request to the British Government for a return of her colonies. They advised the Government in this case not either to refuse to return them or to agree to return them. Rather they thought the best solution was to do away with the old concept of colonies and to allow all nations absolute and complete equality⁸⁷ of access to raw materials and markets.

Labour remained critical of the Government's general attitude towards Germany during this period. Labour desired friendly but firm relations with her. It was willing to concede to Germany's justified grievances, but believed this should work both ways--that Germany should soften her demands and stop her threats to settle grievances by force. The Chamberlain Government, Labour believed, went too far in 1937 in trying to be friendly with Hitler. It should not try to excuse or explain the Nazi crimes, but should recognize and expose them. The trouble with the Government's policy was it hoped "that war could be avoided. . .by retreat, by condoning crimes, by never making a stand." This, it said, was ". . .not the road away from war but the one sure road towards it." "In other words," Labour said, "friendliness will do no harm and perhaps some good, but feebleness and flattery and a humble enduring of every

⁸⁷"Reply to Germany," Daily Herald (London), June 26, 1937, p. 10.

defiance of law are a dangerous encouragement to more law-breaking. For it will be very surprising if Berlin and Rome do not read the Prime Minister's speech [concerned with German aggression in Spain] to mean that there are no limits to which⁸⁸ they may not safely go."

During Lord Halifax's talks with Hitler in November 1937, Labour took the opportunity to once again state clearly its attitude towards Germany. It favored the Halifax visit and believed much good could come from it. Peace was no longer secure without some understanding with Germany. The internal governmental structure, be it democracy, Communism or Fascism was no reason to exclude a country from the community of nations. Britain certainly wanted justice for Germany, Labour asserted, but not only for Germany. Germany was not the only country with problems and grievances. The only peaceful solution to these problems was through international law and an impartial third party. It was Germany's rejection of this that made the British anxious about her intentions. Germany must be encouraged to participate in a new community of nations. Lord Halifax, it said, "can offer Germany nothing save on those terms. For those terms are the only terms which are fair to all nations as well

⁸⁸"The Basis of Peace," Daily Herald (London), June 26, 1937, p. 10.

as to Germany."⁸⁹

⁸⁹"Talks in Berlin," Daily Herald (London), November 17, 1937, p. 12.

CHAPTER VIII

ANSCHLUSS AND MUNICH: THE FINAL BLOW

The Austrian crisis caught Labour, as it caught the rest of Europe, by surprise. It was not until after Hitler summoned Dr. Kurt Schuschnigg, the Austrian Chancellor, to Berchtesgaden to present his demands on Austria, that Labour really realized the dangerousness of the situation. A month later on March 12 the Nazis invaded Austria and the crisis ended almost before Labour had a chance to react.¹

In February when Hitler's demands were made public, Labour confessed there was nothing Schuschnigg could have done but yield to them. Italy, which had been the protector of Austria, was now Germany's ally. France and Britain would do nothing, as to act would risk war. The day had passed when they were sufficiently powerful to impose their will on Germany. The League, which on paper "guaranteed the existing political independence" of Austria, was "hamstrung and powerless." The clear and unfortunate lesson from this to every great power was, Labour said, that as long as it refrained from touching a vital interest of another great power it could impose its will on any weaker neighbor.²

¹Brand, The British Labour Party, p. 203.

²"Austria," Daily Herald (London), February 16, 1938, p. 10.



The actual invasion of Austria again caught Labour by surprise. Labourites violently condemned the action, which shattered the little faith they still had in Hitler's word. Labour, as much as Chamberlain, wanted agreements with Germany, but it now questioned of what use they would be as Hitler would only honor them as long as it suited his purpose.³ The fact that any aggressor could impose his will on a neighbor if he only dared to act was now even more painfully clear. Much of the blame must go to Chamberlain, Labour insisted. He had made it clear to the dictators that under his leadership Britain would do nothing to deter them.⁴ It was too late to help Austria, said Francis Williams, the editor of the Daily Herald, but the western powers must see to it that aggression not be allowed to succeed again. War was not inevitable, he stated,⁵ but every successful act of aggression made it more likely.

By 1938 Labourites were ready to admit collective security through the League was almost impossible, although they still believed it was the best means of securing peace and that if war were to be avoided permanently the nations would have to return

³"Diplomacy of the Balled Fist," Daily Herald (London), March 12, 1938, p. 10.

⁴"Three Weeks," Daily Herald (London), March 14, 1938, p. 10.

⁵Francis Williams, "After Austria--What?" Daily Herald (London), March 14, 1938, p. 10.

to some form of collective defense. They continued to believe it was not the League or the collective security idea that had failed and had created the tense situation in Europe. Rather, the failure arose from the refusal of the powers to put complete faith in the system and use it effectively. Labour maintained the principle was still sound.

The Austrian crisis once again brought demands by Labour that some sort of collective system be established. This time Labour hoped the system would be on a firmer foundation than before. By establishing collective security on Versailles the powers had made a fatal blunder, as the peace settlement, Labour had always held, was impossible to maintain. Versailles contained too many possibilities for future conflict. From the beginning it was obvious Germany would use every means at her disposal to revise the system. As Germany grew stronger the Versailles settlement could only be preserved if the other powers⁶ were willing to go to war to maintain it. The actual invasion of Austria made the need for collective guarantees even more obvious and urgent, Labour declared. There was no escape from war now, "save by working with redoubled power, taking every difficulty as a spur, for the reconstruction of the collective system."⁷ Now that Hitler's willingness to use force to achieve

⁶"Austria," Daily Herald (London), February 16, 1938, p. 10.

⁷"Diplomacy of the Mailed Fist," Daily Herald (London), March 12, 1939, p. 10.



his objectives had been made clear, Czechoslovakia must be given immediate assurance that Britain and the other League powers would fulfil their obligations to maintain her integrity and independence. This would show Hitler for the first time that the risks involved in aggression were too great. When this was clear, Labour assured its followers, aggression would stop.⁸

Labour insisted that although rearmament was necessary, it must not be allowed to take the place of honest attempts to establish a collective security system. Rearmament would only insure that Britain would not lose the next war, it would do nothing to insure that war would not break out.

The German violation of Austrian independence, the Nazi apparent devotion to aggression, and the unwillingness to co-operate in a constructive security arrangement must not be allowed to stand in the way of some security arrangement, Labour said. In fact, it was all the more reason to pursue collective defense with more vigor. Labour suggested this new arrangement be created within the League between nations bound together by a treaty of mutual assistance against aggression. The Anglo-French defensive alliance could be the nucleus of such a group.⁹

⁸Francis Williams, "After Austria--What?" Daily Herald (London), March 14, 1938, p. 10.

⁹"Arms are not Enough," Daily Herald (London), March 15, 1938, p. 10.

Labour summarized its foreign policy again in March 1938 to contrast it with that of the Government. It had two points of difference; first, Labour believed that by cooperation between nations an international authority must be established capable of guaranteeing all law-abiding nations immunity from attack. It believed this could be done when a sufficient number agreed to treat an attack on one as an attack on all. Until this was done nations would continue to rely on their own strength and alliances to defend themselves, and the arms race and alliance system would continue. These two factors, Labour believed, were far more likely to bring war than to prevent it. Secondly, Labour said, the nations must bind themselves to the rule of international law and justice and must abandon all claims to self-judge their own cases in disputes.¹⁰

The Czech crisis of May 1938, Labour believed, illustrated the point that a firm collective stand could effectively prevent aggression. The firm support given the Czechs by the British and French together with the "cool heads and steady nerves" in Prague had prevented German aggression. This showed, Labour said, the knowledge by any would-be aggressor that it would be met by overwhelming collective resistance would cause him to

¹⁰"The Basis of Peace," Daily Herald (London), March 26, 1938, p. 10.

back down. This must be coupled with the knowledge by a dissatisfied country that any legitimate grievance will be adjusted. The only complaint Labour had with the handling of this crisis was that the powers waited to the last moment to declare their position. This meant that an accident, incident, or rashness on the part of a minor official could have touched off a war. The powers must make their position absolutely clear before a crisis arose so there could be no miscalculation on the part of the
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aggressor.

Labour continued to advocate this policy throughout the summer of 1938 and urged the Government to adopt such a position when the Czech crisis of September began to develop. Clement Attlee on September 1, 1938 wrote that the real danger to peace arose if Hitler, using the minority question in Czechoslovakia to pursue his territorial ambitions, miscalculated the position of the British and French Governments to support the Czechs. He warned the Government that although it must not refuse to deal with countries because they had a form of government different from Britain's, it must not assist that Government in maintaining its dictatorship and in suppressing liberty. This, in effect, was what the Government did when it gave way to forces of aggression. A positive peace program, he said, was one that offered to the

¹¹"Lesson of the Crisis," Daily Herald (London), May 24, 1938, p. 10.



peoples of the world greater advantages than those held out as the rewards of successful aggression. A policy of appeasement, Attlee said, which in effect merely yield everywhere to violence did not promote peace but rather war. The true path to peace, he emphasized once again, was in convincing aggressors their actions would be overwhelmingly defeated. Attlee emphasized that the road to peace led back to a strong League, one that would not concern itself with maintaining the status quo, but with removing causes of friction and dealing with the causes of war, especially economic causes.¹²

Labour was willing to modify its base for collective security, as the Czech crisis of September developed. It called on Britain, France, Russia, and the United States to make it clear to Hitler that any attempt to coerce the Czech Government or to weaken her in any way would be resisted by these four powers.¹³

By 1938 Labour had resigned itself to the fact that re-armament was necessary and inevitable. It even admitted it was regrettable but true that Germany paid far more "respectful attention" to an increase in Britain's arms program than to her

¹²C. R. Attlee, "Policy to Rally the World," Daily Herald (London), September 1, 1938, p. 10.

¹³John Marchbank, "Hitler Must Get Clear Warning," Daily Herald (London), September 5, 1938, p. 11.

peaceful words of protest to Hitler's aggressive policies. However, Labour believed that more than just increased armaments was needed. It also demanded a new foreign policy--one in which the peaceful nations held firm against the aggressors.¹⁴ Attlee said in July 1938 that Labour's attitude to armaments was that they were only justified as a support for a constructive peace policy. The amount of arms required, he said, depended on foreign policy and the world conditions obtaining at any one time. While Labour still opposed the policy which resulted in the conditions as they were in 1938--that was the Government's mishandling of foreign affairs, the abandonment of collective security, and the free hand given to aggressors--it accepted the fact that some increase in armaments was necessary.¹⁵ This same support for rearmament was reiterated in September by John Marchbank, the head of the Railway Workers Union. He said, "We will do our part in building up the national defenses to enable us to resist aggression and assist the Government in such action as could be taken to restrain and repel unprovoked attacks on other nations."¹⁶ The annual Congress of Trade Unions in September

¹⁴"Arms are not Enough," Daily Herald (London), March 15, 1938, p. 10.

¹⁵C. R. Attlee, "The Peace That People Seek," Daily Herald (London), July 26, 1938, p. 8.

¹⁶John Marchbank, "Hitler Must Get Clear Warning," Daily Herald (London), September 5, 1938, p. 11.

voted overwhelming to support rearmament on the grounds of necessity.¹⁷

The Munich crisis not only intensified Labour's support of rearmament, but also its demand that something in addition to rearmament was needed.

With the rapid increase in defense production by 1938, Labour began to worry about the effect it might have on the British worker. It warned that defense measures must not be allowed to violate civil liberties. It was particularly concerned about industries taking away hard won worker's benefits and gains on the excuse of national defense necessity.¹⁸

During 1938 Labour grew even more critical of the Government's handling of foreign policy. This was particularly true after Anthony Eden resigned as Foreign Minister in February 1938. It saw Eden's resignation as evidence that Chamberlain was now ready to give the dictators a free hand. Another manifestation of this was that there was no British protest to the demands Hitler had forced on Austria in February. Labour predicted a pact of "appeasement" with Germany and Italy, and at the same time a weakening of the ties between Britain and France. Chamber-

¹⁷"Arms and the TUC," Daily Herald (London), September 7, 1938.

¹⁸"True Defense," Daily Herald (London), October 15, 1938, p. 8.



lain's new policy also meant, Labour said, giving up the hope the United States might participate in a "real policy of world appeasement," as it was now "angrily and rightly suspicious" of Chamberlain's policy. It meant Russia would be even more suspicious of the western powers and this might easily lead to her withdrawal from a "discredited" League. It meant the abandonment of Spain to Fascism. To central Europe, Labour said, it would mean that if they were to be safe they must "hurry now as quickly as possible into the German orbit." It was, Labour warned, "an end of all that remains of Britain's moral authority in the world."¹⁹

Labour placed much of the blame for the situation in 1938 on the Government's blundering since 1931 and more particularly on Chamberlain's "virtual dismissal of Mr. Eden, his patent desire for friendship at any price with the dictators, his eager advances to Rome, his anxiety to start conversations with Berlin, and his expressed contempt for the League." He let the dictators know they could act as they chose without fear that Britain would oppose them with force. Eden's dismissal, Labour claimed, was the signal for Hitler's taking Austria and for the renewed vigor with which Italy acted in the new rebel offensive in Spain. Thus, Chamberlain bore direct responsibility for the "fall of Vienna

¹⁹"Premier's Policy," Daily Herald (London), February 23, 1938, p. 10.

and the threat to Barcelona." The only answer to reverse this policy was a general election which would return a Labour Government, it said.²⁰

Labour deplored the Government's return to alliance diplomacy. It had come to view the Anglo-French alliance as a necessary evil, but constantly called upon the Government to expand it into a real collective security system. It objected most to the pre-World War I thinking that bilateral alliances were enough to keep the peace.²¹

Labour resented the attempts by Chamberlain and his party to brand Labour as the "war party." It pointed to its long record of attempts to bring about true world appeasement by removing the causes of war. It said it had since the signing of the Treaty of Versailles advocated major revisions in the settlement. It had wanted abolition of war indemnities, and had supported Germany's entry into the League. It had long called for open access to raw materials and markets, and removal of other economic causes of war. Labour had been the leading advocate of disarmament. It had been the strongest supporter of the League, collective security and international law under which

²⁰"Three Weeks," Daily Herald (London), March 14, 1938, p. 10.

²¹"Axis into Wedge," Daily Herald (London), May 19, 1938, p. 8.

peaceful adjustments of disputes could be achieved. The Conservatives' abandonment of all of these had caused the present situation in which war seemed a real likelihood. Labour had never urged rash action--only a firm stand and a refusal to be "bullied." Labour believed its policy of firmness was far more likely to preserve peace than the Government's policy of backing down in the face of aggression. This would only cause the dictators to demand more until either Britain would in the end have to fight or recognize the dictators as its masters.²²

All the way up to Munich Labour continued to predict Hitler was in trouble at home. However, it appeared even Labour was no longer taking this too seriously or placing much hope in this view, for it always hastened to add that an overthrow was not in the foreseeable future.

In February 1938 it appeared the Nazis were in trouble with the generals and the big industrialists. Labour seemed to almost hope it would not be these groups that would overthrow Hitler. "When he does go down at last," the Daily Herald wrote, "it will be before the forces of humanity, freedom, tolerance and justice." Thus, even as late as 1938 Labour had not abandoned its long established and long awaited theory that the workers would

22C. R. Attlee, "The Peace People Seek," Daily Herald (London), July 26, 1938, p. 8.

save Germany from Hitler.

Labour believed Hitler's renewed persecution of the Jews in the summer of 1938 was partly because of his frustration from being unable to intimidate the Czechs in May and partly as a safety valve for the growing discontent over the shortage of food.

M. A. Ewer attacked what he said was the "great Nazi myth" that the German army was unequalled and irresistible. This had become tiresome as well as dangerous, he said. The army was, in fact in no condition to wage a major war. The new army was only three years old. There was a lack of officers and NCO's. There was every reason to believe Germany had not made up the handicap in arms with which she started. Speed in production, shortage of raw materials had led to poor quality in their new armaments. The air force was the one exception. However, air power would not be decisive unless in overwhelming superiority. The German railroads in 1938 did not compare in efficiency with those of 1914. The German economy, Ewer said, would not be able to stand the strain of war either in agriculture, finance, administration, or industry. The fact that Germany could not stand a major, prolonged war was the reason she was counting on the "blitzkrieg." Ewer said, ". . .it is a tempting vision. But--there are too many buts." Air power had to be overwhelming. Miscalculations

23"Germany," Daily Herald (London), February 12, 1938, p. 8.

or breakdown would be disastrous. The techniques of blitzkrieg was very difficult, he said. Faith in it was waning as the war in Spain and China had given reason for doubt. Austria gave even more. The Austrian invasion was to have been a dress rehearsal and, militarily, it had been a "complete fiasco." To underestimate Germany would be a mistake, he said, but to regard her as "the most powerful military machine the world has ever seen, is simple nonsense."²⁴

Another Labourite wrote that he believed Hitler and Mussolini would remain "great forces and terror" in the world only so long as the people of Germany and Italy supported them morally. In his opinion the time might be near at hand when because of the "resulting wretchedness of such continued support will defeat all the propaganda, all the drilling, all the war-like circuses on earth."²⁵

M. N. Ewer wrote in August 1938 that "Hitlerism reached its full flood with the annexation of Austria and now is turning, perhaps already ebbing." He saw many signs of discontent in Germany. Enthusiasm was waning. The people were losing confidence in Hitler. There was a "depression of spirit" among the middle-

²⁴W. N. Ewer, "The Great Nazi Myth," Daily Herald (London), June 22, 1938, p. 8.

²⁵T. D., "Fat Man's Conscience," Daily Herald (London), July 6, 1938, p. 8.

class, as well as the workers, the peasants, the aristocracy, the army, and even among the youth. No one was using the "Heil Hitler" greeting any more. Even the S.G. was settling down, no one wanted war, especially the army. There was no illusions, he said, about an easy victory. Germans were talking about the possibility of war with "a sort of puzzled bitterness." The fear Hitler might drag the country into war was turning the nation against him. The propaganda had ceased to have an effect, he reported. The people were tired of it and distrusted it. Everything was suspected as preparation for war. Even the anti-Jewish campaign had defeated its purpose, Ewer claimed. It had gone too far and was now arousing pity for the Jews. In economics there was no longer confidence that Hitler could cure Germany's economic ills, as things were getting worse, not better. Ewer had some doubts as to whether Hitler could overcome these problems. He believed Hitler had lost much of his old demagogic flair. He thought Hitler might be forced to gamble with war in the hope a quick victory would restore his popularity. However, Ewer said, it was not at all positive the generals would obey Hitler if he ordered a war.

While the Austrian crisis took the Labourites more or less by surprise, they realized the imminent danger of Nazi aggression

²⁶W. N. Ewer, "Twilight Over Hitler," Daily Herald (London), August 26, 1938, p. 8.



against Czechoslovakia for several months before the Munich crisis of September 1938.

During February 1938, while the Austrian crisis was still at its height and there seemed to be little that could be done for her, Labour was already beginning to be concerned about the fate of the Czechs. It was disturbed by the British Government's refusal to give public reassurances to Czechoslovakia that Britain would stand by France against any threat to Czech integrity and independence.²⁷ Labour attacked the new slogan "Would you fight for Czechoslovakia?" which was being used by certain groups within the Conservative Party. It was strange, Labour said, that those who said they would not fight for Czechoslovakia because it was a small, far away land would fight for Sierra Leone, Sarawak, the Solomon Islands, or St. Helena, just because they belonged to Britain. This did not prove they wanted war as they were saying about Labour because it favored supporting the Czechs. It proved only that they would fight under certain circumstances. Labour asked them to think what would happen to Europe if Hitler took Czechoslovakia. Labour said, "a fire will be alight and who can tell where it will spread?" Labour urged that guarantees be immediately given to the Czechs to the effect that any attempt by Germany to settle their differences by force

²⁷"Premier's Policy," Daily Herald (London), February 23, 1938, p. 10.

would be met by collective resistance. At the same time it should be made clear to Germany that there can be a peaceful examination and settlement of her grievances if she wished. If Germany could prove any case for change then it must be done. If that right were refused, Labour said, then it would not be justice but power politics and Germany would have a case for using force.²⁸

With the Nazi occupation of Austria in March the Czech's position became even more threatened. Labour was sure that if Hitler attempted an invasion the Czechs would fight and that would start a European war. Britain could not stand aloof and risk the defeat of France. That would leave Germany all-powerful in Europe. Therefore, Labour urged once again that the Government with the other League powers declare they would fulfill their League obligations to maintain the integrity and independence of Czechoslovakia.²⁹

Yet, the Government did not offer the desired guarantees. Chamberlain stated Britain had no "vital interest" in Czechoslovakia and therefore could give no guarantee. Labour disagreed. Besides being the last strong-hold of democracy in central and

²⁸"No More War," Daily Herald (London), February 25, 1938, p. 10.

²⁹Francis Williams, "After Austria--What?" Daily Herald (London), March 14, 1938, p. 10

eastern Europe, it was also allied to the French. Britain's military alliance with France plainly showed that Britain could not tolerate the destruction of France. Therefore, any war, whatever its origins, which threatened defeat of the French would automatically become Britain's war.³⁰

Not until the Czech crisis of May, did Labour get the firm stand it desired from the Government. This incident proved their point about collective resistance, Labourites said. When Hitler understood clearly that an attempt to settle problems by force was likely to be met with overwhelming resistance, he dared not act. That was the right way to handle the situation, but it was wrong to wait until the last minute to make it known. Had Britain's position been clear from the beginning the crisis likely would not have occurred.³¹

The Czechs' willingness to negotiate with the Nazis won hearty approval from the British Socialists. The Czechs were probably the most anti-Fascist nation in the world, but they did not let that interfere with their willingness to discuss with the Germans their mutual grievances. In this the Czechs proved themselves to be first-class democrats, Labour said, and even more

³⁰"Premier's Speech," Daily Herald (London), March 25, 1938, p. 10.

³¹"Lesson of the Crisis," Daily Herald (London), May 24, 1938, p. 10.



deserving than ever of British support.

The Labourites were suspicious of Lord Runciman's visit to Czechoslovakia in August. They said that if he was going as a genuinely independent adviser that was good, but if he was going as the representative of a great power to a small one to impose the will of the former on the latter then this was not so good. Czechoslovakia had won the admiration of the world by her reasonableness in considering the demands of her minorities and for the courage she showed in standing up to the threat of force against her. There were also rumors that Britain would try to make her give up her alliance with Russia to please Germany. She must not be forced to do this, Labour warned, as it would greatly weaken the Czechs and would further isolate Russia. Labour insisted Russia's cooperation with the West must be in-
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creased not decreased.

As August ended Labour continued to be concerned about the Czechs. Labour said that war was not inevitable, and if it came it would be through the deliberate act of some man or group of men. The Daily Herald again warned Germany that an attack on Czechoslovakia would not be isolated, but would bring a new world

32 "Peacemakers," Daily Herald (London), June 16, 1938, p. 8.

33 "Runciman's Visit," Daily Herald (London), July 27, 1938, p. 10.

war. Germany, it said, should not have any illusions about a quick, easy victory.³⁴ Labour observed that it was obvious the Czechs were making every effort to make fair concessions to the Sudetens. It was up to Hitler in the end whether or not these would be accepted. In either case Hitler would bear the responsibility for what followed.³⁵ The problems between the Czechs and the Sudetens were not so great that they could not be solved. Hitler alone was standing in the way of a settlement. Certainly there would be no question of solving the problems by war were Hitler not involved. Labour believed a satisfactory agreement could be reached based on the proposals made by the Czechs at the end of August.³⁶

At the annual T.U.C. Convention in early September, the delegates passed a resolution calling for Britain to support the Czechs.³⁷

A Hitler speech in the first days of the new crisis made threats, but no threat of immediate aggression which Labour had feared. It seemed to Labour that "at the eleventh hour he had

³⁴"The Lanark Speech," Daily Herald (London), August 29, 1938, p. 10.

³⁵"Hitler's Choice," Daily Herald (London), August 30, 1938, p. 8.

³⁶"Waiting," Daily Herald (London), September 5, 1938, p. 8.

³⁷Daily Herald (London), September 9, 1938, p. 11.

understood what such action by Germany would involve and he refrained." There was an urgent need, Labourites said, for a joint declaration by Britain, France, and Russia giving full support to the Czechs.³⁸

In the rapidly moving crisis this feeling of optimism changed quickly. A Hitler ultimatum on September 12, demanding the right of self-determination, changed the situation drastically--"the situation which seemed so hopeful in the morning by evening had become very bad." Labour believed there was now only a slight chance to stop Hitler, but it had to be taken. A strong British warning to Hitler might stop him at least temporarily and that might provide enough time to find a solution,³⁹ Labour said.

Labour firmly supported Chamberlain's first visit to see Hitler at Berchtesgaden, September 15. It was a wise move, Labour believed, to "cut through normal diplomatic procedure at a time when something out of the ordinary was needed." Labour insisted the Russians be kept informed--they must not be isolated in this crisis. Labour cautioned Hitler not to misunderstand

³⁸"Hitler's Speech," Daily Herald (London), September 12, 1938, p. 8.

³⁹"Voice of Britain," Daily Herald (London), September 14, 1938, p. 8. Dalton, The Fateful Years, pp. 174-207. Dalton gives the best account of Labour's activities during the Munich crisis and its attempts to bring pressure on the Government to stand firm.

the British attitude--not just the Government's but also that of people as a whole. That attitude was, Labour declared, one of "uncompromising resistance to any attempt by Germany to settle what can and should be a matter of reasonable negotiation by an act of deliberate unprovoked aggression." Also the world must know clearly what Hitler considered a satisfactory solution. Chamberlain's purpose, Labour asserted, was not to strike a private bargain, but to put forth the British and French position, to hear Hitler's views and to report back to the cabinet and the French Government. Above all the Czech Government must participate in any future discussions.⁴⁰

Labour made it plain at that time it wanted a peaceful solution to the problem, but not one at any price. It was ready to make a stand if an acceptable solution could not be gained from Hitler. It admitted a settlement without fighting could be reached at any time simply by giving Hitler everything he wanted, but this simply would not do. The latest Czech plan, it maintained was a fair basis for settlement. It was "just and even generous."⁴¹

On September 19 the National Council of Labour issued a

⁴⁰"Good Luck, Chamberlain!" Daily Herald (London), September 15, 1938, p. 8.

⁴¹"Britain's Attitude," Daily Herald (London), September 16, 1938, p. 10.

statement in support of the Czechs.

The National Council of Labour earnestly desirous of maintaining peace, views with dismay the reported proposals of the British and French Governments for the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia under the brutal threat of armed force by Nazi Germany and without prior consultation with the Czechoslovakian Government.

It declares that this is a shameful betrayal of a peaceful and democratic people and constitutes a dangerous precedent for the future.

The National Council of Labour expresses its profound sympathy with the Czechoslovakian people in the grievous anxieties through which they are now passing.

It reaffirms its conviction that enduring peace can be secured only by the re-establishment of the rule of law and the ending of the use of lawless force in international relations. 42

Chamberlain's second trip to see Hitler, September 22-23, was not welcomed by Labour as the first had been. The Labourites denounced vehemently the role of the British Government in the surrenders of the second meeting at Godesberg, and the preceding pressure put on the Czechs to accept Hitler's demands. It said every decent man and woman in Britain offered sympathy to the Czechs and felt ". . . shame at the part of our Government in their betrayal. Never in history has there been so disgraceful a case of intolerable pressure brought to bear upon a small Power by two great Powers to force her to surrender her integrity to a

42"British Labour Stands by the Czechs," Daily Herald (London), September 20, 1938, p. 1.

third." Labour claimed all British influence in Europe was now gone. Chamberlain had stood before the world as a "courageous defender of international law until two hours with Herr Hitler sent him hurrying home to carry out with indecent haste Herr Hitler's demands."⁴³ As Chamberlain returned to Germany one week after his first visit, Labour wondered with bitter sarcasm whether Hitler would be ". . .satisfied with so faithful an execution of his requirements?" The only thing that was clearly understood, Labour said at the time of this second trip, was that in one week's time a democracy had been surrendered by its friends, and British influence on world affairs had been dealt an almost fatal blow.⁴⁴

Hitler's demands at this second meeting proved only further to Labour that he was not to be satisfied. His demands were so impossible that no country could be expected to agree to them.⁴⁵ Labour during the days following this second meeting held a series of protest rallies calling for no further sacrifices to be imposed on the Czechs.⁴⁶ Attlee told one of these rallies that the Ger-

⁴³"Hitler Wins, Daily Herald (London), September 22, 1938, p. 8.

⁴⁴"One Week," Daily Herald (London), September 23, 1938, p. 10.

⁴⁵Daily Herald (London), September 26, 1938, p. 13.

⁴⁶Daily Herald (London), September 27, 1938, p. 5.

man demands did not come from national sentiment, but from sheer aggression as outlined in Mein Kampf. He said it was still not too late to avert war by a strong stand. Britain and France must now stand by their pledges as Russia had done throughout the whole crisis. Such a stand by these three powers backed by world opinion could prevent war. If war came the blame would clearly be on Hitler, and Attlee did not believe he would take such a risk. Labour urged a strong stand, Attlee said, not because it wanted war, but because it knew there could be no peace if aggression went unchallenged. While he did not want war, he said there were some things that could not be surrendered. If war came Labour and the British must meet it with courage. Mr. C. Duke, leader of the Municipal and General Workers Union, said at this rally it would be better to fight ". . . now rather than when we are driven too far along the line of concession, until we are finally too weak, without morale, and without determination" to fight.

Hitler's demands made at Godesberg made war likely within four days, Labour claimed. In that period everything must be done to prevent the war if it could be prevented with honor and justice. If war came it must be faced ". . . with calmness, with resolution, with unshakable courage." Hitler's demands which

⁴⁷"Four Fateful Days," Daily Herald (London), September 27, 1938, p. 8.

went beyond the question of the Sudetenland simply could not be accepted. Hitler seemed determined to have war, and it was better that it should be fought while Britain had strong allies than when Hitler had become master of Europe through successful aggression.⁴⁸

The third meeting between Hitler and Chamberlain, this time with Mussolini and Daladier, at Munich was greeted with a little more support from Labour than had been the one at Godesberg a week before. Labour regretted the Czechs and the Russians had not been invited, but agreed this might have prevented the meeting. Nevertheless, Labour insisted the Russians and Czechs must be kept informed of everything that was done there. Labour's cautious support of this meeting came from the fact that it looked as though Hitler was backing down from his October 1 deadline. Labour believed this was caused by world pressure that had been brought to bear on him during the preceding week since Godesberg.⁴⁹

On the day the Munich Agreement was signed and the war threat lifted, Labour felt the same great emotion of relief the rest of Britain and the world felt. However, Labour said, when

⁴⁸John P. Merlehan, "If War Comes," Daily Herald (London), September 28, 1938, p. 10.

⁴⁹"Four Power Conference," Daily Herald (London), September 29, 1938, p. 8.



this initial feeling had passed there would be deep shock at the sacrifices made for peace. The details had not yet been released on September 30, but Labour hoped Chamberlain and Daladier had taken advantage of their "strong position. . .backed by Russia⁵⁰ and world opinion."

Labour thought that the mobilization of the British fleet had finally convinced Hitler at the last moment that Britain would fight if he invaded Czechoslovakia by force. He was⁵¹ also aware the German people did not want such a war.

As the details became known, Labour admitted the Plan, although open to grave criticism, was better than the Godesberg terms laid down by Hitler. A number of the more brutal items had been dropped. It said Hitler, "for the first time has had to realize that there are forces in the world more powerful⁵² than the absolute will of a dictator."

This reluctant acceptance quickly changed again to outright opposition to the Government's action at Munich, and to a denunciation of the Agreement signed there. The Government's policy since 1931, Labour charged, had resulted in triumph after

⁵⁰"The Four Agree," Daily Herald (London), September 30, 1938, p. 8.

⁵¹"The Plan Examined," Daily Herald (London), October 1, 1938, p. 8.

⁵²Ibid., p. 8.



triumph for the dictators. That policy had broken the League and killed collective security. It had brought British influence in world affairs to the lowest level in two hundred years. It was directly responsible for the war scare of the previous week. The only thing that had prevented war from breaking out was at the last minute collective preparedness of Britain, France, and Russia had halted Hitler. Unfortunately the part of the British Government in that was only a desperate expedient, not the basis of a genuine policy, and at the very moment when its first consequence was seen in Hitler's agreement to negotiate, it was abandoned. Labour deplored Chamberlain's attitude towards the Soviets. They were excluded from the meeting, but were expected to help oppose aggression if war broke out. It appeared to Labour that Chamberlain was⁵³ deliberately trying to isolate Russia.

Attlee spoke officially for the Labour Party on October 3, 1938 in Parliament about the Munich Agreement. He said Labour felt relief that war had not come, but it did not believe peace had been established. He said the situation was merely an armistice in a state of war. Labour was unable to ". . . go in for carefree rejoicing. We have felt that we are in the midst of a tragedy." Munich brought only humiliation to Britain, it had

⁵³"The Next Step," Daily Herald (London), October 3, 1938, p. 10.

brought victory to "brute force." The terms had not been negotiated, he said, they had been laid down as an ultimatum. The people of the world had witnessed the betrayal of a "civilized democratic people" to a "ruthless despotism." Democracy had been dealt a terrible blow. Munich was one of the greatest diplomatic defeats ever suffered by Britain and France. It was on the other hand a tremendous victory for Hitler, Attlee charged. With only a show of force he was able to achieve a dominating position in Europe that Germany had been unable to win after four years of war under the Kaiser. He had overthrown the balance of power in Europe, Attlee warned. He had destroyed the last fortress of democracy in eastern Europe and he had opened the way for food, oil and other resources which he needed to consolidate his military power. It was time, he said, for a world-wide peace conference, not just four power talks. The United States and Russia must be included. Mussolini and Hitler could prove their good faith by abandoning aggression in Spain and supporting such a conference.

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Munich was the last step in Labour's movement throughout the thirties towards all out resistance to Nazi aggression. By October 1938 Labour was supporting through necessity the Anglo-French alliance, rearmament, and was willing to fight rather

⁵⁴"Attlee's Speech on Munich," Daily Herald (London), October 4, 1938, p. 5.

than back down to Hitler's unjust demands. It still believed in its earlier program of collective security, disarmament, and peace, but it was willing to lay these temporarily aside in the face of the dictators' determination to achieve their territorial desires through the use of force.

CONCLUSION

Between the years 1929 and 1938 the British Labour Party's foreign policy underwent a reluctant but major change. In 1929 Labour favored and fought for disarmament, universal collective security through the League of Nations in place of bilateral, secret alliances, resistance to British participation in wars other than through the League by a general strike, revision of the unjust articles of Versailles in Germany's favor, treatment of Germany as an equal among nations, and peaceful settlement of disputes among nations through the World Court and international law. By the end of 1938 Labour had come around to voting for Britain's rapidly increasing rearmament program and was admitting that disarmament was impractical for the immediate future. The Labourites had finally recognized that the League was useless to stop aggression, through no weakness of its principles but through lack of cooperation and support of the big powers. They supported the Anglo-French alliance even though it did not work through the League and was of the "pre-World War" variety that Labour had opposed for so long. By the time of Munich Labour had given up all hope that cooperation with and appeasement of the Nazis would maintain peace. In September 1938 Labour preferred to fight rather than sacrifice the prestige and honor of Britain and the independence and territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia to the pressures and threats of force of Hitler.

The sole cause of this change in Labour's foreign policy

was the rise of the Nazis and their and other Fascist regimes' aggressive foreign policy. Labour, although it always firmly believed the system of international relations it supported was the surest and possibly only way to insure world peace, realized the governments of the world were not going to follow its system. So, reluctantly and often bitterly, it readjusted its program to meet the real world situation. It never gave up hope that the situation was temporary and when the fascist problem had been settled the nations would learn from their mistakes during this crisis and return to collective security through the League and real disarmament.

The Spanish Civil War was the turning point in Labour's transition. Before Hitler's open support of Franco, Labour was not able to take a firm stand on what should be the British attitude towards Nazi Germany. The British Socialists deplored what Hitler was doing to Germany and the German people, particularly his treatment of the workers, Socialists, Communists, and Jews. They strongly disliked Hitler's method of conducting foreign relations and his unilateral denunciation of treaties, but until his actions in Spain they approved the results of his actions in international relations if not the means by which they were accomplished. Labour was more critical of the British and French Governments in these instances for their refusal to negotiate a fair settlement of these trouble points and thus forcing Hitler to take the action he did. Hitler before his inter-

vention in Spain was working to overthrow those unfair restrictions of Versailles that Labour itself had long favored revising. The only two actions of Hitler before the Spanish involvement which Labour denounced completely were the abortive Nazi coup d'etat in Austria in 1934, and the renunciation of the Locarno Treaty which Germany had freely signed and Hitler had pledged to respect. The Spanish intervention by Germany had nothing to do with removing treaty iniquities but was outright aggression. From that point on Labour began to demand that Hitler's aggression be resisted, but still insisted the door be left open for readjustment of Germany's justified grievances. Labourites came to realize much sooner than the British Government that the Nazi Government was different from ordinary governments and could not be bargained with or trusted to honor a promise. Therefore by the time of Munich Labour believed little good and possibly much harm would come from negotiating with Hitler. Rather it believed that if Britain, France, and the Soviet Union would stand together firmly opposing Nazi aggression Hitler would back down.

Because of basic ideological differences the British Socialists allowed their prejudices to exaggerate certain aspects of Nazi Germany while underestimating others. Labour even as late as 1938 believed (or desperately hoped) that the German workers would rise up and throw off the Nazi tyranny. The Labourites had long believed their Germany colleagues to have

the strongest labour movement in Europe. Until January 1933 the British Socialists did not believe the German workers would tolerate the establishment of a fascist dictatorship in Germany. When one was established Labour expected during the first year or so that it would be overthrown by the workers. As it became evident this was not going to happen, Labour modified its prediction to a rather vague-far-distant but inevitable rising of the democratic forces in Germany. This was based more on ideological faith than on actual evidence.

Labour tried to ignore or play down the improvements the Nazis made in Germany's economic and social conditions. At the same time it exaggerated those economic problems which the Nazis were unable to solve. Labour stressed constantly between 1933 and 1938 the fact that the Nazis had done little to raise the wages of the German worker, but at the same time said little about the rapid reduction of unemployment in Germany. It put much emphasis on the loss of freedom of the workers and the trade unions, but seldom mentioned Nazi attempts to provide social and cultural advantages for the working class.

Labour did not until very late realize fully the strength of the Nazis, and more particularly, Hitler. Before 1933 it did not believe the Nazis would be strong enough to come to power. After they in fact did, Labour said Hitler and his followers would not be able to hold power, or even that they did not have power but were only the tools of the nationalists, industrialists



and the generals. As Hitler remained in office month after month, Labour declared it was through no strength of his own or his party, but only because he had sold out his socialist program and his party's left wing to big business and the army and that these forces allowed him to remain in office as he was still useful to them. It was not really until Hitler's purge of the top ranks of the army in February 1938 that Labour began to fully understand the true strength of Hitler's hold on Germany. Even then Labour did not give up its belief that sooner or later Hitler would be overthrown by force.

Labour's political position in Britain during the thirties made it difficult if not impossible for it to make its opposition felt or appreciated by the Government. The only hope it had of influencing Britain's foreign policy was not through Parliament, where even after the election of 1935 it was badly outnumbered, but by going "over the head" of the Government by appealing directly to the people. Labour firmly believed throughout this period that it had the overwhelming support of the British people behind it in its approach to international relations. The Peace Ballot of 1935 seemed to confirm this, and in fact, Labour charged the Ballot convinced the National Government to the extent that the Government adopted Labour's foreign policy of collective security through the League until after the election of 1935 and thus destroyed what Labour believed was its strongest campaign issue. The Government, in the eyes of Labour, quickly

abandoned the program based on collective security and the League shortly after it was assured of another five years in office.

It is impossible to say whether or not the firm position the Labourites took towards Germany after 1936 was completely or in some part due to the fact that their influence on the Government was so small they would have to bear no responsibility for the results. However, judging from the attitudes of the leaders such as Dalton, Levin, and Attlee, who by 1936 had won out completely over the pacifist leaders such as Lansbury and Cripps, it seems this position was genuine and would have been pursued had Labour been in power.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The London Daily Herald was the main source for this paper. It was controlled editorially by the Trades Union Council and was considered the official organ of the British Labour Party. During the thirties the Daily Herald had the largest circulation of any British newspaper, going over two million for a time. It tended to be rather spectacular in its presentation of the news, but editorially it was reasonable and responsible. All of the important Labour leaders used it frequently to present their views on various issues, but the paper seemed to favor the majority opinion of the party in its editorials. In the intra-party squabble between the pacifists and the Bevin-Dalton faction which favored strong collective security, the paper sided with the latter group.

Among the memoirs and biographies there are no worthwhile works on Arthur Henderson or George Lansbury which relate to the subject of this paper. Clement Attlee's autobiography As It Happened, is very brief and sketchy and of very little use. Alan Bullock's, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, is a useful account of Bevin's activities in the field of foreign policy and particularly his attitude towards Nazi Germany. Hugh Dalton's, The Fateful Years, 1931-1945, is also a very valuable and detailed account of the behind the scene development of the Labour Party's shift in foreign policy. Herbert Morrison, an Autobiography is concerned primarily with Labour's domestic



policy and is of little use in the study of its program for international relations. The Eric Estorick book, Stafford Cripps, Master Statesman and Michael Foot's Aneurin Bevan, give a fairly good account of the pacifist minority's activities within the party.

Of the secondary works the best by far is Carl F. Brand's The British Labour Party, A Short History. Brand gives a very good account of the evolution of Labour's foreign policy during the thirties. Elaine Lindrich's work, British Labour's Foreign Policy, is a bit too brief and without enough detail on some events. She does not show the vacillation of the party's attitude on many issues, and thus gives the impression that Labour very early adopted a firm, uncompromising attitude towards Hitler's Germany.

The Parliamentary Debates were not used as a source for this paper, as it was found after a preliminary investigation of them that all the important debates in Parliament were accurately and adequately covered in the Daily Herald with additional comments which better reflected the Labour Party's position.

The Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, were likewise not used, as the papers to which Labour had access were those from the period 1929-1931 when there was little serious concern about the Nazis and as the Nazis were not yet in office, there was little if any comment on their foreign policy program.

Also, the papers dealing with the Nazis were almost all sent by Sir Horace Rumbold, the British Ambassador to Germany, who was not a Labourite, and Arthur Henderson's reaction to these is not available.

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