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ABSTRACT

GEOFFREY DAWSON, THE TIMES AND THE FORMATION OF THE BRITISH APPEASEMENT POLICY TO 1936

by Peter A. McKinnon

The contention of this dissertation is that Geoffrey Dawson, as editor of The Times of London, influenced the formulation of British foreign policy to a degree far greater than his qualifications merited during the 1930's. More particularly, it is shown that from January, 1935, to July, 1936, the crucial months during which Hitler openly violated the treaties of Versailles and Locarno, Dawson used his position to promote a policy of appeasement. Without close rival, The Times of London in the 1930's was the most powerful and influential news medium in Britain--perhaps in all of Europe--and both at home and abroad it was recognized as the semi-official voice of the British Government. During this time the paper lay under the autocratic control of Geoffrey Dawson.

Dawson was singularly unqualified, both temperamentally and intellectually, for the task of guiding British public opinion on foreign affairs in a crisis era. Unread in European history, unfamiliar with European political problems, and limited to the use of his native language, he lacked the knowledge and wisdom necessary to distinguish truth from fiction. He had achieved his role

as editor of The Times, and all previous positions, not on the basis of talent, but through the mediation of friends. Despite his limitations, particularly in the field of international politics, he monopolized the right to speak for The Times in foreign affairs.

On the crucial German issue, Dawson failed to see Hitler as anything but a potential friend, and he presented this opinion not only to The Times' readers but also to his many close friends and associates in the British Cabinet. Thus, the British Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, a man with little or no capacity for the complexities of foreign affairs in a troubled Europe, depended heavily upon Dawson for advice. The editor responded with council by intuition, offering opinions which could not be supported by evidence. Personal values and prejudices easily colored his political judgments. In particular, his highly developed sense of ethics led him to believe that in her attitudes toward Germany, Great Britain had to seek expiation for her guilt in helping to impose the Treaty of Versailles. These beliefs were reinforced by his friends in the Cliveden set, even as their preconceptions were reaffirmed by reading The Times. In this way, a self-sustaining cycle of pro-German sentiments developed among these influential Englishmen.

Although pro-German, Dawson was not a Fascist; at the same time, he paid scant attention to Fascist ideology, believing that it was peripheral to the main problems of international relations. This attitude made it easier for Dawson and his associates to embrace and promote appeasement. By July, 1936, the fundamental features of

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appeasement had emerged, and Dawson had contributed significantly to the formulation of that policy.

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APPEASEMENT POLICY TO 1936

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PREFACE

One of the most difficult historical problems of European international relations in the 1930's concerns the emergence of the British policy of appeasement. A key figure in the formulation of that policy was Geoffrey Dawson, editor of The Times of London. Although numerous historians have called attention to the role of Geoffrey Dawson, they have only offered brief comments about his overall influence. Charles W. Mowat, in Britain between the Wars, 1918-1940, hints at the role of Dawson and suggests that it should be thoroughly investigated. In The Appeasers, Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott also refer to Dawson's role, but they do not explore the significance of The Times. Finally, Margaret George, in The Warped Vision, suggests the important part played by Dawson and The Times. However, no complete study of the relationship of The Times and its editor to British foreign policy during the 1930's appeared. This study is intended to fill this gap, at least partly, for it closes with the year 1936.

During the 1930's The Times was under the overwhelming influence of Geoffrey Dawson, who, as editor-in-chief, appointed himself foreign affairs editor as well. His influence went beyond the published word of The Times; it went right into the British cabinet, which was composed entirely of Times readers and partially of Dawson's friends. An understanding of how the appeasement policy was formed requires a

close examination of this man.

The purpose of this study is twofold. It is to investigate the significance of The Times, and the influences which worked upon Dawson as man and editor. Furthermore, it will focus on the impact of Dawson on The Times, and The Times' influence on the government and the British public. More particularly, it concentrates on the critical months between January, 1935, and July, 1936. These eighteen months were crucial to the success of Hitler's program, because during this time he developed the correct assumption that he would not be thwarted by Britain, the most important Western power. Geoffrey Dawson contributed significantly to the British policy that offered Hitler the evidence for his assumption.

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And finally, to my wife, who was a tower of strength. This dedication should read: To Katherine, James, and David.

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CHAPTER I

THE EMERGENCE OF THE TIMES AS BRITAIN'S PRESTIGE NEWSPAPER

During the 1930's The Times of London had an authority which was almost scriptural.¹ When John Walter founded the paper in 1785 he could not foresee that his newspaper would become "paramount among all the newspapers in the world" in the twentieth century.² The newspaper, originally called the Daily Universal Register, was renamed The Times by Walter when it was only three years old.³ The Daily Universal Register was not the first British daily newspaper; The Daily Courant was founded in 1702.⁴ The Times, however, was to become far more influential.

Until early in the nineteenth century newspapers had established no traditions of political independence. They were the natural tools of ministers, or of statesmen who opposed the government of the day. Many people believed that a newspaper could be a useful ally, and, therefore, journalists were regarded as men that could be hired,

¹Ronald Elythe, The Age of Illusion (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), p. 200.

²Francis Williams, Dangerous Estate: The Anatomy of Newspapers (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1958), p. 61.

³John C. Merrill, Carter R. Bryan, and Marion Alisky, The Foreign Press (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), p. 43.

⁴Williams, Estate, p. 16.

managed, and manipulated.⁵ This was the newspaper world into which John Walter introduced his unique press. Ironically, The Daily Universal Register began with the principal idea of drawing attention to Walter's new printing method, called the Logographic press*, which he set up in Printing House Court in London and until 1790 bookselling and publishing were more important to Walter than his newspaper.⁶

Walter demanded qualities in The Times that were different from those of other newspapers. He wanted impartial reporting of all events of public interest, and he wanted the editor of the paper to form his own opinion about each event and not bind the paper to the views of one political party. Walter also felt a newspaper should provide something for all tastes.⁷ Walter did not succeed in carrying out his ambitious plans for The Times; he gradually allowed his paper to be influenced by statesmen and ministers just as all of the other papers had been.

John Walter II, who had worked for the paper since 1803, assumed control of The Times after his father died in 1812. Walter II wanted the paper to have the qualities his father believed a paper should have. Because he was bored with the technical aspects of the publishing business, Walter II devoted all of his time to the editorial

*Logographic press means the use of the word as a type unit instead of the letters.

⁵A Newspaper History 1785-1935 (London: The Times Publishing Company, Ltd., 1935), p. 12.

⁶William D. Bowman, The Story of "The Times" (New York: The Dial Press, 1931), p. 37.

⁷Kurt von Stuterheim, The Press in England, Trans. W. A. Johnston (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1934), p. 48.

policy of the newspaper. Statesmen and others found he could not be managed or controlled. When he died in 1847, the prestige of The Times was so great it was known as "the leading journal of Europe."⁸

Walter II took over The Times when the Napoleonic War was the most important news of the day. At this time newspapers in England depended on the European journals for their news; the journals arrived in England where post office clerks summarized the news and sent their edited versions to the newspapers. The owners of the newspapers paid the government a fee each year for this service. Walter II eschewed this second-hand method with its attendant evils of censorship, staleness, and partisanship. He believed that those papers who supported the government received their news summaries before those papers who did not, but, nevertheless, he stalwartly published his anti-government opinions in The Times. Walter, by late 1812, decided to obtain his own articles to report what was really happening in the war and he established a news smuggling system from the Continent, comprised of a small fleet of sailing vessels running between Dover and the blockaded Continent. John Walter, by sending reporters to countries to report information first-hand, established the "germ of the modern conception of foreign correspondence."⁹ His system worked so much better than the government's that Lord Castlereagh, the Foreign Secretary, sought out Walter when he needed news of the French defeat at Dresden.

⁸ A Newspaper History, p. 13.

⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

The owner of The Times believed that the paper's responsibility was to act in the public interest even if it hurt The Times itself. When, in the early 1840's railroad speculation was rampant in Europe, Walter warned the public about the dangers of speculative investments and lost thousands of pounds in advertising revenue from the railroads. Lloyds of London expressed the affection and gratitude of the nation when they presented Walter with a plaque honoring the sense of the public responsibility shown in The Times. When Walter died The Times had earned the title of "the leviathan of the press."¹⁰

John Walter II alone did not develop the tradition of The Times; capable people assisted him, most notably Thomas Barnes, the editor from 1819 to 1841. A man of independent mind, academic rigor, and literary talent, Barnes surprised his friends by accepting the appointment as editor of The Times. They felt the appointment would impair his chances for literary fame because "journalism remained a venal occupation and that journalists lay open to tempting offers from French Governmental as well as English sources."¹¹

Barnes sacrificed personal fame for the anonymity of the editor's chair. He did not go out socially and avoided the public while keeping in touch with those people of political influence.¹² The editor insisted upon this right of anonymity; Barnes "made The Times the most obstinately anonymous newspaper in the world."¹³

¹⁰Stutterheim, Press in England, p. 507.

¹¹A Newspaper History, p. 20.

¹²Bowman, "The Times," p. 122.

¹³The History of The Times, Vol. I: The Thunderer in the Making 1785-1841 (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1935), p. 205.

This unsung editor fashioned the newspaper that "both in its home and foreign news, its Parliamentary, Legal, Commercial, [sections] and the authority and weight of its comment, excelled all other journals."¹⁴ He believed the mission of a journalist "was to display the facts of a situation by early and accurate news, and to point without fear or favor the most practical way of dealing with them. This meant that no party considerations must interfere with the public welfare. The party which in the hour of crisis was wise and strong was the party for him, and consequently for The Times."¹⁵ The function of the press to Barnes was "to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the events of the time and instantly, by disclosing them, to make them the common property of the nation."¹⁶

The Times was regarded by Barnes as an integral unit; it was organized to have internal consistency and to speak its own mind. He sought the broadest possible audience, and it included all classes of people who could read. The editorial policy of The Times called for action, "The Times spoke out, called out, shouted out, thundered out with the intention of stimulating public opinion towards public action."¹⁷

The tradition and reputation of The Times was established during the years of Walter II's ownership and Barnes' editorship. The paper developed "the best of all traditions since honor and honesty

¹⁴Bowman, "The Times," p. 149.

¹⁵A Newspaper History, p. 20.

¹⁶The History of The Times, Vol. II: The Tradition Established 1841-1884 (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1939), p. IX.

¹⁷History of The Times, I, 397.

are intermingled with it, the tradition of political independence."¹⁸
 Barnes elevated The Times "from its collateral peers to a place of
 lonely eminence," where The Times judged good and evil "from its
 high empyrean."¹⁹

Although John Walter II and Thomas Barnes "made The Times the
 world's greatest and most influential newspaper," John Delane raised
 it "to still higher pinnacles of authority and power."²⁰ After the
 death of Barnes in 1841, John Delane became the editor of The Times.
 Unlike Barnes he had wide social gifts, and he often dined at the
 Mayfair Clubs. People welcomed and recognized him wherever he went.
 The ladies informed him of happenings in court and society, and
 statesmen consulted him regularly. However, he resembled Barnes very
 closely in that he judged political parties by each issue and measure
 they stood for. Consequently, he was charged with being inconsistent,
 as Barnes had also been charged. He was, of course, no more incon-
 sistent than Barnes, and he was considerably more intuitive. He
 possessed an uncanny talent for deducing news from nothing more than
 the slightest hint.²¹

These qualities as well as other qualities bolstered Delane's
 self-confidence. He respected the confidences of statesmen and
 stated their views with moderation and common sense; he never dis-
 closed any source of information obtained by The Times. Delane made

¹⁸ A Newspaper History, p. 12.

¹⁹ Stutterheim, Press in England, p. 53.

²⁰ Bowman, "The Times," p. 265.

²¹ A Newspaper History, p. 35.

it clear to statesmen that he could not be cajoled or influenced into acting against his better judgment. He met great people of the land as an equal, and increased the social status of The Times. People who had always believed a journalist sold his pen to the highest bidder realized that a new era had begun with Dalane. In the 1850's, under Dalane, the circulation of The Times was three times as large as the circulation of all of the other daily papers in London put together. In 1851 Lord John Russell stated The Times was so powerful "that once The Times had passed the sentence of death on an administration execution would speedily follow."²²

The Crimean War brought as many victories to Dalane and The Times as it did to the allies. The Times published the British-French ultimatum to Russia before the Tsar received it officially; in fact the Tsar read it in The Times before he received it through official channels. Dalane did not trust Napoleon III and sent men throughout France to check on the French military situation. The editor knew Britain was not prepared and pleaded editorially for more arms. He believed war would come and he wanted to make sure the British public got all the facts so he sent men all over Europe to gather information. The Crimean War showed friend and foe alike "that The Times could make generals, ministers, and governments."²³ The suffering and misery of the troops were shown to the people at home, and the responsibility was placed in the proper quarter--that is, the government. The Times correspondent in the Crimean War, William Howard

²²Ibid.

²³History of The Times, II, 166.

Russell, sent information to Dalane, telling of the horrid conditions in the Crimea. Dalane always supported Russell and published his correspondent's articles, hoping to awaken the nation and its rulers to the truth. For example, this was how Florence Nightingale discovered how much work had to be done at Scutari.²⁴

The power and influence of The Times extended throughout the world. President Lincoln welcomed Russell as The Times war correspondent during the Civil War and told Russell that The Times "is one of the greatest powers in the world, in fact I don't know anything which has much more power--except perhaps the Mississippi."²⁵ Lincoln, however, regretted that the sympathies of The Times lay with the Confederate cause.

In 1871, The Times was regarded as the monarch of the press and Dalane "was said to possess an empire which is co-extensive with the area of civilization."²⁶ Dalane brought the editorial to maturity. Although Barnes had pioneered the use of the editorial, Dalane breathed uniformity into it; he has been called the "greatest editor not only of The Times but in the whole of English journalism."²⁷ Ministers, ambassadors, and people of importance sought his friendship, for they knew The Times was studied throughout the world "as though it were the authentic voice of Downing Street."²⁸

²⁴A Newspaper History, p. 36.

²⁵Williams, Estate, p. 92.

²⁶A Newspaper History, p. 35.

²⁷Stutterheim, Press in England, p. 65.

²⁸Ibid., p. 66.

While Dalane's retirement in 1877 diminished the editorial voice, it did not weaken the prestige of The Times itself. Dalane's replacement, Thomas Cherney, a Times correspondent for twenty years, did not have Dalane's social gifts, genius for friendship, tact, intuition, or personality; nor did he have Dalane's curiosity.²⁹ The control of The Times reverted to its owner John Walter III. Under Cherney The Times tended to support the Conservative Party and to be more interested in domestic affairs than international affairs. Walter III seemed to guide this change of The Times supporting a political party. The political independence established under the strong editors, Barnes and Dalane, underwent a softening with the more passive Cherney. This change may have been a personal matter rather than one of principle, for the official History of The Times comments that the editor remained independent and true to the paper's traditions.³⁰

After Cherney resigned in 1894, George Buckle became the editor until 1912. Buckle believed the editor of The Times should comment on any affair, institution, or interest, and his wariness of becoming involved in a conflict of interest caused him to refuse to sit on boards or committees which he might have to criticize in print.³¹ The Times, under Buckle, had the same independence as it had under Barnes. The duty of The Times remained that of obtaining "authentic

²⁹ Bowman, "The Times," p. 281.

³⁰ History of The Times, II, 521.

³¹ The History of The Times, Vol. III: The Twentieth Century Test 1884-1912 (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1947), p. 2.

information of political, social, and economic affairs and to comment upon them without regard to private ambitions or interests."³²

Politically, Buckle leaned toward the Conservative Party; the editor believed this leaning to be consistent with the proprietor's views as well as with those of the reader with whom The Times and its proprietors had identified themselves.³³

John Walter III died in 1894, and his son Arthur Walter became the new owner. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, The Times found itself in economic trouble. The penny newspaper had become popular in the 1880's; The Times sold for three times as much, and, as a result, the circulation of The Times decreased. In the late 1890's, sixty thousand copies of The Times were sold daily while the Daily Mail sold eight hundred thousand copies; therefore, the profits of The Times were very low.³⁴ Although The Times had the best staff, only those persons who were educated were attracted to the paper. Buckle believed The Times was an institution that should be revered. Barnes had seen The Times in a more prosaic light--to him The Times was a newspaper and not an institution; it was a political instrument to express his ideas and views but the paper also had to be popular enough to make a profit. He did not care what people said about The Times as long as they bought and read it. In Barnes' day reading The Times had become a British habit, and, by the 1890's,

³²Ibid., p. 13.

³³Ibid., p. 16.

³⁴Ibid., p. 118.

the habit had developed into a tradition. The "audience for which the paper was produced had gradually defined itself and had begun even in Dalane's time to exercise an influence upon the conductors of the paper it chose to read."³⁵

The problem of elite circulation and small dividends caused a great deal of concern among the shareholders. The proprietors of The Times had given shares of the paper away for years as occasional gifts to friends and relatives. In the 1890's one of the one hundred shareholders, because he disagreed with The Times policy, sought to discover precisely who directed or ran the newspaper. The result was a court case in which the court granted the dissolution of the partnership and ordered the property sold.³⁶ Lord Northcliffe, who owned a chain of newspapers which included The Evening News, The Daily Mail, and The Weekly Dispatch, bought The Times in March, 1908. The purchase of The Times ended one hundred and twenty-three years of autocratic control by the Walter family.

Lord Northcliffe reigned over The Times from 1908 to 1922. His ownership has been called the lurid period in the history of The Times.³⁷ One scholar refers to Northcliffe's control as The Times' "Babylonian Captivity."³⁸ The official History of The Times states that Northcliffe never understood the established tradition of The Times, which was

³⁵Ibid., p. 15.

³⁶A Newspaper History, p. 38.

³⁷John D. Scott, Life in Britain (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1956), p. 233.

³⁸Stutterheim, Press in England, p. 95.

anonymity and independence. Northcliffe's heavy hand was apparent in defiance of longstanding Times tradition. He did not want to be known as the heir of a tradition, but rather as the man who saved The Times.³⁹

Northcliffe succeeded in solving the financial problems of The Times, which was bankrupt when he took over. Northcliffe revolutionized the paper; he shortened articles and made them lighter and easier to read. He summarized the speeches of politicians, demanded brevity and clarity from his writers, and established The Times Publishing Company. The Times owes to Northcliffe "its being as a national daily newspaper and register, the epitome of the world designed for the information of the whole range of executive, professional and political men and women who, by their calling, intelligence and education, rank as the most influential constituency in Great Britain. The Times would have floundered without him. Northcliffe alone had the genius. It was he, his work, his inventions, and his changes that alone re-established the property."⁴⁰

Although Northcliffe revived The Times economically in the twentieth century, he never solved the problem of the relationship between himself and the historic institution that was The Times. He did not understand the tradition that had been established in the paper; the chief proprietor tried "to impress his strong personality and political predilections upon a paper equally strong and

³⁹History of The Times, III, 581.

⁴⁰History of The Times, III, 586.

politically mature."⁴¹ The History of The Times claims that Northcliffe never succeeded in making The Times his personal organ; he could not mold it to his likeness. The Times' traditions of anonymity and independence gave strength to those employees whom Northcliffe thought he could dominate, so that Northcliffe, while seeking harmony found only disagreement, the staff members rejected his control because they wanted The Times to remain impersonal.⁴² This constant conflict characterized what is generally called the lurid period of The Times' history.

In the fourteen years of Northcliffe's ownership there were three editors of The Times: George Buckle (1884-1912), Geoffrey Dawson (1912-1919), and Henry W. Stead (1919-1922). When Northcliffe died in August, 1922, a struggle for the ownership of The Times developed between Lord Rothermere, the brother of Lord Northcliffe, and John Walter IV. John Walter IV won, and the Walter family regained control of the paper, thus ending the "Babylonian captivity" of The Times.

There were really two new owners of The Times, John Walter IV and a secret backer, Major John J. Astor. Astor became the chairman of The Times Publishing Company, and the chief proprietor in October, 1922. He had underwritten ninety per cent of the cost, and Walter provided the remaining ten per cent as well as the family name.⁴³

⁴¹A Newspaper History, p. 42.

⁴²History of The Times, III, 582.

⁴³John E. Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times (London: Hutchinson, 1955), p. 205.

Aster did not want to become like Northcliffe; instead, he wanted to remove "The Times from the Northcliffian ambience."⁴⁴ Walter and Aster, therefore, established a permanent body of trustees so that personal interests in the paper should be forever subordinate to the maintenance of its high traditions. As The Times' permanent Board of Trustees, they created a tradition which remains today. They chose the reigning Lord Chief Justice, the President of the Royal Society, the Warden of All Souls, Oxford, the Governor of the Bank of England, and the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. These men were "as formidable an assembly of representative potentates as could well be found."⁴⁵ Their job, naturally, was to approve or disapprove the sale of The Times to anyone. According to the newly drawn up charter, these men could not be stockholders in The Times Publishing Company.

Aster and Walter IV moved quickly; they removed Henry Wickham Steed from the editor's chair. The official History of The Times maintains that the reason for this action was that Steed had left his personal imprint on the paper, although the same argument could be used against any capable editor.⁴⁶ They replaced Steed with Geoffrey Dawson. Dawson in January, 1923, started his second term as editor of The Times, and he held this position until 1941. During the period of Dawson's editorship, The Times enjoyed the period of

⁴⁴The History of The Times, Vol. IV, Part II: The 150th Anniversary and Beyond, 1912-1948 (New York: MacMillan Co., 1955), p. 768.

⁴⁵Scott, Life in Britain, p. 234.

⁴⁶History of The Times, IV, Part II, 769.

its greatest glory.

By the 1930's The Times of London had risen "to a position never before or since equaled by any other newspaper."⁴⁷ This was amazing because The Times was printed only in London and had no provincial editions, as did most other papers in England. The attention that The Times paid to London reflected the attitude that not only was London the capital of the British Government, the home of the court, the center of finance and commerce, and "the great magnet for the ambitious and successful, the natural meeting place of all 'society,'" but also that other cities were insignificant by comparison.⁴⁸ Such a limiting of horizons can, of course, be a weakness as well as a strength.

The Times is known as a "prestige" or "quality" paper, as distinguished from "popular" papers, which are for mass readership, and it is an international as well as a national paper. The Times is considered one of the three foremost newspapers in the world.⁴⁹ Ithiel deSola Pool, in his study of Prestige Papers, contends that in each major power there is one single newspaper that stands out "as an organ of elite opinion."⁵⁰ This newspaper is always very intimate with, or close to, the government and it is read abroad as well as at home by those whose business it is to keep track of world affairs.

⁴⁷Williams, Estate, p. 72.

⁴⁸Scott, Life in Britain, p. 3.

⁴⁹Merrill, Foreign Press, p. 31.

⁵⁰Ithiel deSola Pool, The Prestige Papers (Hoover Institute Studies: Series C Symbols No. 2; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1952), p. 1.

Usually the prestige paper has a small circulation since it is aimed at the business community and the intelligentsia. It is read primarily by public officials, scholars, business leaders, and professional people. Although its circulation is small, its influence is enormous. In discussing prestige papers the Royal Commission stated that "the relatively high purchasing power of their readers make them [prestige papers] a valuable advertising medium for the most expensive goods and enables them to command a high advertisement revenue."⁵¹

In many respects prestige papers are the best index of elite behavior. The prestige paper is produced by men who are "part of the elite and share the typical life pattern of the elite" and write for an elite audience.⁵² John D. Scott claims the appeal of the prestige paper is that of an historical survival, going back to the nineteenth century, embracing the idea "of those small circulation, highly responsible political newspapers, whose interminable leaders [editorials] were studied by ministers, diplomats, bishops, high officials and a country gentry and merchant class who took a semi-professional interest in politics."⁵³ It is a journal for the reader who "is already well informed and wants new information and interpretation to fill the gaps."⁵⁴ It speaks with authority on all topics

⁵¹Great Britain, The Royal Commission on The Press 1947-1949 Report, CMD. 7700 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), p. 87.

⁵²deSola Pool, Prestige Papers, p. 7.

⁵³Scott, Life in Britain, p. 232.

⁵⁴Merrill, Foreign Press, p. 46.

or subjects through its staff.

The editor of the quality paper usually comes from the same circle of the elite as his readers. Because of the power of a prestige paper, the editor, by his selecting what is and what is not important, is in an extraordinarily influential position. The editorials are read with great care by government personnel and private concerns throughout the world.⁵⁵

The Times of London during the years treated in this investigation was the quality paper in Great Britain. The circulation of The Times amounted to approximately two per cent of the British press, or about 191,271 daily issues.⁵⁶ The Times had the reputation of being a semi-government organ.⁵⁷ It was considered to be "definitely the journal of Britain's governing class."⁵⁸

Perhaps a fair question would be how did The Times conceive of itself during the years under investigation? In its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary edition in January, 1935, The Times stated, "it's never been the purpose of The Times to capture a particular kind of reader."⁵⁹ The readers of The Times are to be found "wherever the exact chronicling of events and authoritative comment upon them are demanded as essential, they are rich men, poor men, bishops,

⁵⁵deSola Pool, Prestige Papers, p. 12.

⁵⁶Royal Commission on The Press, p. 190. (Appendix 3)

⁵⁷de Sola Pool, Prestige Papers, p. 140.

⁵⁸Merrill, Foreign Press, p. 45.

⁵⁹The Times (London). Anniversary Edition of 150 Years. January 1, 1935, p. 8.

statesmen, scholars, artists, soldiers, sailors, tradesmen, teachers."⁶⁰ He, the reader, is the omnipresent Englishman, "the great arbiter, to whom this journal for one hundred and fifty years has submitted its services so that he shall know older truths, sad truths, joyful truths, fearful truths, grand truths."⁶¹ On June 11, 1936, Lord Chief Justice Lord Hewart, a member of The Times Board of Trustees, speaking before an International Publishers Congress in London, stated, "he was sure they would agree that it was a matter of no little dignity and no little responsibility to be associated with that unique newspaper of which it might be said without offense that it exhibited day by day infallibility without arrogance, omniscience without condensation, fastidiousness without severity, and that it was monumental without being statuesque."⁶² In both the view of The Times and that of Lord Hewart, it is apparent that they believed that the paper was for everyone. However, one seems to feel, in Lord Hewart's case, that it actually was meant for those who knew and understood The Times.

The Times, however, appeared to present quite a different picture to other readers. It was commonplace in Britain for people to feel that The Times usually wrote what the government was thinking.⁶³ Sir Anthony Eden commented in his Memoirs, ". . . The Times was regarded

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² The Times (London), June 12, 1936, p. 18.

⁶³ Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, The Long Week-end (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1963), p. 361.

~~in~~ Europe as the organ of the British Government."⁶⁴ Wheeler Bennett, ~~in~~ Munich, Prologue to Tragedy, noted that The Times in the eyes of foreigners was regarded as representing the views of the British Government.⁶⁵ The German Ambassador in London, Leopold von Hoesch, wrote a letter to The Times on its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, January 4, 1935, noting that the Germans regarded The Times as the unofficial voice of educated opinion in Britain rather than one of many voices competing in the cacaphony of the journalistic marketplace.⁶⁶

The press reached a position of unprecedented power as a creator of opinion during the mid 1930's. In 1936 Thomas Harrison and Charles Madge conducted an opinion poll and found that thirty-five per cent of the people in Great Britain with any definite opinions received them from the press.⁶⁷ This was twice as much as the next closest source--friends--and three times as great as the next public source--radio.⁶⁸ The British Broadcasting Corporation was controlled by the government, and its presentation of news was never interpreted by commentators. The only real source of opinionated news was the press, and of all the newspapers the influence of The Times was the most

⁶⁴ Sir Anthony Eden, The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon. "Facing the Dictators" (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1962), p. 197.

⁶⁵ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich: Prologue to Tragedy (Duell, Sloan & Pierce, 1948), p. 96.

⁶⁶ The Times (London), January 4, 1935, p. 8.

⁶⁷ Charles Madge and Thomas Harrison, Britain by Mass Observation (Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1939), p. 30.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

~~s~~ignificant.

The man who would edit such a paper would have at his disposal ~~t~~he greatest legacy of good will and trust ever afforded an editor ~~i~~n British history. It is part of the tragedy of our times that this ~~e~~normous trust fell to Geoffrey Dawson.

CHAPTER II

A SKETCH OF AN EDITOR--GEOFFREY DAWSON

John D. Scott, author of Life in Britain, and one of the most respected British historians, pointed at Geoffrey Dawson, editor of The London Times during the 1930's, and said, "there goes one of the three most important men in England."¹ The fact that a member of Britain's literary and scholarly establishment would rank The Times editor along with the Prime Minister and King indicates the awesome respect with which The Times was regarded as an institution, and Dawson as a man. More modestly, Sir John E. Wrench, in his official biography of Geoffrey Dawson, listed the editor as one of the twelve most important Englishmen in the 1930's. Wrench attributed to Dawson powers equalling those of the most powerful cabinet minister, and yet described him as "surrounded by a heavy curtain of secrecy."²

Of Dawson's early life, a few salient facts appear. He was born George Geoffrey Robinson in Skepton-in-Craven, West Riding, Yorkshire, on October 25, 1874.³ In August, 1917, he changed his name to Geoffrey Dawson out of respect for his aunt, who had raised him from early youth. By fulfilling her deathbed request to change his name,

¹Scott, Life in Britain, p. 234.

²Wrench, Dawson, p. 366.

³Ibid., p. 19.

he performed a sentimental act; although he was remembered generously in his aunt's will, he was not motivated by economic gain as he was actually wealthy in his own right by 1917.⁴ As a young boy of nine he had left his aunt's home to attend Aysgarth Preparatory School. Later he went to Eton as a scholarship boy, and he had made a fair reputation as a scholar.⁵ After Eton he matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford. In 1898, he left Magdalen, and, having passed the civil service examination, he took a job as a second-class mail clerk for the Government Post Office. While working in this junior clerkship he learned of his election as a Fellow of All Souls, Oxford.⁶

All Souls "has historically be associated with the State religion."⁷ It was only after 1854 that non-Anglicans could enter, and even then there were only a few. Oxford University has had very close associations with the classes which, through wealth, influence, and social position, dominate British society. Oxford was for the "collegiate, Anglican, ruling class."⁸

At All Souls, Dawson made friendships which lasted throughout his lifetime, among them, John Simon, Edward Halifax, and Robert H. Brand. The opportunity to associate closely with men of intelligence and high social rank gave Dawson much satisfaction; his experience at

⁴Ibid., p. 146.

⁵Ibid., p. 24.

⁶Ibid., p. 29.

⁷Scott, Life in Britain, p. 175.

⁸Ibid., p. 176.

All Souls was one of the great moments of his life.⁹ It was also a very beneficial association for his later professional career in journalism, for at All Souls he gained entrance into a comparatively exclusive circle of Englishmen.¹⁰ Many of the offices of the British Government, Charles W. Brodnib noted in 1932, were filled by men who wore the sign of the Mallard, the ancient emblem of All Souls. A study of the British system, Brodnib commented with wry humor, might be entitled "Government by Mallardy--A Study of Political Ornithology," for All Souls was an "unofficial club for running, or helping to run the destinies of the British Empire."¹¹

Dawson's influential connections were soon to be useful to his career. He did not enjoy his work in the post office, and certain well-placed friends in the Colonial Office effected his transfer to that branch of the government service.¹² In March, 1899, when Dawson came to the Colonial Office, relations between the British Government and the Government of the Transvaal were strained. Dawson worked for the next two years at the South African desk of the "Office" and enjoyed this job. He read all the material he could find on South Africa.

New opportunities for Dawson's advancement emerged when Lord Milner, the High Commissioner in South Africa, wanted to strengthen the civil service under his command. In October, 1901, Lord Milner

⁹Wrench, Dawson, p. 30.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 29.

¹²Ibid., p. 31.

held interviews in England with aspirants for these new positions, and Dawson, who had recently been appointed assistant private secretary to the colonial secretary, applied for an interview, although he believed he had little chance of being accepted. He enjoyed working for the Colonial Office, but believed this new position would be more challenging. Lord Milner was attracted to him and accepted Dawson; he sailed for South Africa in October, 1901.¹³ The official biographer of Dawson says that with this opportunity to serve Lord Milner "circumstances were pushing him [Dawson] where his talents and tastes could be shown."¹⁴ In 1903, Dawson became Lord Milner's private secretary. Dawson's promotion was more than a recognition of his professional competence; the relationship between the two men was almost that of father and son. They seemed to understand each other instinctively, and their biographers remark that each affected the views and the personality of the other.¹⁵ No one left more of an impression upon Dawson than did Lord Milner.¹⁶ Their friendship outlived their professional association, lasting until Milner's death in 1924.

Both men were expansionists at a period in British history when many Englishmen turned with enthusiasm toward empire. Nearly twenty million square miles were added to the British Empire in the period

¹³John E. Wrench, Alfred Lord Milner. The Man of No Illusions 1854-1925 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1958), p. 239.

¹⁴Wrench, Dawson, p. 34.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁶Wrench, Lord Milner, p. 369.

from 1880 to 1900. England was happy to assume the burden of civilizing and converting to Christianity natives in distant lands.

The culmination of this imperialism was the South African Boer War, which caused Englishmen to re-evaluate their position with regard to the value of expansion. The majority of the people and parliamentary leaders were afraid of British isolation from Europe, and the undesirable image as a bully. Those who believed in the Boer War, and the willing support which the colonies gave to it, were reinforced in their belief in the necessity of imperial unity and of empire to England's future as a great power.¹⁷

Milner was among the leading imperialists. "Imperialism," he wrote, "which for so long appealed only to the farseeing few, should become the accepted faith of the whole nation."¹⁸ His "first great principle was follow the race," by which he meant that "all of the Peoples, of the United Kingdom and their descendants in other countries [should be] under one flag," because this is "the bond of common blood, a common language, common history and traditions."¹⁹

Milner believed the empire should be "a group of states independent of one another in their local affairs, but bound together for the defense of their own interests and the development of a common civilization."²⁰ He thought that this community would not be bound by

¹⁷Goldwin Smith, A History of England (2nd ed. Rev.: New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), pp. 649-50.

¹⁸Wrench, Lord Milner, p. 386.

¹⁹Lord Milner, The Nation and The Empire (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1913), p. XXXV.

²⁰Milner, Nation and Empire, pp. 90-91.

alliances, but would be in a permanent organic union and would play an important role in preserving peace in the world.²¹

In South Africa, during the Boer War, Lord Milner hoped that, once peace was achieved, he could strengthen those elements in South Africa that wished to be part of the British Empire. He wanted a prosperous South Africa that would attract British immigrants and tip the balance against the influence of the Boers. With the numerical balance against the Boers, Milner hoped to absorb them into a predominantly British culture and civilization.²²

In April, 1905, the Earl of Salisbury replaced Milner as the Governor of Transvaal and Orange River Colony. Various explanations have been given for Milner's exclusion. According to one view, he retired because of exhaustion.²³ Another view suggests that Milner left because he could not live down the Boers' feelings that he had been the author of the Boer War.²⁴ A more convincing explanation, however, would seem to be that the British Government, rejecting Milner's commitment to English supremacy, wanted to foster a spirit of equality and cooperation between the Dutch and English population in South Africa.

Milner recognized that once he was deported from South Africa his conception of the need for English racial supremacy might be in

²¹Wrench, Dawson, p. 36.

²²Alfred L. Burt, The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth from the American Revolution (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1956), p. 607.

²³Ibid., p. 610.

²⁴Robert C. K. Ensor, England 1870-1914 (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 389.

jeopardy. For that reason, he took precautions to make sure that a few stalwart supporters of his views would remain in influential positions. Milner thus arranged for Dawson to become the editor of the Johannesburg Star in October, 1905. Under Dawson, Milner believed the Star would be a rallying point for those South Africans who fervently desired to keep South Africa in the empire.²⁵

Dawson was one of several men charged with keeping alive Milner's views during his exile. Milner had gathered around him a group of young men whose devotion, both personal and political, had earned them the title of Milner's Kindergarten. These men bore the brunt of the fight for closer relations between South Africa and Great Britain after Milner left in 1905. They had a house in the suburbs of Johannesburg, called the "Moot House," where they met regularly.²⁶ The definition of a "Moot" has been described as a house of assembly or a house of debate.²⁷ These meetings would continue to be held after all of them had returned to England. Dawson's diary is filled with Moot meetings at Cliveden, and other locations in London and England.

Usually, this group included, in addition to Dawson; John Buchan, who became the Governor General of Canada, 1935-1940; Robert Brand, Dawson's friend at All Souls, and a Director of The Times during the 1920's; Dougal Malcolm, who became the future Sir. D. Malcolm, K.C.M.G.,

²⁵Wrench, Dawson, p. 44.

²⁶Ibid., p. 53.

²⁷James R. M. Butler, Lord Lothian Phillip Kerr 1882-1940 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), p. 19.

President of the British South African Company 1937-1956; and Phillip Kerr, eventually Eleventh Marquess of Lothian in 1930.²⁸ These men remained Dawson's friends for life. They had all served their political apprenticeship under Milner in South Africa, and they all held "a firm faith in the British Empire, evolving steadily by constitutional and peaceful methods, into a Commonwealth of sovereign, self-governing nations linked by common ideals, aspirations and purposes, and a common loyalty, embracing and transcending but not obliterating lesser local loyalties."²⁹ They were part of the imperial federation movement. Their faith reflects a sense of optimism about human nature; they were willing to trust, to grant concessions, and to increase local responsibility within the empire, feeling that the most practical solution would also be the most humane.³⁰ Sir John Wrench believes the ideas of the Kindergarten were really the germ seeds of what later became the British Commonwealth of Nations.³¹

Dawson worked hard as the editor of the Johannesburg Star to keep Milner's views in the press. Dawson believed in Milner's ideas of the British Empire and imperialism, and Dawson hoped that the consolidation of dependencies and colonies would be the goal for Britain in the twentieth century. Dawson believed the old empire would become a new brotherhood of peoples symbolized by common loyalty

²⁸ John Connell, The Office. The Story of the British Foreign Office 1919-1951 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958), p. 136.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 137.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Wrench, Dawson, p. 73.

to the crown, and this would bring diverse races and traditions into an empire in which all the peoples would be citizens in a real sense. He saw the empire as a group of states independent in local affairs, but bound together for defense of common interests and development of a common language.³² Dawson believed, as Milner had, that the Dutch in South Africa were trying to destroy or weaken the ties between Britain and South Africa, and this was, of course, against his ideas for the empire. Seven months after Dawson became the editor of the Johannesburg Star, he accepted the additional duties of The Times' correspondent in South Africa.

Dawson, meanwhile, in the Star, kept pressing for a closer union in South Africa. The Kindergarten wanted this in addition to the maintenance and strengthening of the ties in every direction among Commonwealth members.³³ This group continuously kept in contact with Lord Selborne, stressing the importance of a federation for South Africa. Their work was completed by the Union Act of 1909, which went into effect in May, 1910. This act granted equal rights to the two white national groups, and thus ended years of bitterness of the post-war period. The Kindergarten had helped to create the Union of South Africa, and they had helped to draft the Union's constitution.³⁴ Dawson resigned from the Star in September, 1910, because he felt his job had been accomplished with the passage of the Union Act.

³²Ibid., p. 12.

³³Ibid., p. 75.

³⁴Burt, Evolution of British Empire, p. 596.

After Dawson resigned from the Star he returned to England, where Lord Milner was anxious for him to assume the editorship of The Times, whose reporting of imperial matters was inconsistent with Milner's views. The owner of The Times, Lord Northcliffe, had been interested in Dawson since 1908. In June, 1908, Dawson had returned to England for a vacation and had met Northcliffe, who was so impressed by Dawson's views of the empire and imperialism that he told Mr. Wrench in September, 1908, that Dawson would be the next editor of The Times.³⁵ Dawson, who became editor in 1912, was chosen because Northcliffe believed that they shared the same opinions of the world. Their views on imperial matters were alike; Dawson had gone to Eton and Magdalen, and was a Fellow of All Souls. Dawson had been a working journalist as editor of the Johannesburg Star, and had also served as The Times correspondent in South Africa.³⁶ The staff of The Times was impressed with Dawson's background and, since Northcliffe and Dawson had a similar view of the world, the staff felt that the relationship would be harmonious.³⁷ Dawson assumed his responsibilities as editor on September 12, 1912. Northcliffe, according to the official History of The Times, believed Dawson, with his youth, proper education, and journalistic experience, would cooperate with him and help to increase the prestige of The Times. Northcliffe told Dawson to ignore all existing prejudices and

³⁵Wrench, Dawson, p. 66.

³⁶Max Pemberton, Lord Northcliffe, A Memoir (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), p. 139.

³⁷History of The Times, III, 742.

opinions and to form his own judgment.³⁸ Dawson was just as responsible as Northcliffe for the editorial policy of The Times from 1912 to 1919.³⁹

A gap between the editor and publisher began to appear, however, as early as 1914. Dawson complained that Northcliffe's heavy-handed influence in the paper seriously restricted his own professional control.⁴⁰ When The Times Military Correspondent, Colonel Charles Repington, ferreted out the scandal of shell shortages in May, 1915, Northcliffe wanted The Times to print the details, but Dawson would not agree even though the story was true. How, asked Dawson, could the paper print an exposé of the failures of Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, the hero of Fashoda and Khartum and a Field Marshal in the British Army? The English people, Dawson feared, would rise in patriotic anger against Northcliffe if Kitchener's weakness were revealed.⁴¹

Lord Northcliffe, meanwhile, felt Dawson to be overly pacifistic, and in November, 1917, wrote a memorandum to The Times saying that pacifistic words and ideas occurred far too often in the paper.⁴² Repington, who had discovered the shell shortage, was a trusted veteran on The Times, having come to the paper in 1905. Northcliffe

³⁸Ibid., p. 769

³⁹Wrench, Dawson, p. 88.

⁴⁰Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, Northcliffe (London: Cassell, 1959), p. 448.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 478.

⁴²Ibid., p. 594.

admired his military expert and adviser very much, and he supported Repington's campaign in The Times in February, 1918, for new ideas for the military. Dawson did not like the military correspondent, or his journalistic assertions about the ineptitude of the British military establishment, and in 1918 he pressured Northcliffe to fire Repington. Dawson reasoned that he wanted to prevent the Germans from learning about British military ideas from The Times. He wanted to keep "the paper's reputation for good sense and consistency: and submitted the Military Correspondent's articles to frequent and drastic change."⁴³ This policy forced Repington to resign and go over to the Morning Post.

Lord Northcliffe became increasingly angrier with his editor, and he wrote to Dawson on May 4, 1918, saying The Times had not been critical for months and people could not help but regard the paper as a government organ. The Times lacked independence, and the Prime Minister thought he had the paper in his pocket.⁴⁴ The official History of The Times shows another letter that Northcliffe wrote to Dawson, dated July 5, 1918, and again the charge is made that the attitude of The Times is such that it is known as a government organ.⁴⁵ In November, 1918, Lovat Frazer, a correspondent for The Times, discovered black marketeering, graft, and corruption in the Slough war depot. Frazer told Dawson to expose this news; but the story was

⁴³Randolph S. Churchill, Lord Derby, King of Lancashire (New York: G. P. Putnam's Son, 1960), p. 311.

⁴⁴Pound, Northcliffe, p. 637.

⁴⁵History of The Times, III, 363.

never printed. The reason that Dawson ignored Frazer's plea is understandable; Lord Milner, the Secretary of State for War and Dawson's closest friend and political mentor, was implicated, and so Dawson refused to act. By this action the editor placed private interests above national interest.⁴⁶

Dawson's heavy editing, tailoring, and ignoring of his correspondents' articles would become The Times editor's hallmark during the 1930's. Instead of analyzing the news sent to him by his reporters, Dawson attempted to change the news to be consistent with what he instinctively felt to be right. Dawson relentlessly pursued this policy until the end of his editorship.

As Dawson's relationship with Northcliffe cooled, he entered more deeply into Milner's sphere of influence. The members of this circle became a formal group when the Ginger Group was organized in early 1916.⁴⁷ The purpose of this group was to inspire each member "to work for the most effective conduct of the war, and, above all, somehow or another, to secure a change of government."⁴⁸ By 1916, Britain's war effort had been under the direction of Prime Minister Asquith and his coalition government, composed mostly of Liberals and Conservatives. In 1916, however, the people were wearying of the war because of Britain's failure to end the conflict. People felt that the cabinet had the power, but Asquith did not vigorously prosecute the war because of his concern for constitutional liberties, and thus

⁴⁶Pound, Northcliffe, p. 739

⁴⁷Wrench, Lord Milner, p. 306.

⁴⁸Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 62.

he appeared hesitant. On the other hand, David Lloyd George, the Minister of Munitions in Asquith's Cabinet, seemed prepared to ignore the peoples' liberties to bring about victory. The Ginger Group promoted the idea of a small, powerful war cabinet, to be headed by Lloyd George; their efforts were successful and Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister in December, 1916.

The most prominent members of the group were Phillip Kerr, Lloyd George's Private Secretary; Lord Milner, Dawson's mentor and the Secretary of State for War in Lloyd George's Cabinet; Waldorf Astor, M.P.; and Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of The Times. This group held meetings on Monday nights, and they continued to meet after December, 1916, when Lloyd George became Prime Minister. Sir John E. Wrench, Dawson's official biographer, states that the Ginger Group had a great advantage in that its decisions and plans could be furthered unobtrusively and constantly in The Times.⁴⁹ Wrench also says that Dawson, until the death of Lord Milner, consistently backed Lord Milner and his ideas in the columns of The Times.⁵⁰ An example of this relationship was observed earlier in the Slough scandal, which Dawson refused to publish in The Times because of his friendship for Milner.

Dawson's use of his position as editor of The Times to protect his friends and to air their opinions in print again brought him into conflict with his publisher and employer, Lord Northcliffe. The owner of The Times distrusted his editor for five interconnected

⁴⁹Wrench, Lord Milner, p. 306.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 305.

reasons: (1) his friendship with the Ginger Group and his willingness to discuss personalities with them; (2) his support of Lloyd George; (3) his alleged pro-Germanism; (4) his unwillingness to use the press to further Northcliffe's own political ambitions; and (5) his dependence on Astor and others, thus robbing The Times of its traditional independence.

As Dawson's friendship with Milner and the Ginger Group grew, Northcliffe decided that a change of editors would be desirable. The final break between Northcliffe and Dawson came in February 24, 1919, when Dawson resigned as editor of The Times. The official History of The Times states Dawson left because he would not accept Northcliffe as his political mentor.⁵¹ The owner did not approve of Lloyd George and resented Dawson's using The Times to support Lloyd George in the 1918 election. Northcliffe decided that, as publisher, he would have more voice in the future about the policy of The Times.⁵²

Northcliffe did not like Dawson's friends--Lord Milner, the Astors, and Kerr. He knew that Dawson had talked to his friends about his publisher, and this set had gossiped about him in their various clubs. The biographer of Lord Northcliffe traces Dawson's downfall to his social and political circles, which were filled with people whom Northcliffe neither liked nor trusted.

Dawson's biographer and personal friend, Sir John Wrench, believed one reason for Dawson's resignation was that Northcliffe wanted to dominate the paper, and to use it for his own political

⁵¹History of The Times, IV, Part I, 454.

⁵²Ibid., p. 460.

ends. Northcliffe supposedly wanted to be at the peace conference at the end of the war as a British Plenipotentiary and Dawson would not help him to achieve this ambition.⁵³ Lord Northcliffe's biographer denies this charge on the ground that Northcliffe was very ill at this time, and had no desire for such a position, and also Northcliffe knew the rest of the British press would have been outraged.⁵⁴ Another reason for Dawson's resignation, according to Wrench, is that he wanted to preserve the integrity and tradition of independence of the editor of The Times.

The influence of Dawson on The Times from 1912 to 1919 was infinitely greater than that of Northcliffe, although during this period many people erroneously regarded Northcliffe as the man responsible for the actions of the paper. Actually, Northcliffe's "part was so small; absurdly so compared with that of Dawson."⁵⁵ Dawson "had an infinitely greater understanding of the real nature of political power and a much more subtle comprehension of the springs of political action than Northcliffe had."⁵⁶

After Dawson resigned, Henry W. Steed once again became the editor of The Times. In June, 1921, Dawson became the Secretary of the Rhodes Trust. Lord Northcliffe died in August, 1922, and in October Robert H. Brand, Dawson's old friend, asked Dawson if he wanted to become The Times' editor under the paper's new owners,

⁵³Wrench, Dawson, p. 175.

⁵⁴Pound, Northcliffe, p. 683.

⁵⁵Williams, Estate, p. 257.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Major John Astor and John Walter IV.

Dawson was not eager to return to Printing House Square; he was happily married now, with two children, and he had no desire to return to The Times if it would mean aggravation and unpleasantness. Dawson still remembered the difficulties with Lord Northcliffe.⁵⁷ He felt he might wish to return to The Times, however, if he could be supreme in the editor's chair. The ex-editor spoke to his closest friend, Lord Milner, about the offer from The Times, and Lord Milner told him to accept it only if the conditions The Times promised were satisfactory.⁵⁸

In the meantime, on November 5, 1922, at one of John Astor's homes, Hove Castle, both Astor and Walter outlined what kind of an editor they wanted for The Times; they wanted a man in whom they were confident, that is, an editor completely free to exercise his judgment and independent in the fullest sense. His sole responsibility would be to the proprietors and not to the Board of Directors or to the Managing Director.⁵⁹

On November 18, 1922, Dawson and Lord Milner sent a memorandum to the owners of The Times which laid down the conditions under which Dawson would accept the editorship. This memorandum explicitly stated what the future relations between the owners and editor, and the managerial department and the editor would be. The memorandum

⁵⁷Wrench, Dawson, p. 208.

⁵⁸History of The Times, IV, Part II, 774.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 774-75.

stated that the editor was not to be employed merely to reflect the views of the management, nor was his responsibility to be limited to the editorial page. The editor's power was to include exclusive control of everything presented in the news columns as well as complete control of the staff, that is, the power to hire and fire at will. Dawson never asked for a contract with the owners; he felt that his usefulness to The Times would last only as long as he enjoyed the owners' confidence because his terms were such that The Times would be run, in effect, by the editor.⁶⁰

Major Astor and John Walter IV answered Dawson's memorandum on November 22, 1922, and they told him that his memorandum "represents the traditional Constitution of The Times as far as it is possible to define it, and it conveys a true idea of the lines upon which we intend that the paper shall be conducted in the future."⁶¹ Both Astor and Walter IV accepted Dawson's conditions, and he returned as editor of The Times in January, 1923.

When Dawson became editor for the second time his policy for The Times presumably was to give fair play to the government of the day, without following it at every turn.⁶² The History of The Times, however, suggests that if Lord Northcliffe had been alive he would not have believed Dawson capable of being so independent or impartial. Dawson's principle of fair play would only operate so long as the government of the day was either Conservative or a National

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 777-78.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 783.

⁶²Wrench, Dawson, p. 243.

Government; Dawson had no respect for the Labor Party. Dawson was a "Conservative of the Right with a loyalty to party greater than felt by any predecessors."⁶³ Dawson was less interested in policy than in the anatomy of the government. To Dawson the art of politics, according to the History of The Times, was the "finding and fitting the man to the required job rather than in the excogitation and formulation of measures in advance."⁶⁴

The foreign policy supported by The Times during Dawson's absence rested on Anglo-French solidarity and the Treaty of Versailles; this was the basis of British foreign policy as long as Britain belonged to the League of Nations. The Treaty of Versailles, even with its faults, was considered to be the law, which could be changed only by France and Britain acting jointly in agreement.⁶⁵

Under Dawson The Times continued to support this policy for five years because Harold Williams, the head of The Times foreign department, and highly regarded as an expert on foreign affairs, moulded The Times foreign policy.⁶⁶ His death in November, 1928, was disastrous for The Times. For the next thirteen years The Times found no one to replace Williams, and Dawson only went through the motions of seeking a highly qualified replacement. Wrench, Dawson's biographer, says the reason the editor never found a replacement was that Dawson, as a forceful editor, would never agree to divide control of the

⁶³History of The Times, IV, Part II, 783.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 795.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 796.

paper and, of course, he wanted all final responsibility.⁶⁷ Thus, Dawson assumed the foreign editor's desk.

When Dawson appointed himself foreign editor, he completely changed the foreign policy of The Times. Dawson, in judging himself responsible for the foreign affairs post on The Times, publicly declared such normally expected prerequisites as the ability to speak foreign languages, apprenticeship in foreign correspondence, an understanding of European history and peoples, and a personal knowledge of the Continent to be considerably less important than literary skill and intuition, which he felt he possessed in abundance.⁶⁸ Actually, he knew dominion and domestic affairs much better than he understood foreign affairs. Dawson was not committed to journalistic principles; he appeared to be more committed to his friends, and became more intimate and friendly with statesmen. He whispered advice here, and cornered someone else there, and he preferred to identify with those ministers of whom he approved, or who would confide in him. The editor knew that politicians are naturally more swayed by editors who can talk to the world, than by public servants who cannot.⁶⁹ Dawson's action of becoming his own foreign editor created a large vacuum at The Times foreign desk. The foreign correspondents of The Times worked under an editor in London with whom nobody could discuss ideas

⁶⁷Wrench, Dawson, p. 465.

⁶⁸Douglas Reed, Disgrace Abounding (London: Jonathan Cape, 1939), p. 208.

⁶⁹John Raymond (Ed.), The Baldwin Age (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1960), p. 172.

on a basis of intimate knowledge.⁷⁰ By the 1930's, then, The Times was dominated by the personality of Geoffrey Dawson, and its stance in foreign affairs was merely the public pronouncement of his private political convictions.

⁷⁰Reed, Disgrace, p. 208.

CHAPTER III

PERSONAL DIPLOMACY--THE MAKING OF

THE TIME'S FOREIGN POLICY

The foreign policy of The Times during 1935-1936 was not the policy of the Foreign Office; the official History of The Times declares that "at no time during this period did Printing House Square follow the inspirations of the Foreign Office."¹ What inspirations did it follow then? A search for the sources of The Times' foreign policy must begin with an investigation of the influences that worked on Geoffrey Dawson, the singleminded editor of The Times.

In foreign policy Dawson was predominantly influenced by his belief in the British Commonwealth of Nations. Dawson, as was pointed out in the last chapter, had accepted and absorbed Lord Milner's concept of the British Empire. The goal in the twentieth century that Dawson strove for was that "British Civilization, prosperity, power firmly established in the four corners of the earth, would justify itself in its capacity as a guarantor of peace."² This goal called for the consolidation of colonies and dependencies so that the old empire would become a new brotherhood of peoples, symbolized by a common loyalty to the crown, and bringing diverse races and traditions

¹History of The Times, IV, Part II, 931.

²Ibid., p. 1.

into an empire in which all the people would be citizens. A group of states would be independent in local affairs, but bound together for defense of common interests and development of a common civilization.³ This goal was achieved in 1931 when the Statute of Westminster was passed.

The Times editor was primarily interested in the Commonwealth of Nations, and he remained ever watchful for anything that might disturb this body, while he was blind to events on the European continent, except insofar as they might upset the equilibrium within the Commonwealth or empire.⁴

Dawson wanted to avoid all Continental commitments; no single point of British policy was more important to him than the "consolidation of British Imperial sentiment and Dominion power."⁵ He looked on Europe's troubles as being closely analogous to those he had experienced in South Africa, and he believed that Britain's success in dealing with the Boers in South Africa could be used as a guide for British foreign policy generally. Britain's African policy had demonstrated a willingness to trust, grant concessions, and hand over responsibility to the Boer leaders. Dawson felt this pattern of political behavior would be successful with Hitler and Mussolini, and he was shocked when it was not. Thus, he believed that if Britain acted resolutely in Europe during 1935-1936, she risked starting a war, which might then "endanger and perhaps destroy the unity of the

³Ibid., p. 2.

⁴Wrench, Dawson, p. 76.

⁵History of The Times, IV, Part II, 832.

Empire and Commonwealth."⁶

Another major factor which influenced the formulation of Dawson's ideas about foreign policy was the fear of Communism. Dawson's anti-Communism began with the Russian Revolution of 1917. When the February Revolution broke out The Times supported it because The Times believed the revolution would help inspire the Russians to defeat the Germans.⁷ Dawson believed that the new Russian leaders would make the Russian army more efficient, and The Times was convinced that the idea of constitutionalism would really fortify the Russian people.

The October Revolution of 1917 received an entirely different treatment in The Times. The Times viewed Lenin and his company as a band of extremists seeking economic justice, and Dawson felt this was irrelevant to the war effort. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were prepared to end the war on the Russian front, even if it meant an inglorious peace with Germany. Therefore, the October Revolution in Russia was violently attacked in The Times from the beginning.⁸ Lord Milner felt only a miracle could save Russia from total collapse, and he conveyed these pessimistic views to Dawson, although, evidently, never in writing.⁹ Dawson must have thought immediately of the empire, and how its manpower would be strained if the Russians abandoned the Eastern front, thus freeing German troops to fight in the west.

⁶Connell, The Office, p. 137.

⁷History of The Times, IV, Part I, 241.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Wrench, Dawson, p. 149.

He understood neither the social nor the economic implications of the October Revolution: "the subject was not one that interested Dawson."¹⁰ So little did it concern him that he ignored the regular reports sent by his Petrograd correspondent. The official History of The Times charitably suggests that the Correspondent's letters may not have arrived.¹¹ One cannot help thinking, however, that whether they arrived or not made little difference to Dawson.

By June, 1918, The Times was attacking the Bolshevik policies. The Times called them fatal to Russia, and said that their domestic policy was ruining the country. The Times claimed that the Bolsheviks were German agents who had destroyed the Russian army, had made a separate peace, and had broken their pledges to their allies. Thus, The Times urged immediate intervention because "the allies cannot wash their hands of Russia."¹² The Times held to this view after Dawson left the editorship in 1919. Under Henry W. Steed, The Times aroused public opinion to keep Russia out of the League of Nations. The Times editorialized that the key to future European recovery lay in a France-British understanding, rather than in a pan-European community; so The Times remained anti-Bolshevik.¹³

This fear of Communism continued to haunt the British after the close of World War I, and was especially heightened by the evidence of Red infiltration in the trade unions at the time of the General

¹⁰History of The Times, IV, Part I, 242.

¹¹Ibid., p. 243.

¹²Ibid., p. 267.

¹³Ibid., pp. 467-68.

Strike in 1926. In subsequent years the anxiety about the Bolshevik threat rose still higher as Britain faced serious economic and social problems in the depression years. In this context, many Britishers entertained the idea that a rearmed Germany might offer international insurance against a potential threat of Russian Communism in Europe. Some reasoned that if "two people disliked the same thing, they must necessarily like each other," and that British anti-Communism should send the nation into Hitler's and Mussolini's arms.¹⁴ Many leading English intellectuals, such as Lord Halifax, Lord Lothian, Lord Londonderry, and Anthony Eden, were impressed during 1933-1936 by Hitler's avowed stand against Communism.¹⁵ Geoffrey Dawson, too, was convinced that a Nazi Germany would serve as a barrier against the spread of Communism in the West.¹⁶

Lord Londonderry, a member of the cabinet of the National Government from 1931-1935 (as Secretary of State for Air), frequently met with his friend Dawson to discuss their common fear of Communism. In March, 1938, Londonderry published a book, Ourselves and Germany, which recounts interviews during his visit to Germany in 1936. On January 28, 1936, General Göring told him that the main problem was not colonies or arms, but the danger of Bolshevism. Göring argued that England had made a mistake in judging Communism by the tiny handful of Communists in England.* He said England and the British

¹⁴Dennis Bardens, Portrait of a Statesman (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1956), p. 108.

¹⁵Thomas Jones, Lloyd George (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 242.

¹⁶Wrench, Dawson, p. 376.

*Göring believed there were twenty-six thousand Communists in Britain.

Empire should cast their lot with Germany and halt the spread of Communism throughout Eastern Europe. Britain, Göring insisted, could learn from Hitler that Communism can be killed by raising the standard of living. Londonderry believed this and was even more impressed when on February 4, 1936, he had an interview with Hitler himself.¹⁷ The Fuehrer, Londonderry wrote, sees the problem of this world more clearly than the rest of us do: it is Bolshevism.¹⁸ The growth of Russia and the instability of France bothered Hitler, and it bothered Londonderry as well.

In the summer of 1936, Londonderry suggested that British foreign policy seemed to condone Communism by its association with France. He declared that people in Britain snub a healthy Germany, Italy, and Japan, which wholeheartedly fight Communism and Bolshevism, realizing that the Communists are trying to destroy by "internal disruption" all modern governments--our own as well as theirs--by means of world revolution.¹⁹ In December, 1936, Londonderry said he could not understand British complacency toward Communism, and, as long as the English ignored or condoned it, they would not be able to deal with Germany. He did not understand why Britain had not taken a stand against Communism before this time.²⁰

When William L. Shirer, an American newspaper man in Berlin in

¹⁷The Marquess of Londonderry, Ourselves and Germany (London: Robert Hale, Ltd., 1938), p. 90.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 21.

²⁰Ibid., p. 129.

1936, learned that Lord Londonderry had visited Goring and Hitler, he commented critically that Londonderry "hasn't been up to any good. He is an all out pro-Nazi."²¹ Paul Schwartz, author of This Man Ribbentrop: His Life and Times, describes the Marquess of Londonderry during his Berlin visit of 1936 as a man "known for his anti-Bolshevik sentiments and . . . fascist sympathies."²²

Another of Dawson's friends, Lord Halifax, went to Germany in November, 1937. On November 19 he spoke with Hitler, praising the many services he had performed for Germany, but singling out the anti-Communist drive as the most important. "By destroying Communism in his country," he said, Hitler "had barred its road to Western Europe and . . . Germany therefore could rightly be regarded as a bulwark of the West against Bolshevism."²³ Lord Halifax, who replaced Anthony Eden as British Foreign Secretary in 1938, was a personal friend of Dawson's, an All Souls man, and Dawson's neighbor in Yorkshire.²⁴ Equally close to the inner circle was Thomas Jones, who more than once stated that Dawson would never offend any government of which Lord Halifax was a member.²⁵ Dawson's official biographer, Sir John

²¹William L. Shirer, Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent (New York: A. K. Knopf, 1941), p. 48.

²²Paul Schwarz, This Man Ribbentrop: His Life and Times (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1943), p. 163.

²³Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second World War. Vol. I, Nov. 1937-1938 (New York: International Publishers, 1948), p. 19.

²⁴Lord Halifax, Fullness of Days (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1957), p. 44.

²⁵Thomas Jones, A Diary with Letters (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 420.

E. Wrench, published in 1940 a book with the damning title I Loved Germany. He agreed that Hitler had prevented Communism in Germany and that all of Western Europe should be grateful, and that Englishmen especially should try to understand the Communist menace as the Germans had.²⁶ These were not the only men in Dawson's circle but they were, however, the men he chose to listen to.

How important were the Communists in Great Britain in the 1930's? The eleven thousand Communists in Britain by 1937, less than half the figure Göring mentioned to Londonderry, posed no threat in British political and intellectual life in this period.²⁷ This was not a red decade nor is there any evidence to support a threat of Communism in this period.²⁸ Douglas Reed, the former Times journalist, says of the role of Communism in Great Britain and the empire during 1935 that Communism "was the least of the anxieties of the police throughout the British Empire" and that "Communist propaganda financed and controlled from Russia . . . [was] . . . in these days about as dangerous to England--in peace--as an attack by Martians."²⁹

Even though Communism was no threat to England, Lord Lothian chose to visit Germany and the German Ambassador in Great Britain wrote to the German Foreign Minister in Berlin, on January 17, 1935,

²⁶ John E. Wrench, I Loved Germany (London: Michael Joseph, Ltd., 1940), p. 137.

²⁷ Philip Gibbs, Ordeal in England (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1937), p. 161.

²⁸ Neal Wood, Communism and British Intellectuals (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 73.

²⁹ Douglas Reed, Insanity Fair (New York: Covici Freide, 1938), p. 75.

informing him that Lord Lothian would arrive at the end of the month. The ambassador requested that Lord Lothian be allowed to meet with the Chancellor and the Foreign Minister. He characterized Lord Lothian as being "among the highly influential non-official Englishmen who [has] so far asked to be received by the Chancellor. He is favorably inclined towards Germany and wished to contribute to promoting better understanding between Germany and England."³⁰ The ambassador reported Lord Lothian's boast that at a recent luncheon meeting, Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, had asked him "to give him a report of his Berlin impressions."³¹

Phillip Kerr (Lord Lothian) was a friend of Geoffrey Dawson and his chief informant on German affairs during the 1930's, as noted by Lothian's biographer.³² Sir John E. Wrench, the official biographer of Dawson agrees.³³ Lord Lothian's influence on the ideas of Dawson and his notions of foreign policy had grown through many years of close friendship, which had originally been formed in Lord Milner's "Kindergarten" in South Africa during the early years of the twentieth century.³⁴ Since that time Lothian's career in the government had steadily risen through a series of personal contacts.

³⁰Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1948, Series C, Vol. III, June 14, 1934 - March 31, 1935 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), p. 837. From the Ambassador in Great Britain to the Foreign Ministry Jan. 17, 1935. Hereafter cited as D.G.F.P.

³¹Ibid.

³²Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 237.

³³Wrench, Dawson, p. 360.

³⁴Cornell, The Office, p. 136.

When David Lloyd George became Prime Minister of Great Britain in December, 1916, he sought Lord Milner's advice about recommending a private secretary who could do research, and Milner suggested Phillip Kerr. It was in this way that Kerr became the Prime Minister's Private Secretary.³⁵ During this time he had become part of the Ginger Group, along with Dawson, Milner, Astor, and several others.³⁶

Lord Lothian was the Prime Minister's secretary at the peace conferences in 1919. He had helped draft the allied answer to the Germans, and he was among those who stressed the "War Guilt" clause of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Later, when he became fanatic about appeasement, he tried to discredit the treaty he had helped to write.³⁷ He remained with Lloyd George until May, 1921, during which time he was known as a "confidant in foreign affairs and a go-between in relation to the Foreign Office."³⁸ Winston Churchill, in July, 1920, resented Lothian's growing significance because he felt that Lothian was permitted to exercise too much influence on important questions of policy. Churchill castigated Lothian, reminding him that a confidential secretary had "no real responsibility," and, if anything went wrong, the Prime Minister would be held accountable.³⁹ By March, 1922, Phillip Kerr was an important public figure. He had

³⁵Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 63.

³⁶Wrench, Dawson, p. 307.

³⁷Alan J. P. Taylor, The Trouble Makers Dissent over Foreign Policy 1922-1929 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), p. 180.

³⁸Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 80.

³⁹Ibid.

been at the heart of politics in London and Paris, and he was the confidant and constant companion of Lloyd George, who stood alone as the world's greatest political figure after the collapse of Woodrow Wilson.⁴⁰

After Geoffrey Dawson resumed control of The Times in January, 1923, Robert H. Brand, who had restored him to the editorial post, offered Phillip Kerr the foreign editorship of The Times.⁴¹ All three men had been friends in South Africa early in the century. Obviously Brand or Dawson, or perhaps both, thought about removing Harold Williams from his position, thus leaving a triumvirate of Milner's disciples in charge. Kerr, however, refused Brand's offer. His recent conversion from Roman Catholicism to Christian Science caused him to apply religious teaching in practical affairs--public as well as private--and to seek solutions to the political and economic problems in the world in the progress of morals and religion; he considered politics as a minor branch of theology. Because he felt he could not affect human affairs by working at the foreign affairs desk of The Times, he refused the position.⁴² Lothian's conversion to Christian Science had an important impact on his mind, and he tended to ignore evil and see only good. This euphoric view of life ill-suited him for his new roles as General Secretary of the Board of Rhodes Trustees (July, 1925 to 1939), where he served alongside Geoffrey Dawson, and as the eleventh Marquess of Lothian (March, 1930),

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 85.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 92.

⁴²Ibid.

because of which he served as a member of the House of Lords.

Lord Lothian's moralistic philosophy of the world (or government) was supported by the influence of the imperial experience in South Africa which he shared with Dawson during the "Kindergarten period." Lothian felt that the benefits of the voluntary political and economic union of communities, which, unassociated, faced the constant threat of war, were very great. He thought that war could be avoided only by a just peace, and he believed this required a single world government. Lothian was not so unrealistic as to expect a world government in his own time, but he hoped that there might be a federation "between friendly governments representing a large proportion of the world's inhabitants."⁴³ He thought that such a group of nations, co-operating for mutual advantage, not unlike the British Commonwealth of Nations, would be a beginning. During the meantime, he wanted the Commonwealth nations to keep working and developing harmoniously, and to attempt to get the other nations to work for a closer union for their own sake. The growing involvement of Commonwealth members in events on the Continent of Europe dismayed him.⁴⁴ The Great War and the peace conferences which followed made him realize the importance of the United States and its possible role in world affairs. The Dominions and America had similar interests, and a closer union of the Dominions meant a closer union with the United States. Lord Lothian believed that this union of English-speaking peoples "would not only increase their own prosperity but by their example and

⁴³Ibid., p. 102.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 103.

leadership promote peace and happiness of other nations."⁴⁵ He believed the promotion of this unity would promote peace, and to this end he would dedicate his life.

Lord Lothian also had reservations about the League of Nations. He thought that the League could never end war; it could only prevent war by going to war, and to Lothian this meant the League could turn a local conflict into a world war. Lothian believed that the idea of collective security was scarcely more than a military alliance to prevent the status quo from being altered by war. He felt that, if a major power decided to act, and the League of Nations applied military sanctions to it, a world war could develop. He saw the function of the League as the bringing about of peaceful revisions, and the prevention of change by force. But at best he believed the League could never eliminate the possibility of war, and thus the real value of the League of Nations would lay in promoting discussion.⁴⁶ He thought that use of sanctions or attempting to force compulsory arbitration was wrong, and, if there were to be sanctions or other action by the League, the Dominions and Great Britain must look at the merits of each case.⁴⁷ Lothian's view of the League of Nations did not recognize the potential of the League's peace-maintaining mechanism.

Lothian, during the 1920's, was pro-German, and he believed that Germany was the key to European political stability. He felt that Germany wanted peace, although she would not want to remain disarmed

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 207.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 112.

forever and he believed those who thought otherwise were "living in a fool's paradise."⁴⁸ He thought if Russia should recover her strength and try to dominate the West, Germany would be a useful ally to Britain and, as such, must be given her place in the sun, "not so much a territorial as an economic place, the secure right to the open door, to raw materials and markets."⁴⁹ When France marched into the Ruhr in January, 1923, Lothian wrote that Germany "was sinner against as well as the sinner."⁵⁰

During the 1930's, Lothian continually called for "justice" to Germany. In 1931, he believed that Germany should be allowed to rearm, and that Britain should give no more security to France than that provided for under the Treaty of Locarno. Once Germany felt secure, said Lothian, she would drop her demands for equality.⁵¹ In November, 1933, Lord Lothian, while speaking at an Armistice Day remembrance in Nottingham, England, again stated that there would be no European peace until Germany was given equality.⁵² When the Germans left the Disarmament Conference in December, 1933, Lothian argued that Britain should try and get them back to the conference table, and that German disarmament should be backed with universal guarantees. He said it would be better for Germany to be allowed to rearm than to be forced to rearm illegally and that there was no use

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 114.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 123.

⁵²Ibid., p. 197.

in pointing the finger at Nazi excesses because he believed that they resulted from the same "sense of injustice and inferiority" which had helped create the Nazi dictatorship in the first place.⁵³ Although baffled by many of the actions of the Nazi leaders, Lothian wrote that "there is much that is healthy and self-respecting about the popular aspects of the Nazi renaissance."⁵⁴ He defended Germany for leaving the disarmament conference; he felt Germany should not be made to promise not to rearm when she had legally been forbidden to do so. Lothian thought that "Equality in arms would be . . . justice."⁵⁵ By September, 1934, Lothian stated that the British people felt that the peace treaties signed in 1919 had been "dictated and severe and required some, though not much, revision by agreement."⁵⁶ He thought the Treaty of Locarno was unworkable and that no British army would stop Germany from reclaiming her own territory. This attitude was far different from his stand in 1919 for a strong peace treaty. He was not classed as the head of the sentimentalists because he saw "something heroic in Germany's resurgence from the awful humiliation of 1918."⁵⁷

Lothian's official biographer, James Butler, points out that Lothian did not know the German language, its peoples, nor did he

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, The Appeasers (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), p. 30.

⁵⁶Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 199.

⁵⁷George M. Young, Stanley Baldwin (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1952), p. 184.

know or understand the character of Hitler, to whom supreme power was entrusted in January, 1933. As a result of this ignorance, he "fatally misjudged the situation and applied maxims in the present instance which were irrelevant."⁵⁸ His judgment was incorrect on foreign affairs, and he never claimed to be an expert on German affairs.⁵⁹ Despite Lothian's lack of real knowledge, Dawson, according to his biographer, was greatly influenced by Lothian's opinions on Germany.

The consensus of informed opinion regarded Lothian as being very unstable; Stanley Baldwin, the Prime Minister, called Lothian a "run core" and a "queer bird," and regarded him as completely useless inside the cabinet, although sometimes useful outside.⁶⁰ Thomas Jones, the author of a Diary with Letters, cited Phillip Kerr's ability, intelligence, and unstable judgment--and called him a man apt to be a victim of his most recent experience.⁶¹ Jones, in 1932, believed that Lothian had no interest in the art of politics, but rather interested himself in the more abstract areas of religion, Communism, and ideas.⁶² Lord Percy of Newcastle said that he was told that Lothian's mind was "like a fresh pat of butter, which would take any impress and record it sharply and accurately."⁶³ Lothian's friend, the historian Alfred L. Rowse, delicately observed that "of his gifts of mind and

⁵⁸Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 190.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 159.

⁶⁰Jones, Diary, p. 44.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., p. 48.

⁶³Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 242.

personality, stability of judgment was not one."⁶⁴ To the American Ambassador, William Dodd, whom Lothian told, on their first meeting in May, 1936, that Hitler had saved Germany, Lothian appeared "more Fascist than any other Englishman I have met."⁶⁵ Robert Boothby, an M.P. during the 1930's, said that Lothian could not bring himself to enter the rigorous life of trying to stand for Parliament; Boothby felt that, if Lothian had run for office, he would have encountered men with equal minds who might have convinced him how wrong he was.⁶⁶ His system--arbitrary, mercurial, and highly opinionated--could not have withstood public scrutiny and attack.

Nonetheless, Lord Lothian did enter public life when he became Ambassador to the United States in 1939. Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary who appointed him, shared his views to some extent on Germany.⁶⁷ When Lothian presented himself to President Roosevelt, the President remarked half-jokingly that "Britain had suffered from an inferiority complex" and from an unrealistically magnified fear of Communism, which had caused the wealthy classes to rush the nation into the arms of the Nazis.⁶⁸ Since the outbreak of war in September, 1939, the upper classes had been caught in a snare of their own making.

⁶⁴ Alfred L. Rowse, The End of an Epoch (London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1947), p. 109.

⁶⁵ Martha Dodd and William E. Dodd, Jr. (Ed.), Ambassador Dodd's Diary 1933-1938 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1941), p. 407.

⁶⁶ Robert Boothby, I Fight to Live (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1947), p. 52.

⁶⁷ Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 257.

⁶⁸ Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, Vol. II: The Inside Struggle (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 571.

The American President's analysis contained more than a kernel of truth. The fear of Communism had certainly influenced Dawson, and it was also influential in Lothian's pro-Germanism. When Lothian died in 1940, his friend Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, said in the eulogy that "no one was ever less prone to temptation of thinking wishfully or of underrating difficulties."⁶⁹ De mortuis nil nisi bonum.

Like Lothian, Dawson detested the Treaty of Versailles, and, in fact, this hatred became a major influence on his foreign policy. How he felt when the treaty was signed we do not know, but, since his opinions were not recorded at the time (Henry W. Steed was editor in 1919), he was free to condemn the treaty later. And this is precisely what he did. By the early 1930's, Dawson was convinced the treaty was unjust, and he felt Germany had a good case for revision and friendly treatment. The Times argued that concessions should be made even to an unfriendly government; it stated that "agreements freely concluded" were better than the insistence on the strict observance of those agreements that had been dictated.⁷⁰ By 1929, Dawson already believed that France wanted to perpetuate the dictated peace treaty, and he felt that British industry might have recovered sooner and European peace might have been accomplished earlier if it were not for the "recalcitrance of the French and their unwise treatment of the Germans."⁷¹ The reader will recall that in 1929 Dawson

⁶⁹Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 313.

⁷⁰Charles L. Mowat, Britain Between the War, 1918-1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 536.

⁷¹History of The Times, IV, Part II, 817.

was not only the editor of The Times, but also its foreign affairs "expert." Public opinion in Great Britain had become more favorable toward Germany after the Germans signed the Locarno Treaty, and Dawson, like Lothian, felt that German grievances could be redressed at the conference table, and he championed this cause in his newspaper. By December, 1932, Dawson believed that pre-World War I prosperity would be possible if Europe, and particularly Germany, could be pacified, and he decided that The Times should promote this policy.⁷²

Another defect Lothian emphasized in the Treaty of Versailles, and which Dawson believed, was the creation of the Eastern European nations. The evil in the world according to Lothian was nationalism and the insistence on state sovereignty. This doctrine made it impossible to have peace and progress.⁷³ The East European nations, which had been created by the Treaty of Versailles, were ignored and insulted by Lothian. He even denied their existence, claiming they were mere political fictions, created in part to punish Germany and Austria. He believed that these countries could only be in danger from Germany and that the British should really welcome Germany's drive to the East for three reasons: (1) it would help divert Germany from Britain, (2) it would bring unity and order out of the chaos in Eastern Europe, and (3) if Russia decided to move westward, she would be blocked.⁷⁴

⁷²Ibid., p. 880.

⁷³Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 208.

⁷⁴Gott, Appeasers, p. 49.

The American Ambassador to Germany recalled a meeting with Lord Lothian on February 12, 1936 and he commented that "Lothian preferred to let Germany go on her conquering way towards European domination rather than impose limitations upon Germany by his country."⁷⁵ The Ambassador said that Lothian was vehement against France, and expressed hatred for France twice in the short conversation.⁷⁶ Lothian believed that France was evil because she had formed military alliances with the Eastern European nations and in time of war threatened to involve Britain in their defense.

By 1933, the Treaty of Versailles seemed, to people like Dawson, an overriding political evil in Europe. Dawson believed that France wanted to perpetuate this injustice and that Germany was strong while France was weak and under the control of left-wing politicians. Many Englishmen did not like France because of her weakness, which, they thought, offered a great opportunity for Moscow's agents to infiltrate the West. To many, an agreement with France was considered, therefore, an agreement with Communism. The Germans, on the other hand, were considered to be stronger, wiser, and anti-Communist. Many Englishmen felt that trade with Germany would be economically beneficial, and Germany and the British Commonwealth could make a common cause, thus forming a potent force in the world for peace. The United States was seen as isolated while Russia was devoured by Communism. From this vantage point, the German revolution of 1933, therefore, looked very promising. Many Englishmen thought that, if

⁷⁵Dodd, Ambassador Diary, p. 309.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 406.

the German programs looked violent and wild, this effect was partially England's fault because England had helped to drive Germany "into confusion and anarchy, by agreeing with France to the severe terms of Versailles."⁷⁷ These same Britons thought that Britain must try to understand Germany and Hitler because the Fuehrer had been wronged, and he surely had the right to justify his country in heroic terms. They also felt, in partial restitution, Germany should be given the benefit of any doubt and out of a sense of fair play Britain must right the wrongs by changing the Treaty of Versailles.⁷⁸ In writing to Ambassador Dodd on May 5, 1935, Lothian identified the pro-French attitude as the chief failure in British foreign policy, a posture that perpetuated the injustice toward Germany. With his awareness of the difficulties that the Treaty of Versailles created for Germany, Lothian hoped that Hitler would turn to the East, thus solving German problems without creating trouble for Great Britain. At the same time, Lothian built much of his thinking on the assumption that the Democracies had to find a "stronger place [for the Germans] in world affairs to which, in his opinion, they are entitled because of their power and tradition."⁷⁹ In a later context, Lothian addressed a similar statement to President Roosevelt, suggesting that "Hitler should be allowed his head in order to repair the crime of Versailles."⁸⁰

Another factor which moulded the mind of Geoffrey Dawson was his

⁷⁷Gott, Appeasers, p. 26.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Dodd, Ambassador Diary, p. 241.

⁸⁰Ickes, Harold Ickes, II, 571.

participation in the exclusive gatherings of the Cliveden "Moots" in the 1930's and particularly after 1937. The popular reaction to the snobbish "Moots" at that time tended to ridicule them. One thinks particularly of the David Low Cartoons that appeared in the Evening Standard. The first of these cartoons appeared in December, 1937, and it showed the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, walking along a tightrope holding a pole depicted as Lord Halifax. At one end of the pole were Dawson, Lothian, and Lady Astor; on the other end were Low's famous Elimp Brothers. The caption read "concessions and the devil take the hindmost." Another famous Low cartoon in January, 1938, showed Goebbels, German Minister of Propaganda, winding up a gramophone and teaching girls how to dance to the music; the girls are represented as Lothian, Dawson, and Lady Astor. These cartoons reflect a general dislike for the Cliveden set. A Labor M.P. stood in Hyde Park, in February, 1938, and stated that "the foreign policy of this country is no longer settled in the Cabinet in Downing Street but at the country home of Lady Astor at Cliveden."⁸¹ Sir Stafford Cripps, in March, 1938, accused the Cliveden set of running foreign policy behind Prime Minister Chamberlain's back, and wanting Britain to become a Fascist state.⁸²

The attacks on the Cliveden set became so vicious that Lord Lothian in Glasgow, Scotland, on April 28, 1938, felt forced to reply. He publicly announced that the set was not pro-Fascist, and

⁸¹Maurice Collis, Nancy Astor (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1960), p. 185.

⁸²Ibid.

that it did not work behind the Prime Minister's back. He said "The whole thing is a mare's nest originally invented by the Communist editor of the Daily Worker and spread in pamphlets issued by the Communist Party."⁸³ Despite this statement, the attacks on the Cliveden set did not cease. In September, 1938, Colonel Lindbergh, who already being accused of pro-Fascist sentiments in his own country, was invited to Cliveden, and many of the British people felt that "Lindy" was a clear-cut Fascist. Because he had received medals from Hitler, many people assumed that he was one of Hitler's agents. They felt that, obviously, Lindbergh would not visit people unfriendly to him, and thus his visit to Cliveden proved it was a Fascist den. This was the reaction of many people to the Cliveden set after the publicity received in 1937-1938. However, in the years 1935-1936, most people were not even aware that the set existed; nonetheless, it already had an influence.

Cliveden was one of the homes of the Lord and Lady Astor, located about one hour from London. On the eve of the first World War a group of young men frequently came to Cliveden for the week-end, and in this group were Geoffrey Dawson, Phillip Kerr, and Robert Brand. All of them, one will recall, were members of the Kindergarten, imbued with the idea of the empire and how it might develop into a Commonwealth of Nations, leading the world toward universal peace. They all considered themselves experts on Commonwealth affairs, but their influence was not readily seen because they worked behind the

⁸³Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 250.

scenes.⁸⁴ Lady Astor's husband, not yet "Lord" Astor, was then a member of Parliament and "Waldorf Astor, as a member of Parliament, was the link between them [the group] and Commons."⁸⁵ Thus the germ seed for the future Cliveden set of the 1930's was planted. These people met regularly at Cliveden. The reader will recall the formation of the Ginger Group, which included the same people. Dawson was then in his first term as the editor of The Times. The social, intellectual, and political interrelationships of these people go back to the first World War. This was not just a social group; it had definite political interests far beyond the hunt and party. Its spokesman was the editor of The Times, Geoffrey Dawson, and its voice in the Prime Minister's office was Phillip Kerr, his private secretary.

The member of the group who really captured Lady Astor's mind, according to Maurice Collis, her official biographer, was Phillip Kerr. She considered him "a man of charm, talent, sense, and warmth, remarkably unambitious, modest and frank."⁸⁶ Phillip Kerr would be ". . . the greatest influence on her life."⁸⁷ Kerr was to have great influence on two members of this group, Geoffrey Dawson and Lady Astor, until his death in 1940.

Waldorf Astor enjoyed being an M.P. His father's peerage dated only to 1917. In 1919, when his father died, Waldorf had to give up

⁸⁴Collis, Astor, p. 54.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 53.

⁸⁷Ibid.

his position in the House of Commons and move to the House of Lords, with reduced political powers. Lady Astor decided to run for her husband's House of Commons seat in Plymouth, and she won in 1919. She held the seat for more than twenty-five years. During 1935-1936, there were six Astor's and their relatives in the Houses of Parliament. Lady Astor, her son, brother-in-law, son-in-law, and nephew were in Commons; her husband sat in the House of Lords.⁸⁸

Although the Cliveden set, hosted magnanimously by Lady Astor, was most active in the 1930's, the precise nature of the group's thinking and influence is difficult to define. Estimations of the Cliveden influence vary, some believing that it had a great and disastrous impact, others that its reputation is much exaggerated.

Lord Halifax, who observed the Cliveden set from the inside, found the rumors of its political influence ludicrous, "Cliveden was another hospitable house, where Lord and Lady Astor loved to assemble friends."⁸⁹ Halifax had attended parties occasionally, although not frequently enough to feel he was a member of a set. He doubted that the Cliveden set as a political entity even existed; he felt that there were too many people of various interests, occupations, political ideas, and beliefs to form a set. He believed that the group's supposed "corporate feelings of tenderness towards Nazi Germany was a pure invention of some journalistic brain."⁹⁰ Thomas Jones said the Cliveden meetings were an "unplanned setting for informal talk, a

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 194.

⁸⁹Halifax, Fullness of Days, p. 155.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 156.

comfortable theatre for the conversational interplay of political personalities."⁹¹ Men from Parliament, Whitehall, Cabinet Ministers, the Foreign Office, Empire, France, England, America, and Royalty all came to Cliveden. Lord Lothian's official biographer notes that it was neither a group of reactionaries exercising influence on British politics, nor was it pro-Fascist or pro-Hitler.

Such disclaimers of Cliveden's influence were not universally accepted. Charles Mowat, the British historian, saw Cliveden as dark, sinister, and evil, the principal meeting place for members of the upper class such as Lothian, Dawson, and the Astors, who had a love for the Nazis.⁹² The inner Cabinet of Chamberlain's government also gathered at Cliveden; they included Dawson, Halifax, Hoare, Simon, and Lothian. Many people in England thought that the Astors provided the central meeting place where all the pro-Nazi elements in government and the press could gather.⁹³

In a less damaging analysis, Hugh Thomas, author of The Establishment, found no evil political intent or active subversion at Cliveden; he felt that the Cliveden set was more concerned with seeking pleasure than with the needs of the nation. He affirmed, however, that by their collective status the set had a great deal of influence on the politics of Great Britain. "They enjoyed, even worshipped, power, but the idea that the purpose of political power is consciously

⁹¹Jones, Diary, p. xxxviii.

⁹²Mowat, Britain Between War, p. 592.

⁹³Ibid., p. 593.

to seek to make the world a better place never occurred to them."⁹⁴

The Cliveden set was dominated in the 1930's by the mind of Lord Lothian, the intellectual star of the group, who influenced the group to believe that Germany was harmless and Hitler should not be criticized.⁹⁵ When on June 2, 1936, Joachim von Ribbentrop went to England as Hitler's roving Ambassador, Jones arranged for him to go to Cliveden and meet Lothian, as well as the Astors and Sir Thomas Inskip, the Minister for the Coordination of Defense. (When Baldwin elevated Inskip to this sensitive post, Alan J.P. Taylor compared the appointment to Caligula's appointing his horse Consul.) During this meeting Jones praised Lothian's ability in foreign affairs. Lady Astor, in support of Jones, declared Lothian had not been wrong in foreign affairs in twenty years.⁹⁶ Perhaps she had forgotten or ignored the role Lothian played in drawing up the Treaty of Versailles.

The rise of Hitler in 1933 was really at the heart of the discussions that took place at Cliveden. The rhetorical questions raised at every session were: Had Hitler arisen because of the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles? Was he the countermovement? Could German animosity be softened by concessions? Should not the British people be more fair to the Germans? Should the Nazis be cleaned out? Was Russia and her Bolshevism more dangerous than Nazi Germany?

⁹⁴Hugh Thomas, The Establishment (London: Anthony Blond, Ltd., 1959), p. 19.

⁹⁵Boothby, Fight to Live, p. 52.

⁹⁶Jones, Diary, p. 215.

When Germany left the League of Nations in late December, 1933, the "set" was shocked. Led by Lord Lothian, they felt England must bring Germany back into the fold. They believed that the way to achieve this would be to satisfy Germany's reasonable aspirations and restore Germany's confidence in Britain's fairness. Lord Lothian, as stated previously, regretted his role in the Treaty of Versailles. He thought Germany had been punished too harshly and that it was not "too late to make true friends of them."⁹⁷ The set believed that the possibility of another world war was too horrible to consider because the Great War had cost millions of lives, and this sacrifice would be meaningless if the peace was not kept. They felt that the new generation must avoid the mistakes of the past; they wanted international agreements to halt a possible arms race and avoid war. The set also wanted Germany to be treated as an equal. Lady Astor's official biographer commented that as late as the spring of 1937 she and her friends still believed the League of Nations could control Hitler.⁹⁸ Very few persons acquainted with the facts could be so optimistic, because for all practical purposes the League had died in June, 1936. It had failed in Ethiopia and the Rhineland.

The last influence on Dawson was his assistant, Barrington Ward, who became Dawson's assistant in October, 1927. He agreed with Dawson on foreign policy, especially in international and continental affairs, and he fortified Dawson's outlook of the world at large.⁹⁹ Ward saw

⁹⁷Collis, Astor, p. 181.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 182.

⁹⁹History of The Times, IV, Part II, 810.

everything in relation to a higher principle, in moralistic terms.¹⁰⁰ To Ward journalism was a calling. He was a fervent apostle of the moral factors "standard of honor," "rule of ethics," "international morality," "public opinion," and "world opinion." These factors were "destined to be given increasing weight at Printing House Square as it dealt with France and Germany."¹⁰¹ The emphasis on these ethical ideas is especially noticeable in The Times attitude toward the Treaty of Versailles as it affected Germany. Ward felt that the cruel error of Versailles had to be redressed by the allies, and this remained one of his deepest convictions. He believed that anything Hitler did, however immoral, was to be suffered and later neither facts, nor evidence of violence, cruelty, and aggression changed his mind. Ward could not refuse Hitler the conclusions he had arrived at before Hitler came to power because Ward had felt this way since 1927.¹⁰²

As Dawson's assistant, Barrington Ward only reinforced Dawson's ideas, as Dawson, too, was a moralist. His Anglican upbringing and his attendance at Oxford had strengthened his strong moralistic feelings and he saw the world as black and white, or good and evil.

The factors that influenced Dawson in formulating The Times policy in 1935-1936 were a belief in the Commonwealth, fear of Communism, respect for the opinions of Lord Lothian, the desire to

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 811.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 805.

¹⁰²Alfred L. Rowse, Appeasement: A Study of Political Decline, 1933-1939 (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1961), p. 7.

balance injustices of the Treaty of Versailles with regard to Germany, fear of another war, as felt by the Cliveden set, hatred of France, and the support of Barrington Ward. Dawson was committed to the views of those with whom he was friendly, regardless of their competence; he was committed to Eton, All Souls, The Kindergarten, The Ginger Group, Milner, Lothian, the Cliveden set, Moots, certain London clubs, and those ministers with whom he agreed. Although these were limited groups or circles, Dawson thought they represented the average British opinion, and he followed and encouraged them.¹⁰³

The Times stated in its eulogy to Dawson, when he retired in October, 1941, that his intimate connections were with "the hereditary English governing class, the middle class gentry, and their ennobled offspring."¹⁰⁴ Without intentional irony, The Times cited him as a man who "delighted and keenly enjoyed the opportunity his position opened to him of influencing the trends of politics and the careers of his friends. No man was more faithful to family, village, country, school, college, and university."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Mowat, Britain Between War, p. 536.

¹⁰⁴History of The Times, IV, Part II, 981.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND STANLEY BALDWIN

From August, 1931, until the end of World War II, the British people were governed by a National Government; this government was born in the economic crisis of 1931. Britain suffered a major financial crisis as a result of the United States stock market crash in 1929. Compared with other countries the balance of payments was adverse; exports by volume had dropped thirty per cent from 1929 to 1931 and by June, 1931, 2,800,000, or twenty-three per cent, of the insured workers were unemployed.¹ The British Government's chief concern was how to keep the country solvent.

The Labour Party under Ramsay MacDonald was caught unprepared by this crisis. The members of the government were ignorant of economics and, therefore, incompetent to deal with the severe problem of unemployment.²

The financial crisis was acute, and MacDonald, together with his Chancellor of the Exchequer Phillip Snowden, was convinced that the only cure for the fiscal malaise was adherence to the principle that the government must pay its way. They wanted to reduce government

¹Alfred F. Havighurst, Twentieth Century Britain (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson & Co., 1962), p. 220.

²Ibid., p. 226.

spending, and to restrict the Labour Party's program of social security, especially the benefits received by the unemployed. MacDonald's cabinet split over this issue, and eleven members, including MacDonald, were in favor of a cutback in the social security program while eight other cabinet members refused to follow their leader. Parliament was not in session at this time, but many people believed MacDonald's program would have been repugnant to most members of the Labour Party.³ At any rate, there was not a clearcut vote of confidence and MacDonald, lacking support, resigned on August 24, 1931. The Labour Party forced him and his followers out of the party. Nonetheless, the King, George V, after consulting with the leaders of the Conservatives (Baldwin) and the Liberals (Samuel), asked MacDonald to form a National Government comprised of members of the three parties to deal with the financial crisis. MacDonald became Prime Minister and formed a new cabinet, containing four Labourites, four Conservatives, and two Liberals. The Conservatives, who a few days before had opposed MacDonald, now became his strong supporters.⁴ Most of the Labour Party opposed MacDonald's actions, and considered him a traitor.

On October 27, 1931, the National Government went to the country to get a "doctor's mandate" to promote economic recovery, and the election resulted in a complete victory for the National Government. The National Government won five hundred and fifty-six seats; which consisted of four hundred and seventy-three Conservatives, sixty-eight

³Smith, History of England, p. 746.

⁴Ibid.

Liberals, thirteen National Labourites, and two Nationalists. The opposition received fifty-six seats, which included fifty-two Labourites and four Liberals.⁵ The only issue of the campaign was whether it would be wise or not to form a National Government, which itself had no specific program.

The key men in the National Government were Ramsey MacDonald, Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, Lord President of the Council, Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, Foreign Secretary, and Sir Herbert Samuel, Home Secretary. The question of the necessity of the formation of a National Government should be considered. The Labour Cabinet and the "city bankers" agreed that it was necessary but the Labour Party called it a "bankers' scare," and claimed that the National Government of August, 1931, exploited the atmosphere of crisis. Labour conceded that an economic problem existed but hardly one "demanding extraordinary political action."⁶ Dawson did not agree. The reader will recall that a National Government or a Conservative Government was the kind of government that Dawson could gladly support.⁷ Alfred L. Rowse, the Oxford historian, argues that the idea of a National Government undermined and helped to destroy parliamentary democracy. He believes it was created to swaddle and sooth British public opinion, and "to let no clear ideas of the issues at home and abroad get hold of the minds of the people, to lull them into a sense of false security when the

⁵Ibid., p. 747.

⁶Havighurst, Twentieth Century Britain, p. 225.

⁷History of The Times, IV, Part II, 794.

gravest dangers were accumulating for our country abroad."⁸ The National Government, he continues, had no principle except "that of holding on to what they or their supporters had got."⁹ He feels it was open to pressures, concessions, weaknesses, all from the fear of losing office, and anyone who differed with the government was branded an alarmist, or warmonger.¹⁰

The National Government was dominated from 1931 until November, 1935, by the Conservatives, who occupied eighty-five per cent of the seats in the House of Commons. Simon Haxey, a Conservative M.P., listed several characteristics of his colleagues during the 1930's: they were all very wealthy, the employers of labor and the captains of industries, and they had "little in common with the man in the street."¹¹ The links of the Conservative Party with wealth and big business were very strong. The party, according to R. Scott, also "maintains its historical connection with the Church of England," omitting Jews and non-conformists from its candidates.¹² The Tories, during the 1930's, controlled the press, and they used it to "enable public opinion to be swayed to suit Tory policy."¹³ Douglas Reed, a former Times correspondent, argues that The Times was the Conservative

⁸Rowse, End of Epoch, p. 68.

⁹Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 68.

¹¹Simon Haxey, England's Money Lords (London: Harrison Hilton Books, 1939), p. 35.

¹²Scott, Life in Britain, p. 150.

¹³Haxey, Money Lords, p. 240.

organ, and one should "read The Times if you wish to know what is actually going to happen [or] what a Conservative Government will do when a crisis comes."¹⁴

The real power in the National Government after 1933 was not the Prime Minister; although MacDonald was the titular head of the group, he only "preserved the fiction of a non-partisan government."¹⁵ The man actually in charge was Baldwin; however, he liked standing behind the throne in order to avoid the responsibility of making final decisions. Despite this, in May, 1933, Dawson editorialized that MacDonald was Britain's one indispensable man and that it was MacDonald who had decided to face the country with a National Government.¹⁶ The year of 1934 was the lull before the storm; the worst of the depression had almost ended, and the international crisis had hardly begun.¹⁷ By the end of 1934, however, it became very clear to persons in the government that MacDonald was becoming unfit for duty. His speeches in the House of Commons were growing increasingly vague, and people gossiped about his incompetence.¹⁸ Finally in June, 1935, MacDonald stepped down and Baldwin became Prime Minister.

Stanley Baldwin, in June, 1935, became Prime Minister for a third time, but he had never been far from power. Winston Churchill

¹⁴Reed, Disgrace, p. 204.

¹⁵Havighurst, Twentieth Century Britain, p. 241.

¹⁶Wrench, Dawson, p. 299.

¹⁷Graves, Long Week-end, p. 315.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 318.

correctly observed that Baldwin "became the ruling force in British politics from October, 1922, when he ousted Lloyd George, until May, 1937."¹⁹ Despite his significant position in public life, Baldwin is still an enigma; he kept no diary, circulated no memoranda to his colleagues, and very rarely wrote a political letter. Most of his papers have been destroyed.²⁰

Baldwin was born in 1867, into a wealthy family that made its fortune from iron and steel mills.²¹ His early upbringing was in an atmosphere of piety, frugality, and wealth. At Harrow, Baldwin was caught with a piece of "juvenile pornography," and punished so severely that he lost interest in his work and ceased to try to excel. Nonetheless, he was accepted at Cambridge, where he took a third-class degree, "a result clearly below his capacity."²² At Cambridge he was "shy, diffident, and bad at coping with emergencies."²³ After graduating from Cambridge, in 1888, Baldwin went to work in the family steel mills at Widen, Worcestershire. Baldwin's father had been a Conservative M.P. from 1892, until his death in 1908. In that year Baldwin was offered his father's safe seat in Bewdley, Worcestershire, and he won unopposed.

Baldwin was forty when he entered the House of Commons, and

¹⁹Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), p. 18.

²⁰Young, Baldwin, p. 11.

²¹Raymond, Baldwin Age, p. 26.

²²Ibid., p. 28.

²³Ibid.

appeared to be a plodding, upper-middle-class Tory, representing a safe Conservative seat. During the next six years he made five unimpressive speeches.²⁴ Baldwin worked hard on committees, but, by 1916, he had not been recognized and he had become discouraged: he thought of leaving the House of Commons.

The Great War had left its mark on his character; the waste, wickedness, misery, and the tragedy of it "affected him like a spiritual conversion."²⁵ Baldwin believed that he had to pave the way toward creating a better government and a safe peace for the school-boys who were too young to fight. He felt that another war would be a disaster to avoid at almost any cost.

Baldwin, as President of the Board of Trade, and a cabinet member, felt by March, 1921, that the real control of affairs lay in the hands of a few people, namely, George, Churchill, and Birkenhead. He did not think these men were serious enough about problems of the state.²⁶ Because he lacked "repartee," he was unable to communicate his resentment, and he did not recognize that these men were more experienced than he and just as dedicated.

The coalition government of Lloyd George was dissolved in 1922, and after the election in November, 1922, A. Bonar Law became the new Prime Minister, and Baldwin his Chancellor of the Exchequer. After seven months, Law retired because of illness and Baldwin became the new Prime Minister. Baldwin, although very colorless and lacking in

²⁴Ibid., p. 32.

²⁵Ibid., p. 33.

²⁶Ibid., p. 35.

political astuteness, was selected Prime Minister as a compromise candidate between the two Conservative factions. Baldwin was Prime Minister from May, 1923, until January, 1924. The Labour Government came in until November, 1924, under Ramsey MacDonald. Baldwin replaced MacDonald as Prime Minister for a second time and held the reins of government until June, 1929. MacDonald returned as Prime Minister until August, 1931, at which time he resigned, and then he formed the National Government with Baldwin as second in command. However, as stated above, by 1933, Baldwin had already become the dominating force in the government although he did not officially replace MacDonald until June, 1935. He was now almost seventy years old.

Baldwin's thirty-year career in politics had been spent almost exclusively in shaping domestic policy, and his long experience in Commons was of no real help in the tasks he had to face in foreign affairs during the trying years of 1935-1936. He did not believe the League of Nations could be an effective force in the affairs of the world.²⁷ The Great War had disillusioned him; he believed war to be "the worst of all possible evils that might befall the human race."²⁸ This belief, in turn, generated a tremendous distrust and suspicion of any step that might lead to war.

Contemporaries of Baldwin agree that his knowledge of foreign affairs was very slight. One of his foreign secretaries, Samuel Hoare, noted that Baldwin knew no foreign languages and had little in

²⁷Young, Baldwin, p. 173.

²⁸Ibid., p. 177.

common with foreigners, and it was this "insularity that obscured his view of the changing world."²⁹ Hoare says Baldwin loathed foreign affairs, and Thomas Jones, Baldwin's private secretary, points out that Baldwin knew no European history.³⁰ His biographer, George Young, says Baldwin would or could not bring his mind to bear on anything he was not interested in; he did not try to understand how other people felt or thought, and "foreigners made him peevish or sent him to sleep."³¹ Even more damaging, Young reports that, when the cabinet discussed foreign affairs, Baldwin would say "wake me up when you're finished with that," and thus the foreign policy of Britain was drawn from this attitude of indifference.³² Neville Chamberlain, Baldwin's Chancellor of the Exchequer, noted on March 8, 1935, even before he became Prime Minister, that Baldwin was "tired and won't apply his mind to problems."³³ Anthony Eden recalled that in foreign affairs Baldwin was "a passive listener rather than an active contributor."³⁴ Another contemporary, Duff Cooper, argued "foreign affairs was so uncongenial to his [Baldwin's] mind he

²⁹Viscount Templewood, Nine Troubled Years (London: Wm. Collins, 1954), p. 136.

³⁰Jones, Diary, p. 173.

³¹Young, Baldwin, p. 61.

³²Ibid., p. 63.

³³Keith Feiling, Life of Neville Chamberlain (London: MacMillan and Co., 1966), p. 242.

³⁴Eden, Memoirs, p. 334.

preferred to ignore it."³⁵ Lord Vansittart, the Permanent Under Secretary for the Foreign Office believed Baldwin could not "find time to masticate the mass of our Foreign Office papers."³⁶ A Prime Minister who did not read the reports prepared for him by his own Foreign Office left much to be desired. John F. Kennedy argued that Baldwin "should be condemned for his blindness and his unwillingness to face unpleasant facts."³⁷ And finally, Baldwin's friend, Thomas Jones, noted sarcastically in his diary on March 19, 1935, that "Baldwin is a genial smoker who promises everything and forgets everything."³⁸

What emerges from these quotations is a consensus that Baldwin was insular, uninterested in foreign affairs, and given to underestimating their importance in the policy of the British Government. He was, in short, the wrong man to lead Britain through the series of crises which she was to face in the years 1935, 1936, and 1937.

Baldwin was not likely to read or comprehend the intelligence reports that came from qualified observers of the European scene, and the evidence of his failure to examine reports on Germany is overwhelming. In 1933, Sir Horace Rumbold, the British Ambassador in Berlin, told the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Simon, that the

³⁵Duff Cooper, Old Men Forget: The Autobiography of Duff Cooper Viscount Norwich (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 204.

³⁶Lord Vansittart, The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart (London: Hutchinson, 1958), p. 352.

³⁷John F. Kennedy, Why England Slept (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1940), p. 159.

³⁸Jones, Diary, p. 143.

German people were being cowed, and that the Jews and others were being sent to concentration camps. Rumbold maintained that Hitler was devious and harmful, but London did not or would not believe this to be true.³⁹ After Germany suddenly left the Disarmament Conference in December, 1933, James Herring, British Air Attaché, spoke to the wife of a German air official at an air display in Berlin; she pointed to a two-seater "mail" plane and suggested it was probably a new type of fighter plane. He reported this to London but his information was ignored.⁴⁰ The reports of Sir Eric Phipps, the British Ambassador in Berlin from 1934 until 1937, also were ignored. The French Ambassador, André François-Poncet suggests that "he [Phipps] had seen through Hitler's real nature" from the beginning and "he had never been the dupe of the Third Reich."⁴¹ Phipps told the Ambassador from the United States, William Dodd, in August, 1934, that Hitler would gladly go to war if he had the power, and that Europe must either unite or fall. Dodd quotes Phipps as warning that "Europe must watch Germany day and night."⁴² Ivone Kirkpatrick, a professional civil servant in the British Foreign Office, agrees that Phipps hated the Nazis, and grew sick watching Germany prepare for war. He became even more discouraged when the British government

³⁹Gott, Appeasers, p. 27.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 32.

⁴¹André François-Poncet, The Fateful Years: Memoirs of a French Ambassador in Berlin 1931-1938 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1949), p. 112.

⁴²Dodd, Ambassador Diary, p. 139.

ignored his warnings of Germany's military buildup.⁴³ The Germans cleverly understood how to reach Baldwin, and, in May, 1936, Ribbentrop asked Jones to visit Berlin, feeling that he could talk to Jones as he could not talk to Phipps. Ribbentrop knew Jones was close to Baldwin.⁴⁴ Baldwin did not respect his ambassador, Phipps, because Phipps was anti-German, and Baldwin believed he was hampered by diplomatic tradition.⁴⁵ Baldwin would not listen to his Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign Office, Vansittart, who was strongly anti-German, but also an informed diplomat.

While ignoring the intelligence reports from qualified sources, Baldwin preferred to receive his information from more compatible authorities. The Prime Minister was subject to the influence of a small and largely secret group of people "whose proper fields of responsibility did not lie in foreign affairs."⁴⁶ Baldwin craved friendship, but he chose his "intimate friends outside of politics."⁴⁷ Foremost among these close associates was Geoffrey Dawson, who had been Baldwin's friend for many years.

From 1922-1941, Geoffrey Dawson came very close to exercising "direct influence on the government."⁴⁸ The History of The Times

⁴³Ivone Kirkpatrick, The Inner Circle: Memoirs of Ivone Kirkpatrick (New York: St. Martins Press, 1959), p. 90.

⁴⁴Jones, Diary, p. 200.

⁴⁵Gott, Appassers, p. 51.

⁴⁶Connell, The Office, p. 243.

⁴⁷Percy of Newcastle, Some Memories (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1958), p. 192.

⁴⁸Williams, Estate, p. 270.

agrees that Dawson was a close personal friend of Baldwin's, and supported him at every turn.⁴⁹ The biographer of Lord Beaverbrook, Thomas Driberg, says Beaverbrook believed Dawson was more "important than any of the Prime Minister's colleagues" and that "Dawson was invariably consulted first" in time of trouble; when Baldwin appeared hesitant, Dawson comforted and encouraged him.⁵⁰ Dawson conducted himself in his relations with Baldwin "as though he were a confidential advisor, a superior civil servant," and Dawson's influence was not so much that of a journalist, but "of an eminence grise of politics, the confidant and go-between of men of power."⁵¹ The editor of The Times was the bellwether for the Prime Minister.⁵² Thomas Jones says that Baldwin, when bored with ordinary "yes-men" in the civil service, needed Dawson as a confidant.⁵³ In return, Dawson, who had complete faith in Baldwin's common sense and integrity, said "yes" from sincere conviction.⁵⁴

The friendship between Dawson and Baldwin began in May, 1923, and a possible reason for the friendship might have been that Baldwin liked a Fellow of All Souls "better than any other fellow."⁵⁵

⁴⁹History of The Times, IV, Part II, 892.

⁵⁰Tom Driberg, Beaverbrook: A Study in Power and Frustration (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1956), p. 223.

⁵¹Raymond, Age of Baldwin, p. 176.

⁵²Randolph S. Churchill, The Rise and Fall of Sir Anthony Eden (New York: G. P. Putnam and Son, 1959), p. 68.

⁵³Jones, Diary, p. xxv.

⁵⁴History of The Times, IV, Part II, 825.

⁵⁵Vansittart, Mist, p. 359.

Even after Baldwin had become Prime Minister, Dawson believed him to be unchanged, that is, a politician "singularly free from self-advertisement," and not forgetful of old friends.⁵⁶ Dawson's diary recorded a two-hour meeting with Baldwin on June 7, 1923, at which time they spoke on many subjects, such as the squabbles in the cabinet, the public's reaction to the new Prime Minister, the problems about the Ruhr, who should be named the new British Ambassador to the United States, the problems of the Dominions, and, finally, Baldwin's admitted ignorance of the empire.⁵⁷ Dawson recorded another meeting on November 4, 1924, the eve of Baldwin's second term in office, and Dawson stated that "he tried to give him [Baldwin] some wise advice about his government, [of] which he took only part."⁵⁸ Dawson recorded still another meeting on November 6, 1924, when he identified the good and bad members in Baldwin's Cabinet.⁵⁹ Baldwin and Dawson met regularly during Baldwin's second term, and the editor said that, when he felt there was too much complacency in Downing Street, he would meet Baldwin and prod his old friend along.⁶⁰ In September, 1928, Dawson again discussed members of the cabinet, and told Baldwin that if he wished to win the forthcoming election, he should tell the people that there would be changes in his team.⁶¹

⁵⁶Wrench, Dawson, p. 218.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 218-19.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 233.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 236.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 265.

On the eve of the election of April, 1929, Baldwin spoke to Dawson about reconstruction of the cabinet. On April 13, 1929, The Times published an article about why reconstruction would be advisable at the time.⁶² Dawson noted in his diary in October, 1930, that it was very hard to commit Baldwin to an exact statement of his views, and he feared that Baldwin never really rose to his full capacity until the causes for which he stood were almost desperate.⁶³ His own tremendous influence on Baldwin, in foreign affairs, turned out to be an asset neither to Baldwin nor to the British people.

Dawson's advice, whether good or bad, opinionated or factual, had to be judged by Baldwin in the light of his own character and experiences; Baldwin at this time was too tired, physically and mentally, to attend carefully to advice from any source. Baldwin was a product of militant Christianity, with a "strong sense of tradition and reveration for the past," and his conscience was more active than his intellect.⁶⁴ He was more of a preacher than a statesman; he should not be called lazy for he "was a ruminant."⁶⁵ Baldwin was "inclined to live in the past" and "his heart was more with the countryside and the pigs than with the devious speeches and machinations of politicians."⁶⁶

⁶²Ibid., p. 274.

⁶³Ibid., p. 287.

⁶⁴Jones, Diary, p. xxvi.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. xodi.

⁶⁶Bardens, Portrait of a Statesman, p. 167.

Neville Chamberlain, Baldwin's successor in 1937, threw light on Baldwin's essential character when he told the story of Baldwin after his defeat in 1923. Baldwin believed that the cabinet had plotted against him and Chamberlain believed that when Baldwin asked him to go for a walk so that Baldwin could ask him about political problems; however, there was "Not a bit of it. He talked pelicans, and the beauty of spring at Astley, and I [Chamberlain] had the utmost difficulty in dragging in politics."⁶⁷ Baldwin perplexed, charmed, and exasperated Chamberlain; he liked Baldwin as an individual, but felt that he was not a positive leader.⁶⁸

From the other side of the aisle Baldwin looked less whimsical and more senile. Aneurin Bevan became infuriated with Baldwin on the rare occasion at which he spoke in Parliament. Bevan called his speeches "'audible reveries' which were Baldwin's substitute for oratory on grave occasions." Bevan saw in them a "shambling gate of pedestrian thought." "It is medicine man talk," he said. "It lifts discussion on to so abstract a plane that the minds of the hearers are relieved of the effort of considering the details of the immediate problems. It imposes no intellectual strain because thought drifts from thought, assembling and dissolving like clouds in the upper air, having no connection with earthly obstacles. It flatters, because it appears to offer intimate companionship with a rare and noble spirit. It pleases the unskeptical, because it blurs the outline of unpleasant fact in a maze of meaningless generalities. Murmurs of admiration

⁶⁷Felling, Chamberlain, p. 111.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 164.

break out as this second-rate orator trails his tawdry wisps of mist over the parliamentary scene."⁶⁹

Baldwin conceived the role of the Prime Minister as that of a person apart from others with no colleagues of equal rank; he believed that all the decisions were to be made by him. Of all the gifts that a Prime Minister should have, Baldwin felt he possessed, to a pre-eminent degree, the ability to understand the people; he said "my worst enemy could never say that I do not understand the people of England."⁷⁰ Because he saw his duty in terms of his intimate and unquestioned knowledge of his countrymen, he brought this concept into cabinet meetings and made "it tell in the deliberations of his colleagues."⁷¹ He believed he did not have to do or say much and he thought the less he interfered the better it was; however, he felt his colleagues had to know that he embodied "the force to which they owe their offices: the will of the people, the sense of the nation."⁷²

Baldwin's biographer, Young, says that eventually everyone who knew him concluded that he was indolent. Dawson's influence burgeoned in proportion to Baldwin's indolence because the Prime Minister, not willing to sift a great variety of conflicting advice from those trained professionally in government, more and more came to depend on his private source for advice and comfort. The English historian,

⁶⁹Michael Foot, Aneurin Bevan: 1897-1945. A Biography (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1962), p. 257.

⁷⁰Young, Baldwin, p. 54.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

Sir Charles Petrie, says Baldwin was the laziest Prime Minister in the twentieth century.⁷³ Baldwin preferred to do nothing rather than act; he took over a great empire, supreme in power, secure in its liberty, and led it almost to annihilation.⁷⁴ Winston Churchill says Baldwin "preferred the substance to the form of power, and reigned placidly in the background."⁷⁵ Churchill, on November 12, 1936, in the House of Commons, summarized Baldwin's leadership; he said the government had indicated that it has "decided only to be undecided," "resolved to be irresolute," "solid to fluidity," and "all powerful to be impotent."⁷⁶ When Baldwin resigned in May, 1937, Churchill described him as laying down "the wide authority he had gathered and carefully maintained, but had used as little as possible," a man without detailed executive ability, a man who knew little of Europe, and disliked what he knew, a man detached from a concern of foreign affairs of his country.⁷⁷

This description summarized Baldwin very adequately; it is understandable that the people of Britain, victimized by a recent European war, wanted to ignore the entire field of foreign affairs, but it is hardly justifiable for a political leader with responsibility for the nation's welfare to ignore these problems. The only advice Baldwin

⁷³Sir Charles Petrie, The Powers Behind the Prime Ministers (London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1958), p. 58.

⁷⁴Cato [Frank Owen, Peter Howard and Michael Macintosh Foot], Guilty Men (New York: Fredrick A. Stokes Co., 1940), p. 14.

⁷⁵Churchill, Storm, p. 60.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 193.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 197-98.

left to his followers was to "use your common sense, avoid logic, love your fellow man; have faith in your own people."⁷⁸ From the man who had, in effect, been the National Government for the four years of Hitler's greatest growth, this advice was hardly adequate.

⁷⁸Young, Baldwin, p. 209.

CHAPTER V

THE PRO-GERMANISM OF THE TIMES AND DAWSON,

JANUARY TO APRIL, 1935

The main problem in foreign affairs confronting The Times and its European expert, Geoffrey Dawson, in the first half of 1935 was German rearmament. Until January, 1935, The Times' policy was unsettled, but, after the New Year, it began to assume a pro-German shape and by June it was obvious that the basis of its foreign policy was the appeasement of Hitler. During the first six months of 1935, there were two climactic events; Germany broke the Treaty of Versailles in March, and Great Britain signed a Naval Agreement with Germany in June. Both of these events called for editorial comment because of their importance; The Times condoned Germany for breaking the Treaty of Versailles and supported the Naval Agreement. These attitudes were no surprise to the perceptive reader of The Times because it was apparent that the paper was following a non-critical pattern toward Germany. Whatever the issue, foreign affairs, rearmament, or even German internal affairs, The Times was either decisively pro-German or, at very least, non-committal. Based on his influences, this attitude was not unexpected of Dawson. The most bitterly ironic fact was that Dawson, gullible and susceptible as he was to unsupported opinions from "proper" sources, was himself the largest single influence on British public opinion at this time.

At the beginning of 1935, The Times was universally regarded as the semi-official paper of the British Government, and "it was commonplace that what The Times was writing the government was usually thinking."¹ From inside the government Anthony Eden, too, observed that "The Times was widely regarded in Europe as the organ of the British Government."² This fact was even more obvious to an objective scholar, R. A. Scott, who said that the editor and the political line of The Times have "led to the belief, quite widely held in Britain, and very widely held indeed outside of Britain that The Times is nothing more or less than the mouthpiece of the Government."³ Foreigners believed The Times "to be inspired by the British Government of that day."⁴ Douglas Reed, a former Times journalist, says that The Times is unique among the world's newspapers at this time because "it is more objectively studied in foreign countries than any other" and one should read The Times if "you wish to know what is actually going to happen, [or] what a Conservative government will do when a crisis comes."⁵ Thus, The Times, in early 1935, was the most powerful editorial voice in England. Many of the world's leading figures read The Times to learn the policy of the British Government.

When Hitler came to power in January, 1933, as Chancellor of Germany, the attitude of the paper was to treat his government like

¹Graves, Long Week-end, p. 361.

²Eden, Memoirs, p. 197.

³Scott, Life in Britain, p. 234.

⁴Wheeler-Bennett, Prologue to Tragedy, p. 96.

⁵Reed, Disgrace, p. 204.

any other, based on its performance and merit. Dawson believed that one could not speculate about the future behavior of Hitler's government until Hitler could be judged on performance, "for cooperation with allies or colleagues, which are the real tests of a ruler."⁶ By February, 1933, The Times' correspondents wrote that the German Government, its chiefs, and its supporters were acting in an abnormal way. The correspondents told Dawson that Germany wanted to rearm and use her armed strength as she pleased, and also to obtain modifications of the Treaty of Versailles, but there was no comment from The Times.⁷ On June 28, 1933, the fourteenth anniversary of the Treaty of Versailles, The Times used the occasion for an attack on the treaty. The paper stated that Europe was in a dilemma and must choose either "to refuse to force what reason suggests in part be conceded, or else yielding to extremism what earlier was refused to moderation."⁸ The newspaper, and Dawson, by June of 1933 saw "no reason why an action that was justified by ethics and politics before January, 1933, should be held to be falsified by events of the 30th of that month."⁹ Dawson and the British Government had been told that Hitler was preparing to rearm, but both remained silent. On October 14, 1933, when it was learned that Hitler withdrew from the Disarmament Conference and Germany resigned from the League of Nations as of October 28, Dawson remained unperturbed and believed that now,

⁶History of The Times, IV, Part II, 881.

⁷Ibid., p. 882.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Rowse, Appeasement, p. 7.

more than ever, treaty revision was of primary importance. Dawson complained on November 27 that British disarmament proposals had never been precisely stated to the world. Dawson believed the world deserved to know what, in Britain's opinion, would represent a fair and reasonable offer to Germany. He believed that one did not know whether Hitler wanted peace, as his speeches indicated, or was only hiding behind oratory while preparing for war; he knew Britain would have to deal with Hitler in either event, and he felt Britain should be open.¹⁰

Dawson, as noted by his biographer, encountered much difficulty and indecisiveness in writing of the past events of 1933. In his diary he noted in 1933 that there was a great deal of indecision in high government places about Germany. The National Government, Dawson believed, was adequate to the task for which it had been formed--solving Britain's economic problems--but was not capable of dealing with the difficulties of Europe.¹¹ To Dawson and many intelligent Englishmen at the end of 1933, Hitler's apparent ravings were not the war cries of a wicked man, but rather the reasonable complaints of a man who had been wronged.¹²

On March 1, 1934, Dawson wrote to his Berlin correspondent that Hitler would find sympathy in England if he were really to help the youth of Germany. Dawson also said that he believed "Hitler might

¹⁰Wrench, Dawson, p. 309.

¹¹Ibid., p. 304.

¹²Gott, Appeasers, p. 26.

not be so bad if he were delivered from the influence of some of his wicked associates" but Dawson noted that even at their worst the Nazis were behaving no differently from any other politicians.¹³ Dawson at no time in the early period relayed the frightened reports of his European correspondents telling of Germany's buildup of air power, and that German commercial planes were really military planes in disguise.

Hitler, on June 30, 1934, purged many of the high officials of the Nazi party. Ernest Roehm, a high official in the party, was killed. Dawson was at his country estate at the time of this news release, but The Times did not censure this act; in fact the paper almost condoned it, saying that Hitler was trying to impose a high standard of conduct on the officials of the National Socialist movement.¹⁴ Dawson noted in his diary that, when he heard about this Nazi act, he believed Germany had been reduced to barbarism, which was in sharp contrast to The Times report.¹⁵ Lord Lothian, Dawson's chief source of knowledge on German affairs, believed the Germans were mad gunmen.¹⁶ The official History of The Times pointed out that Dawson was recorded as opposing the editorial which almost condoned this brutal action. However, it is reasonable to assume that the anonymous writer who wrote the editorial which placed Hitler in

¹³History of The Times, IV, Part II, 886.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 887.

¹⁵Wrench, Dawson, p. 316.

¹⁶Rowse, Appeasement, p. 31.

such a favorable light must have done so in the expectation of his editor's approval.

At the end of 1934, The Times published its review of the year; 1934, said the paper, was a year of many discomforts and afflictions, but the inhabitants of Great Britain might note with pride that, despite its faults, their country was still the best country in the world to live in, especially in view of the plight of the rest of the world.¹⁷ The review of the year indicates more clearly than any other evidence the indomitable optimism of The Times' editor.

The British Government on the eve of 1935 was tranquil in the hands of Baldwin; although MacDonald was the head of the National Government, as previously pointed out, it was actually Baldwin who guided the affairs of state after 1933. British foreign policy from 1931-1935 appears to be essentially negative; the greatest attention was paid to domestic problems in Great Britain, and inside the government any conflict as to what should be done in foreign affairs was resolved by the fear of the Communists, thus minimizing the dangers of Fascism.¹⁸ The major negative factor was the lack of loyal opposition. The National Government had more than eighty-five per cent of the seats in the House of Commons, and the opposition was impotent, leaderless, and chaotic. Consequently, the leaders of the National Government could afford to ignore any criticism from the floor and they did so.

The one positive factor seemed to be that, since World War I,

¹⁷Wrench, Dawson, p. 310.

¹⁸Havighurst, Twentieth Century Britain, p. 241.

British Governments agreed that their foreign policy rested "upon the Covenant of the League of Nations and the theory of collective security; in doing so they were reflecting the beliefs and wishes of ninety-five per cent of the electorate."¹⁹ Collective security might be defined as the attempt to keep international order by consent rather than by compulsion; for example, if a state became belligerent, it would soon find the rest of the members of the League of Nations against it. These nations would place sanctions on the disruptive nation as a means of coercion. Collective security meant that nations would not have to be heavily armed, with huge military buildups, and tax funds would be released for more humane purposes.²⁰

The National Government under MacDonald adhered to the policy of the League of Nations, as did Baldwin, but Baldwin also had to deal with the problem of German rearmament. It is fair to recall Baldwin's violent dislike for foreign affairs, and he and the National Government, warned by representatives on the Continent that Hitler was rearming, still chose to ignore the problem.

German rearmament, however, had advanced by 1935 far beyond the point it had occupied in 1933. The only reason for the British Government not acting on Germany before 1935 was that the governing classes wanted to retain power, and could do so only by ignoring "the German problem."²¹ Winston Churchill summed up the feeling in the country on the eve of 1935. The desire for peace "which animated the

¹⁹Harold Nicolson, King George The Fifth: His Life and Reign (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1952), p. 527.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Boothby, Fight to Live, p. 132.

uninformed, misinformed majority of British people" was disastrous, and it appeared to be political suicide for anyone to try to awaken them; however, continued Churchill, it "is no excuse for political leaders who fall short of their duty."²²

Whether the British Government and The Times recognized it or not, Hitler had been very busy in 1933-1934. During this period his foreign policy was to act in such a way as to avoid disturbing the powers who had signed the Treaty of Versailles. This tactic allowed him to rearm with time and freedom and to build German military power.²³ He wanted to create a "Great German Army" and then make Germany the most important power in Europe, which, of course, meant utterly destroying the Treaty of Versailles.²⁴

There is a difference of opinion among scholars as to the means to Hitler's end. One school of thought is represented by the idea that Hitler had a planned foreign policy, that is, a blueprint which he followed accordingly.²⁵ Another interpretation insists that Hitler was a unique phenomenon in foreign policy and that he "translated commonplace thoughts into action," appearing as the "master in the game of waiting"; the proponents of this view believe that in foreign affairs Hitler recognized that his opponents were utterly

²²Churchill, Storm, p. 100.

²³Alan Bullock, Hitler, A Study in Tyranny (1st ed. rev.; New York: Harper Row & Co., 1962), p. 321.

²⁴Alan J.P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961), p. 70.

²⁵Schwarz, Ribbentrop: His Life, p. 45.

confused and that they literally forced success upon him.²⁶ Regardless of the interpretation, it is clear that by the eve of 1935, German rearmament was well underway, and Hitler could no longer hope to keep it a "secret."

The British Foreign Secretary, who would have to deal with the problem of German rearmament during the first half of 1935, was Sir John Simon. He was an All Souls man, and a very close friend of Dawson's. Simon, Foreign Secretary since the founding of the National Government and a key figure in that government, was very indecisive. Anthony Eden recalls that Simon had a "brilliant, analytical mind [but] hated to make decisions," and that he would attempt to dodge decision-making while giving "an ingenious reason" for delay.²⁷ Another view says that he lacked the two essential qualifications for the job: (1) he did not have the knowledge necessary for his position, and (2) he did not have the aptitude for long-range policy-making; he saw each episode as detached from all others; for him the art of diplomacy was relying on one's instinct.²⁸ An official in the German Embassy in London, describing Simon, said that he really represented the "British mentality which preferred a bad compromise to a straight solution, if that solution involves the assumption of any responsibility."²⁹ Besides his indecision and

²⁶Taylor, Origins of Second World War, p. 72.

²⁷Eden, Memoirs, p. 32.

²⁸Aubrey L. Kennedy, Britain Faces Germany (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 108.

²⁹Gott, Appeasers, p. 66.

predilection for intuition he had no knowledge of Europe, its history, or its peoples, and he believed that the French cries for security were romantic fantasies.³⁰

On January 16, 1935, The Times printed the story of Hitler's joyous speech after ninety per cent of the Saarlanders in a plebiscite agreed to return the Saar to Germany. The paper quoted Hitler as saying he would "raise no further territorial claims against France" and that the way was now clear for a Franco-German understanding and that "the complicated international settlements of German equality of status is regarded as a condition" for such talks to begin.³¹ The editorial of the same day spoke of Hitler's speech and his intentions for peace, implying that this would strengthen peace among the European nations. Dawson said that the British people should believe Hitler and his peaceful intentions because "there is no reason to doubt them."³² By Hitler's action in the Saar, Dawson believed Hitler would be placing himself in close accord with Britain and France, which would create harmonious relations in Europe. At this time no one could see that this legal move was the first stage of Hitler's expansion in Europe.

The German concentration camps came under the scrutiny of The Times in 1935, but only in their relationship to foreign affairs. On January 24 The Times said that these "are instruments not of law but of terrorism, and tend to breed cases of personal cruelty and random

³⁰Taylor, Origins of Second World War, p. 67.

³¹The Times (London), January 16, 1935, p. 10.

³²Ibid., p. 11.

oppression." However, the paper continued, this does not mean the Nazi regime should abandon "the use of the 'strong hand' against its political opponents." Dawson reasoned "that it is not lightly to be believed that they [the authors of the system] delight in harshness and cruelty." "May not we, as foreigners who admire and love so much that is German, who wish to remove causes of misunderstanding between our peoples," appeal to Hitler, and hope he will look anew at these camps because this would "strengthen his moral position both at home and abroad."³³ Although this article was at first critical, it later weakened its criticism so that, in effect, The Times almost apologized for German barbarism.

Geoffrey Dawson's friend Sir Edward Grigg spoke on foreign affairs before the University Conservative Club at Oxford on January 25. Dawson commented on this speech in an editorial and agreed with Grigg's views, which were that the Treaty of Locarno was the focal point of British foreign policy. However, there are limits, even here, Dawson injected, because no country can be expected to undertake "commitments in cases where its own interests are not affected." The editorial pointed to the coming British visit of French ministers Flandin and Laval, and the paper said that Britain should not make further promises to France. The Times observed that "German rearmament is the central fact of European politics, and German equality within a system of security is a principle that has been accepted by all." Dawson said that now was the time for the restrictions upon arms to be removed because these restrictions were

³³The Times (London), January 24, 1935, pp. 13-14.

never meant to be permanent and, until equality was really recognized, there would be "no stable international system."³⁴ This editorial is interesting because it was directed to the French, letting them know what The Times and, perhaps the government, thought of their forthcoming British visit.

"Two years of National Socialism" was the headline for January 30 editorial; it showed how Hitler had reduced unemployment in Germany and returned self-respect, direction, and discipline to Germans. The paper also said that Hitler desired peace, and that now he was "pursuing more moderate courses, and is obviously trying to substitute the evolutionary process for the revolutionary methods of his earlier days."³⁵

The Times, on January 30, noted that Lord Lothian had visited Hitler and other influential members of the regime in Germany. The reader will recall that the German Ambassador arranged this visit because Lothian was sympathetic to Germany. In the January 31 edition there appeared the first of two long articles written by Lothian. By placing these articles on the editorial page, Dawson reflected the importance The Times gave them. Lothian called his articles "Germany and France." After his discussion with Hitler and heads of the foreign service and the army, he believed that there were now great prospects for peace. However, he felt these prospects would only be realized if the British government grappled with the situation; he said that there was fear in Europe, arising from the Franco-German

³⁴The Times (London), January 26, 1935, p. 13.

³⁵The Times (London), January 30, 1935, p. 13.

issue. Because Germany had been defeated and the punitive Treaty of Versailles was "made at her expense," she was rearming in defiance of it, and many people feared trouble. France, continued Lothian, had sought security for fifteen years, knowing she could not count on help against Germany. Thus, the equality France sought implied inferiority for Germany because France wanted equality with security, including an alliance system which would give her military aid in the event of another war. Germany's complaint was that the Treaty of Versailles imposed huge losses on her. These included reduction of territory, loss of colonies, and reparations. In addition, Germany was defenseless against her neighbors because of the disarmament clauses of Part 5 of the Treaty of Versailles. Consequently, Lothian said, this prostrate position of Germany, this inequality, had meant security for France since 1918. Germany wanted an equality which would be obtained only when she had "military power equivalent to that of her neighbors." This was the reason why she had left the League of Nations, and why she was rearming. "This [was] now the only road to equality," which would provide security to the regime. The danger was that, when Germany seized equality of arms, France felt threatened. Thus France increased her arms and sought new military alliances with other nations who feared Germany, and who wanted the Treaty of Versailles obeyed. The danger lay in the possible chance of a buildup of arms and a "repetition of the situation of 1914--in which Europe rushed headlong into war without anyone deliberately pressing the button for war." Although he saw the possibility of war, Lothian believed that there was a way of squaring this

circle.³⁶

He had a solution to the problem of the arms race. "Germany," said Lothian, "[did] not want war and [was] prepared to renounce it absolutely as a method of settling her disputes with her neighbors," provided she was granted equality, which of course meant equality in arms with her neighbors. Lothian addressed himself to the people who asked "should we trust Germany?" and answered that there were two reasons why England should. The first was "the emphatic declaration of Herr Hitler himself--the undisputed leader of Germany today," that he would renounce war if he got equality. As evidence of Hitler's good faith, Lothian noted that Hitler had removed the problem of the Polish Corridor with the January, 1934, treaty with Poland, which provided for non-aggression and respect for existing territorial rights for ten years. Lothian neglected to mention the breach this treaty caused in the French alliance system of Eastern Europe by pulling Poland out of the French orbit. With regard to the French, Lothian said that Hitler "accepts the incorporation of Alsace and Lorraine in France," and also cited Hitler's pledge "not to interfere in his beloved Austria by force." The second reason Lothian suggested for trusting Hitler was that he announced his readiness to sign "pacts of nonaggression with all Germany's neighbors" and in the field of armaments he, too, would submit to international inspection if everyone else agreed to do the same. Lothian felt Hitler's sincerity should not be doubted because in wanting to "unite the young generation in peace" it would take ten years for Germany to recover

³⁶The Times (London), January 31, 1935, p. 15.

economically and eight years to restore the efficiency of the German army and, if war were to come before that time, Communism would wipe out Germany's National Socialism. Lothian stressed Germany's desire to avoid the war which all Europe feared; he believed she would surely not go to war to change the Treaty of Versailles, and there were no other reasons.³⁷ Lothian was correct in saying Germany would not go to war to change the Treaty of Versailles; why should she, when she had been building arms with impunity in direct violation of that treaty?

For Lothian the key to the European puzzle rested with Britain, the impartial state that other powers looked up to and followed. He thought she should remove herself from "the method of the Diktat of Versailles" and make sure that Germany was invited to take part in any European discussions as an equal with other nations. For, if Britain could ensure Germany peace and security, Lothian believed that Germany could change "those features of her internal regime which most pain her friends, alarm her neighbors, and discredit her fair name." In this way, he felt, Britain would give "equality to Germany and security to France."³⁸

Lothian raised the old scourge of Communism. Hitler, said Lothian, felt that Russian Communism was "essentially a militant religion," always expanding, and despite Russia's vast internal resources and population, a threat to Europe. How would Germany be regarded, Lothian asked, if Russia decided to expand? Would she be considered

³⁷The Times (London), February 1, 1935, p. 15.

³⁸Ibid.

as the "potential enemy of Europe or as the Bulwark of Europe, as the menace or protector of the new nations of Eastern Europe?"³⁹

These two articles are very important because they reveal what The Times editor was thinking, namely, that the Treaty of Versailles was wrong, that Hitler was a fine and honorable man, and that Russia was a genuine threat. Dawson would adopt Lothian's suggestion to make Britain the mediator in obtaining German equality. Lothian's proposal of Germany as a possible protector of the new Eastern European Nations was an absolute reversal of his earlier estimate of these states as non-entities, which had only Germany to fear. Also, the early February talks between Britain and France were about to start and these editorials appeared as a warning to the French of Britain's changing attitude.

The British held a conference with France, on the 1st and 2nd of February, called primarily because of German rearmament. France had, on January 7, held talks in Rome with Mussolini, which guaranteed further Franco-Italian talks if Austria's independence were threatened, and both denied to any country the right of repudiating arms obligations; "any country" was directed at Germany. The Times said, as a result of this conference, France and Italy have improved "the whole outlook in Europe."⁴⁰ Anthony Eden called the Franco-Italian talks an "important contribution for European stability." British foreign policy was based on the League of Nations, and the maintenance of collective security, which he described as the abolition of force

³⁹Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁰The Times (London), January 8, 1935, p. 12.

and substituting the rule of law.⁴¹

The results of the Anglo-French February talks were threefold: both countries agreed, first, that countries whose armaments have been limited by peace treaties could not rearm but that France and Britain would allow Germany to revise the current treaty. Second, Britain and France hoped that Germany might agree to pacts of mutual assistance with the new nations of East Europe. Third, the two powers hoped for a possible trilateral air pact with Germany, and they wanted Germany to rejoin the League of Nations. France and Britain offered this as a package proposal.

The Times reported that the German reaction to the British-French talks was cautious. The paper said, however, that the Germans liked the suggestion of Lord Lothian for a direct British-German conference as a means of helping Germany to reply to the British-French proposals, and that "a visit to Berlin by Sir John Simon or Anthony Eden might contribute largely to advancing matters." Without naming specific persons, The Times suggested that this idea had already been discussed in political circles in Britain.⁴² This is the first indication of a possible trip to Germany by the British Foreign Secretary; soon thereafter the Foreign Secretary announced publicly in the House of Commons that he hoped to go to Germany shortly. This points up two facts: (1) Dawson knew what was happening in the British Government before other newspapermen, and (2) the Germans had kept abreast of Lothian's articles that appeared in The Times.

⁴¹The Times (London), January 9, 1935, p. 12.

⁴²The Times (London), February 5, 1935, p. 14.

The Times commented editorially on the Franco-British talks, stating "there is not the slightest effort to rush Germany, or to offer her a finished product . . . for her to take or leave it." If Germany refused to enter into the general European negotiations, "the whole process of negotiation must begin all over again. Europe has done with Diktats."⁴³ Again on February 6, The Times emphasized that Germany would really feel like an equal from "a visit by Sir John Simon to Berlin."⁴⁴ The editorial of the next day noted that the Germans liked the ideas proposed in the London agreement, and thought perhaps as a result of the agreement ". . . a breach is being closed in the West, so a breach in the East [i.e., between France and Russia] is being opened." Dawson saw Russia as the only unhappy country in Europe, and he suggested that if France were to give up her interest in Germany's eastern border France and Germany could live peacefully side by side. Dawson would have liked to ignore or isolate Russia in the East, and he was evidently working to do so.⁴⁵ The Times published an article sympathizing the Germany in her fears of Russia, noting that Germany has always been aware of the military and economic expansion of Russia, and fearful of her wild revolutionary doctrine.⁴⁶

The official German reply to the British-French communiqué, published on February 16, declared that Germany wanted peace, security, and a cessation of the armament race, and stated that this could be

⁴³Ibid., p. 15.

⁴⁴The Times (London), February 6, 1935, p. 12.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁶The Times (London), February 9, 1935, p. 12.

achieved only when there was "free agreement between sovereign states."⁴⁷

The reply continued that Germany would like some kind of air agreement, but not until she had talked with the countries separately, and suggested that Britain send a representative to Berlin. Dawson wrote an editorial about this reply and said that he approved of Germany's position; he stated that this was a new and fairer start "for fresh diplomatic negotiations, and that, after all is the main thing." The Times asserted that the Germans had shown a sincere readiness to negotiate and that they wanted only to be an equal among nations without resorting to an arms race. The Times reasoned that if Germany were equal in air power, she might go back to Geneva and become active again in the League of Nations. The article concluded that "there is no obstacle which cannot be overcome if all set themselves together to remove it."⁴⁸ On March 27, only five weeks after this editorial appeared, Germany was to tell Britain, when Simon and Eden met Hitler, that she had achieved equality of arms. Equality in five weeks! Germany had been building arms all along, a fact Dawson knew but ignored.

The next round of European talks had already started with the Franco-British talks in early February. The Germans wanted British representatives to visit them to negotiate freely; however, the British and French, by holding consultations and dispatching and receiving notes, appeared to be acting in a sinister manner. Dawson wanted the British Cabinet to send someone to mollify Hitler and remove his fear

⁴⁷The Times (London), February 16, 1935, p. 12.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 13.

of what he regarded as clandestine Franco-British deliberations. Dawson asserted that Germany knew exactly what Britain had told Italy and other powers about the Franco-British agreement of early February, but one had to "look at the matter in the light in which it is seen from Germany." In other words, one had to look at this from Germany's point of view. There had been important meetings held in Rome and London, but "Germany [has] not been present," nor was she represented at Geneva. As a result of these talks, France and Italy appeared to be closer than at any time since the war, France and Britain also were very close, and France and Russia seemed to be agreeing more and more. Thus, with the exception of Germany all of the major powers seemed to be friendly. To be sure, Dawson conceded, Germany had stalked out of Geneva, and had engaged in balligerent chauvinistic propaganda in the early days of Hitler, but, today, however, Hitler sought to collaborate with other governments, especially with Britain, the guarantor of both the German and the French frontiers. He said the British, therefore, should go to see Hitler, and "the sooner the better"; "this opportunity simply must not be missed." He believed Germany wanted, deserved, and would attain equality in arms and in negotiation and it would be better for her to obtain them by consent rather than by defiance. He thought Britain should show France her optimism about initial negotiations with Germany, and as a result France would follow the British example.⁴⁹ The Times, once more, was pro-German. Dawson was making a case that the German fear, although psychological, was nonetheless real, and Britain should try to

⁴⁹The Times (London), February 20, 1935, p. 15.

understand the mind of Germany.

Sir John Simon told the British House of Commons on February 25 that he hoped to visit Germany shortly with the knowledge and consent of Britain's French and Italian allies. He added that a visit to Moscow was also under consideration. The Times reported this decision by Simon, and also the news that some members in the cabinet wanted him to go to Moscow; however, The Times believed that Simon should return to London and send an aide to Moscow. The Times wanted the visit of Simon to Berlin not to lose any of its significance in the minds of the Germans by being followed by a visit to Moscow by Simon.⁵⁰

This visit was "if anything, overdue," agreed Dawson. Again, he stressed the fact that other states had been trying to settle "problems that still cause misgivings and apprehensions and divisions among States that should normally be united," but the Germans had been left out. Even the Franco-British decisions have been interpreted in Berlin as commands, and, in light of the rivalry between Germany and France, the Germans had justifiable misgivings. France had been very suspicious of Germany because the Germans had stressed the proposed air convention for Western Europe, but the Germans had not mentioned their part in the proposed Eastern European pact. Dawson said this fear was complete nonsense because the Germans wanted to talk about all aspects of the British-French agreement and were using the air convention as a logical beginning. The editorial continued that the Germans were not demanding too much because, after all, the

⁵⁰The Times (London), February 26, 1935, p. 6.

French had gone to see Mussolini, the man in charge of Italian foreign policy, and, thus, it was not asking too much for Britain to see the man in charge of German foreign policy. It was only natural that the Germans should request Simon's visit and that this request should find support "in public opinion and [in] the columns of the British Press, and that it should be adopted by the British Government."⁵¹

The emphasis here again is that Germany, cut off from the negotiations, was reacting out of fear, and with admirable restraint. The fantastic suspicions of France were without supporting evidence, argued Dawson, and he appealed to the rationality of "public opinion" to recognize this position. This term was supposed to reflect the good common sense of the British man-in-the-street, whom Dawson did not know. Dawson stated that "public opinion" supported Simon's visit, although Simon had only made the announcement on February 25, the day before the editorial appeared.

For The Times the month of March was very eventful. The Saar was transferred to Germany in March, and The Times editorialized that the credit for this belonged to the League of Nations, and noted that Hitler had taken the opportunity to address a kind word to France.⁵² The Times officially announced that Simon and Eden would go to Berlin on March 7-9.

Dawson praised this decision elaborately. He felt this visit would be an act of diplomacy, and that there had been much diplomatic travel abroad to Rome, Paris, and London in the past few months, but

⁵¹Ibid., p. 15.

⁵²The Times (London), March 2, 1935, p. 13.

"no French or British Ministers have visited Berlin," which was particularly insulting because Hitler did not like to travel abroad. Simon's visit was to "dispel embarrassment and bring Berlin well into the diplomatic orbit," and Dawson said "equality in negotiations will be re-established in regard to Germany." Toward the end of this editorial, Dawson expressed his anti-Russianism; he said that, if the Berlin trip had been taken "on the way to Moscow, the visit would have lost much of its importance and psychological value."⁵³ To whom would the psychological value be lost? If Simon continued to Moscow, Germany would think Russia was her equal and Dawson, of course, did not believe that.

Dawson's hopes were not immediately realized because the government had published a White Paper [CMD 4827] on March 4 and the House of Commons prepared to debate an increase in arms; the government document argued that an arms increase was necessary as a result of Germany's rearming in violation of the limitations set by the Treaty of Versailles. The White Paper sufficiently annoyed Hitler so that Germany cancelled the visit by Simon and Eden, allegedly because Hitler had caught a cold.⁵⁴

Dawson denied that Hitler was annoyed by the White Paper, and claimed that he was really ill. Hitler, said Dawson, had caught a cold when he was in Saarbrücken for the reunification festivities. Dawson thought that Simon and Eden had been invited to Berlin by the German Government to exchange questions and answers with Hitler

⁵³The Times (London), March 4, 1935, p. 14.

⁵⁴Poncet, Fateful Years, p. 167.

himself, and it would hardly be in Germany's self-interest to cancel the visit.⁵⁵

The very next day Dawson defended the White Paper, stating that Baldwin had said in November, 1934, that Britain needed more planes. Dawson said there was no reason to believe that this increase in air power was "prompted by, or had reference to, the projected visit of British Ministers to Berlin." Dawson declared that Britain was only correcting the deficiencies pointed out by Baldwin and that the talks could be held when Hitler recovered.⁵⁶

The German Foreign Minister, Konstantin von Neurath, told the British Ambassador that Hitler expected to be "cured" by the 24th to 28th, and the visit could still be made if Britain were still in agreement. Meanwhile, the real head of the British Government, Baldwin, was reported to be "tired and [unable to] apply his mind to problems."⁵⁷

The House of Commons was scheduled to debate the White Paper, and, in an editorial on the forthcoming debate, Dawson said that the government's plan to modernize and renovate the country's defenses was the right course even if it were not popular. An increase in arms was not popular because people did not like to see their hard-earned tax money go for arms, and also many people felt that national armament was contrary to the spirit of the League of Nations. Dawson replied by saying that Britain was not following an aggressive policy,

⁵⁵The Times (London), March 6, 1935, p. 14.

⁵⁶The Times (London), March 7, 1935, p. 15.

⁵⁷Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 242.

and, by being better equipped, would be able to play her full part in collective security. The second group of critics came from abroad, especially from Germany, and Dawson answered them by saying that Germany did not have to worry, for Britain recognized the principle of German equality; the postponement of the Anglo-German talks "will only play into the hands of the isolationists" and hurt the collective security of the Continent.⁵⁸

Lord Lothian, who did not believe Hitler had a cold, wrote a long letter to the editor on the same day, explaining why Hitler took offense at the White Paper. Germany, Lothian said, felt her armed neighbors had broken the disarmament provisions of the League of Nations, as well as its promises in the Covenant, and Germany would gain equality only by arming, believing that equal power would buy her equal status inside the League of Nations. Lothian said, when the White Paper called German rearmament a threat to the peace, Hitler saw a revival of "the Versailles Diktat" which blamed Germany for the war. Lothian said friendly discussion would remove Germany's isolation, and the future of Europe would be based on equality. Lothian was convinced that if Hitler had equality in arms he would want a stabilized Europe, and would rejoin the League of Nations to discuss his grievances in a peaceful manner.⁵⁹

Baldwin defended the White Paper on the 11th. He declared that Britain was only replacing its old weapons, and that this action was in accordance with the League of Nations. Baldwin, too, was convinced

⁵⁸The Times (London), March 11, 1935, p. 13.

⁵⁹Ibid.

that Hitler had a cold.⁶⁰ Perhaps Dawson told him.

The government did not think the White Paper was anti-German because it was officially announced that Simon and Eden would go to see Hitler on March 26-27, and that only Eden would go to Russia afterward. No doubt, Dawson was pleased that the Foreign Secretary would return to London, thus not losing any of the psychological value gained from his Berlin trip.

On March 16, which was a Saturday, Germany formally repudiated the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles and reintroduced conscription, stating that there would be a peacetime army of 600,000 men in thirty-six divisions. The reasons Hitler offered were that Russia was rearming, and that France had, on March 12, increased the period of military service from one to two years, and therefore, Germany had to rearm.⁶¹ Another factor, of course, was the British White Paper. The Times, which has no Sunday editions, had to wait until the edition of the 18th to comment.

Meantime, on the 17th, Dawson spoke with Baldwin, and told him there was no need to be afraid.⁶² The Times on the 18th reported the event of the 16th; the full text of Hitler's speech was given, in addition to the high points of future German policy. Briefly these were: (1) Germany wanted peace; (2) Germany was prepared to offer non-aggression pacts to her neighbors; (3) Germany had no claims

⁶⁰The Times (London), March 12, 1935, p. 16.

⁶¹Eden, Memoirs, P. 143.

⁶²Wrench, Dawson, p. 321.

against France; (4) Germany wanted respect and to be a guarantor of peace; and (5) Germany rearmend to protect herself.

Dawson's editorial declared that German rearmament had been accepted by Western diplomats, and "there is something to be said on general grounds for having the German cards on the table" because it might help the negotiations among Britain, Germany, and France to have each know where the other two stood. Dawson agreed that this flagrant violation of a treaty could not be passed over in silence, and Germany, by acting unilaterally, had broken the British-Franco agreement of February with which Germany appeared to agree. However, Dawson continued, if this was a crude method of asserting German equality "no harm is done," and Britain should still go on with her planned visit to Berlin.⁶³

Dawson's belief that "no harm is done" is a classic instance of diplomatic misunderstanding. To the Germans, the defeat and humiliation had been thrown off, and Hitler was the hero. He had gained more for Germany than the Republican Government; he had restored the nation's honor, all without foreign intervention.⁶⁴

The British Government sent a strong note of protest to Germany, but undercut its effect by asking if Germany still wanted the British visit to take place; the Germans said yes.

Dawson justified Britain's sending a note of protest by arguing that, if the unilateral breaking of treaties became commonplace, it would end diplomatic relations among civilized countries. However,

⁶³The Times (London), March 18, 1935, p. 13.

⁶⁴William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. A History of Nazi Germany (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 284.

continued Dawson, there might be occasions when one party had not really been represented in a treaty, thus inferring that Germany had been justified in breaking the Treaty of Versailles. In this article, Dawson admitted that relations between France and Germany were strained, but Hitler really believed that the situation was not insoluble.⁶⁵ This editorial attempted to diminish the force of the day's news from Germany.

The Italians and French reacted to Germany's action, and they wanted to confer with Britain before Simon and Eden visited Germany. No conference was necessary, argued Dawson, because everyone knew that British policy was "not to take sides for or against any particular country, but to work steadily for the inclusion of all in some sort of collective system." The editor seemed to ignore British and almost worldwide membership in the League of Nations as a collective system. The purpose of the Berlin visit, reasoned Dawson, was to get Germany to enter a "pact or pacts of this nature"; this visit had been arranged some time ago because "Berlin had been left out of the recent series of diplomatic calls and conferences." Some people believed that Simon should stop in Italy or Paris before going to Berlin, but the Foreign Secretary felt he was not a messenger. "The British public" wanted him to carry "out an agreement with his own colleagues, a considered policy deliberately settled."⁶⁶

The French and Italians protested to Berlin on the 20th and France declared that she would take her case to the League of Nations.

⁶⁵The Times (London), March 19, 1935, p. 17.

⁶⁶The Times (London), March 20, 1935, p. 15.

France emphasized four major objections. The first was that Germany had broken international law with her unilateral breaking of the Treaty of Versailles. Second, Germany, by using force instead of negotiation, was making negotiations very difficult. Third, Germany was building a large army. And fourth, Germany's actions of March 16 were not acceptable to France. The French argument rested on Articles 10, 11, and 17 of the League of Nations.

The future Foreign Secretary, Samuel Hoare, noted that The Times stressed the value of getting Germany back into a disarmament conference, and that only trouble would result from agreeing with France to take this matter before the League. The Times insisted that the British diplomatic visit must be made to Germany, and the government agreed with The Times that Simon and Eden should go to Berlin, with the understanding that Eden would stop in Paris and allay French-Italian fears.⁶⁷

Dawson's March 21 editorial, "A Good and a Bad Decision," commenting on the French appeal to the League of Nations, affirmed that Eden would stop in Paris and clarify Britain's investigation of Hitler's readiness to take part in the collective system, explaining whether Hitler would use his new power for evil "as his critics believe" or "play a leading part in establishing a new international order." France had taken the violation of Versailles before the League of Nations; people in Britain wanted Germany to rejoin the League of Nations, but Dawson feared that a Germany indicted for breaking the treaty would shun Geneva. Therefore, he suggested that

⁶⁷Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 131.

the Council "consider equity as well as purely legal argument." The League of Nations was to agree to the obvious German violation of the Treaty of Versailles but "that [however] is not the dispute. The real question is whether Germany for the last fifteen years has had a square deal, and whether the treaty itself, which was imposed upon her in 1919, was in all respects a fair one. That question cannot be answered by any Court of Arbitration in the world." Dawson believed the only thing that would be accomplished by bringing Germany before the League of Nations would be to document the League's anti-German sentiment; therefore, France's decision to go before the League of Nations was a bad one.⁶⁸

This statement showed most clearly Dawson's pro-Germanism, as the dispute centered on the Treaty of Versailles itself and not its violation.

Anthony Eden arrived in Paris on March 23, and, after a meeting with the French Foreign Minister Laval and Italy's Luvick, all agreed to meet at Stresa with Mussolini on April 11. Eden then went to Berlin and met Simon, where both met with Hitler. The Times reported that both talked with Hitler for seven hours "dispelling misapprehensions."⁶⁹ They reconvened on March 26, and it was at this meeting that Simon questioned Hitler about the size of Germany's air force. Hitler answered frankly that Germany had "already achieved parity with Great Britain."⁷⁰ Neither Simon nor Eden replied. Hitler then

⁶⁸The Times (London), March 21, 1935, p. 15.

⁶⁹The Times (London), March 26, 1935, p. 16.

⁷⁰Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951), p. 24.

talked about German naval strength, and suggested that thirty-five per cent of Britain's fleet would be a fair figure for Germany. Again Simon made no comment; in fact, according to Hitler's translator, he believed "they [both Simon and Eden] were inwardly in agreement with it" since they had raised no objections.⁷¹ Hitler also told the British diplomats that he did not care for an Eastern pact because he hated Russia, and Simon's silence appeared to indicate his benign feelings toward Hitler.⁷² Eden, on the other hand, concluded privately that the talks had failed, for Germany was rearming "with the old Prussian spirit" while Britain gained nothing.⁷³ When Simon and Eden went to Berlin after Germany had broken the Treaty of Versailles, it was as if Britain had come with hat in hand, thus achieving a major triumph for German diplomacy. Hitler was now equal in prestige and in arms, and he felt that he would gain more.

The French were not disappointed with the Berlin talks, as they had had no expectations of success. France wanted closer cooperation with Russia which she considered a lesser threat than Germany.⁷⁴

Dawson editorialized on Simon's visit to Berlin, and noted these talks showed that the anti-Communist Hitler was not interested in an Eastern pact; Hitler did not care for multilateral talks, but rather for bilateral talks. The German leader, like other "national leaders at this moment, insisted Germany must be able to rely on herself to

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., p. 25.

⁷³Eden, Memoirs, p. 154.

⁷⁴The Times (London), March 28, 1935, p. 14.

defend herself," and this belief explained his demands for parity of air, land, and naval power with other Continental powers. A vital question was whether or not Hitler was a supporter of the collective system. The answer might appear to be negative, said Dawson, but Hitler "did not oppose the thesis of the League of Nations," and he seemed to want to return to the League some day. But "national pride and sense of bargaining, made him pose certain conditions," mainly concerned with equal treatment. Dawson said "there is nothing inherently unreasonable in any one of them." Hitler wanted arms limitation and was willing to sign a Western air pact, limiting Germany to what the other nations had. Dawson believed Britain must not lose this opportunity, considering the destructive power of airplanes.⁷⁵ The Germans approved of this editorial of March 29.⁷⁶

Although Dawson and Britain had accepted Germany's action of March 16, and Hitler had achieved equality, the German nation and its leader still had to worry about the results of the Stresa and League Council meetings, scheduled for April. In April Dawson declared what Britain's role in policy should be; he said British policy was one of collective security but this was limited because Britain "is specifically committed to more than diplomatic support in Western Europe only." This editorial betrayed Dawson's disinterest in Eastern Europe. Dawson said that collective security was defined in many ways. For example, Poland preferred bilateral talks as opposed to multilateral talks and, yet she had not been accused of being against

⁷⁵The Times (London), March 29, 1935, p. 17.

⁷⁶The Times (London), March 30, 1935, p. 13.

collective security, whereas Hitler, by following the same policy, had been condemned, although his acts, like those of the Poles, were in harmony with the League of Nations. Dawson agreed with Lothian that Britain's role was one of mediating and educating (presumably all Europeans, including the British public). Britain, declared Dawson, should show France that she was ignoring Hitler's positive comments to Simon while stressing the negative remarks. He said Germany would arm no more than her neighbors, would accept arms inspection, and had agreed to a Western air pact, and, if Britain obtained an agreement, she would have "performed an inestimable service to Europe."⁷⁷

On April 8, The Times announced that Italy wanted France and Britain to warn Germany that she faced a united front at the Stresa Conference and that Germany must be told that these powers had agreed to the Rome-London talks and had opposed unilateral breaking of treaties.⁷⁸

The editorial on the same day argued that Mussolini wanted a strong stand in Europe, and he prompted France to call the meeting of the League Council after the Stresa Conference. France wanted to join into an alliance with Russia and Czechoslovakia. Dawson wrote that Britain did not want Europe divided into hostile camps; he found (intuitively, one suspects) little "public support" for more British commitments in Europe. He said Britain felt that she must get Germany into the collective security system of the League of Nations

⁷⁷The Times (London), April 4, 1935, p. 15.

⁷⁸The Times (London), April 9, 1935, p. 14.

but Hitler, however, had shown no desire for this. Hitler, according to Dawson, only wanted an army and navy equal to that of any Continental power; he wanted entrance into the mandate system. He had an air force equal to Britain's and he had agreed to the limitation of arms with inspections. Dawson continued that some of Hitler's "demands are high, but there is nothing really incompatible with the agreed principle of equality, reckoned on any fair basis of national size and national needs."⁷⁹ British "public opinion" wanted Britain to work impartially for peace and Britain was obliged to get Germany into the collective system, regardless of the price; of course, this meant Hitler's price.

Stanley Baldwin, speaking before the National Council of Free Churches, agreed that Versailles was a mistake, the nationality principle did not work. He said Germany now, "smarting under the humiliation" of the Treaty of Versailles, had "refused the lot assigned to her and [has] rearmed." Baldwin showed that he had not lost hope for arms limitation and would "stick to Germany until she had told us straight that she would not have anything to do with it."⁸⁰ Baldwin continued that he did not want war, but, if an aggressor had to be stopped, Britain would do her part; however, like all The Times readers, Baldwin was convinced that no aggression would take place.

It was officially announced on April 8 that Simon and MacDonald would represent Britain at Stresa. Simon, who believed French fears of Germany were romantic fantasies and who had had a paternalistic

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 15.

⁸⁰The Times (London), April 18, 1935, p. 18.

attitude toward Hitler in Berlin, was the Foreign Secretary. Ramsay MacDonald, whom most people in Parliament knew was only the titular head of the government, a man whose "health, eyesight, and mental powers were evidently failing," was the other British representative at Stresa.⁸¹ In effect, Britain was represented by men who were pre-disposed in Hitler's favor, with neither willing to support the French and Italian position against Germany.

On the eve of the Stresa Conference, The Times emphasized that these talks were to be exploratory and that Britain would not acquire fresh commitments. Dawson noted that Baldwin's speech of April 8 was significant because it showed that Britain was trying to help the League of Nations. Britain, continued Dawson, should be impartial, independent, and unbiased on the "conflicting views of the countries whether present or absent," and British ministers had the united support of their country for this policy.⁸² This obviously meant that Britain should represent, or take into consideration, Germany's point of view, and should educate the French and Italians as to the point of view. One assumes that by emphasizing the exploratory nature of the talks, Dawson was sure no new commitments would be made by Britain.

The next day it was announced that France and Russia had agreed to a mutual assistance pact based on Articles 10, 11, and 17 of the League of Nations. The Times' editorial called this an alliance "in the garb of the League" and said the drawback in this agreement was that Europe would be divided into two camps. The Times said what was

⁸¹ Churchill, Storm, p. 119.

⁸² The Times (London), April 10, 1935, p. 15.

really needed was a peace system with "no distinctions based on the last war" and which "renders future wars superfluous by ensuring change without violence."⁸³ Dawson ignored the potential of the League as an instrument for ensuring change without violence.

Britain, France, and Italy convened at Stresa, and MacDonald declared that the governments were united, that they would not be divided on peace and the strengthening of Europe, and that no country should think differently. Britain wanted Germany to come back to the League of Nations and to help build peace in Europe, and Britain wanted a peace based on the League of Nations. On the 12th, the Stresa powers agreed to put a resolution before the Council of the League of Nations condemning the German repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles.⁸⁴

Dawson noted what had happened in Stresa, but did not like to see Germany as the victim. He argued that there was no "chance of a true peace unless Germany is an equal partner in it." He claimed the last peace treaty had forced Germany at the "point of a bayonet" and "imposed an inferior position upon her," and she never really accepted this treaty. Britain, he continued, must try to understand how the Germans felt; because they had been down so long any concessions only appeared as "tardy acts of justice." More important to Dawson was "what is Germany going to do when she has got her equality not what she had to do to get it."⁸⁵ He had not seen the obvious point, that

⁸³The Times (London), April 11, 1935, p. 15.

⁸⁴The Times (London), April 12, 1935, p. 12.

⁸⁵The Times (London), April 13, 1935, p. 13.

is, Germany would reenter the League and become part of collective security, but completely on her own terms.

The Stresa Conference ended on the 14th, and the three powers all agreed to the following four points: (1) to the condemnation of Germany for breaking the Treaty of Versailles; (2) to the repudiation of the unilateral breaking of treaties; (3) to a consultation if Austrian independence and integrity were threatened; and (4) to a British-Italian agreement that they intended to fulfill their Locarno obligations. The principle of containing Germany appeared in the above declaration, and it seemed that the line was drawn by the three powers against Hitler's ambitions.

What was really important about the Stresa Conference, however, was what was not said. As a result of these conversations, Mussolini believed that Britain and France had given him approval for his movements in Africa. In a later chapter, this conference and its African implications will be discussed.

After this conference was concluded, the Council of the League of Nations was to take up France's protest against Germany for breaking the Treaty of Versailles. This meeting was to be held between the 16th and the 18th of April. In the meantime, "From Stresa to Geneva" was the editorial that appeared on April 15; it agreed that Britain, France, and Italy together had helped the system of collective security, and thus had guaranteed peace, but Britain would have to plead Germany's case at Geneva, if she were to be a real mediator to other powers. It continued that Germany really wanted peace but she still adhered to Locarno and wanted an air pact and to collaborate with her neighbors. The Times said France had a legal but not a moral

point in her protest to the Council against Germany for breaking the Treaty of Versailles and "every fair minded person must acknowledge that the violation of a dictated treaty is not the same as the violation of a freely negotiated agreement." The allies implied they would reduce their own armament, but they had not; Germany was promised equality by 1932, but had not received it. Therefore, The Times continued, "what other method [was] in practice possible to a disarmed country to whom parity had been promised?"⁸⁶ This was an excellent defense of Germany's violation of the Treaty of Versailles. Dawson felt that, although a treaty might be legal, if it were signed under duress it was not binding.

In Parliament, on April 17, the Prime Minister spoke about the conference at Stresa. He reiterated the declarations of the three powers, but hoped that Germany would enter the collective system of Europe; he said the door was still open.

On the same day the Germans were condemned by the League's Council for breaking the Treaty of Versailles. The Times reported the French reaction as "a triumph for the principle of international morality and the sanctity of treaties" and that "the easiest way to preserve peace" was not to yield to violence.⁸⁷ The Italians were reported to be equally pleased. The German reaction was one of anger and exasperation; they still believed the League maintained the mentality of Versailles, and that the League was an instrument to be used against Germany. They felt that the Stresa powers were behind

⁸⁶The Times (London), April 15, 1935, p. 15.

⁸⁷The Times (London), April 18, 1935, p. 11.

the Council's decision.⁸⁸

Dawson also disliked the Council's decision; it was "regrettable that no allowance should have been made by a body like the League Council for the special circumstances in which Germany incurred her obligations." He felt it would have been better if "one voice at least had been raised to recall the manner in which this particular treaty had been imposed" because it was "at the point of a bayonet." No doubt Dawson believed it should have been Britain's voice. He continued that the German representatives at Versailles stated Germany could not carry out the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, and they were not allowed to sit at the table, but were given a fully drafted agreement. Today, Dawson believed, the injustice of Versailles was burnt into the minds of Germans, and "Hitlerism is largely a revolt against Versailles." He believed Europe should have recognized this and, if she did not eventually recognize it, there could never be peace.⁸⁹

By the end of April it was possible that Hitler and Germany were justified in feeling angry at Britain because in March the British Foreign Secretary had seemingly approved of Germany's action; in fact, it was the British Government that had asked for the March discussions after Hitler had broken the Treaty of Versailles. But, when Simon went to Stresa and agreed with the French proposal, it appeared as if he were perfidious in drawing a line of containment against Germany with France and Italy. Britain, posing as a mediator, was now a

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹The Times (London), April 18, 1935, p. 13.

partisan and as guilty to Germany as the other powers. The Stresa Conference and the Council's decision were two unpleasant blows to Hitler; The Times, on April 20, said: "Germany feels surrounded by a hostile world."⁹⁰

⁹⁰The Times (London), April 20, 1935, p. 12.

CHAPTER VI

DAWSON'S PRO-GERMANISM, PART TWO

MAY TO JUNE, 1935

Although it seemed that Germany had been given a serious setback with Stresa and the League Council's condemnation, Dawson and The Times remained steadfast in their pro-Germanism. The naval conversations raised in March were not allowed to dissipate, and, by the end of June, Germany and Britain would be in a Naval Agreement, which not even the most optimistic pro-German Briton would have dared predict.

In the last week of April, The Times noted that British-German naval conversations were being held and that German experts would arrive in London for informal talks in the middle of May. Hitler had suggested one third of British tonnage when he had met Simon in March; however, The Times added, "the British Government does not accept these figures as a basis for negotiations."¹ Within two months, however, these figures were the basis for negotiations.

News came to Britain on the 29th that Germany was preparing to build twelve submarines. This was surprising because Germany was forbidden submarines by the Treaty of Versailles; The Times reasoned that Hitler was doing this because he did not recognize the disarmament

¹The Times (London), April 26, 1935, p. 16.

clauses of Versailles. Sir John Simon, because of The Times article, confirmed The Times story the same afternoon in the House of Commons. Again, The Times was slightly ahead of the government.

During May The Times and Dawson became louder in their pro-German utterances. Also, the Abyssinian crisis was beginning to be evident. Dawson argued if the British-French agreement of February 3 had been carried out, there might have been agreement with Germany by this time. The proposed air agreement, which Dawson believed to be forfeited by British fumbling, was actually part of a package proposal, which was to be accepted or rejected in toto. The editor fearfully cited Germany's "kicking over the traces right and left," creating an army, attaining air parity with Britain, and ordering submarines without even waiting for the British-German naval talks to begin. Dawson acted surprised and as if he had never been warned by his correspondent, Norman Ebbuitt, on German rearmament. The editorial indicated Britain's righteous indignation at the persecution of the destruction of civil rights, the disregard for international law, and the rise of the cult of force. Dawson argued that all countries shared "the responsibility for the growth of this [Germany's] defiant spirit, and . . . the failure to make timely concessions has contributed greatly to the present tragic confusion." "The real business of statesmanship is still to negotiate a peace with Germany strong instead of the peace which was imposed upon a Germany prostrate." Britain could be a mediator, he continued, if British ministers lost "the Versailles habit of mind," which was only "one sided prejudice," and agreed to a peace "freely negotiated on equal terms, which Europe

has never yet had since the war."² Dawson himself was now willing to sacrifice the British-French communiqué of February 3 for peace, and, although he felt Hitler's demands might be high, the cruelty of Versailles put the moral burden on Britain and the other signatories.

Hitler at a May Day rally reiterated Germany's desire for peace. On the same day, Prime Minister MacDonald stated in Parliament that Britain wanted to strengthen her defenses, to reduce arms, and to obtain an air pact; he said Britain and the Western powers wanted to be strong, but the door was still open for Germany to help in the cause of peace.

France and Russia had officially signed their mutual assistance pact, but it had to be ratified by the French Senate and Chamber. Both agreed to consult in case of "danger of aggression" or to give "mutual assistance in case of unprovoked aggression."³ Lord Londonderry, Dawson's friend, said that this pact only increased Germany's fears of being surrounded by hostile powers.⁴

The editorial section of that day, although not mentioning the Franco-Russian alliance, discussed Britain's role in foreign affairs. It applauded Lord Lothian's May 1 stand in the House of Lords, that is, Germany must be "given a position appropriate to a nation which is normally the most powerful single state in Europe" because anything less was false. The Times said the "Versailles system has been tried, and it has not given Europe peace"; only a treaty with Germany

²The Times (London), May 1, 1935, p. 17.

³The Times (London), May 3, 1935, p. 15.

⁴Londonderry, Ourselves, p. 72.

could do that. Dawson argued that, although Britain was not committed by treaty to fight for Austrian or Eastern Europe frontiers, she supported their integrity, and this was the sensible course to follow, and one which "the British people will endorse." He said the Germans, who were also honorable, would comply with good faith.⁵

Dawson's defense of Hitler was very clear now. On the 13th, he raised the question whether Hitler was really after power or not, and he answered it negatively. Dawson claimed that, if Hitler had been abrupt in his methods, "the blame is not entirely on him but must be shared by those who realized that Germany was entitled to equality" and by those powers which promised equality but had not kept their word. Germany, therefore, he believed, had an excuse "for resorting to subterfuge and force in order to establish claims which were generally regarded as legitimate." The Times continued that Hitler had not put forth "any claim that is wholly unreasonable" and the international obligations which he defied were those Germany had never accepted in the first place. The editor noted that, if Hitler's forthcoming speech would contain his usual frankness, others would see exactly what Germany wanted before she came to the conference table.⁶

The major speech that Dawson expected Hitler to make came on May 21; Hitler said that both he and Germany had been misunderstood and that all Germany wanted was to be an equal, and not a second-class nation. Germany broke the articles of the Treaty of Versailles

⁵The Times (London), May 3, 1935, p. 17.

⁶The Times (London), May 13, 1935, p. 17.

because these articles discriminated against her, but for further revisions Germany would rely on peaceful negotiation. Germany wanted a Western air agreement that would supplement Locarno, and Germany would like and would accept arms limitations if other powers were similarly limited. Germany did not want a naval race such as that before 1914 and would settle for thirty-five per cent of British tonnage. Germany accepted the demilitarization of the Rhineland.⁷ When Hitler made this address to the Reichstag, his more cautious generals and foreign service officers were afraid the Stresa powers and the French and Russians would send armies in compliance with their pacts, but no one called Hitler's bluff.⁸

With this speech Hitler lulled the suspicions and raised the hopes of the gullible, and sowed discord among those who were lined up against him.

The Times, the most influential paper in the British Isles, and perhaps all of Europe, was almost hysterical with joy. The editorial of the 22nd said that after the recent European developments, that is, the Council's denouncement of German rearmament, the signing of the Russo-French pact, and some "less prudent utterances of British statesmen," Germany's mood looked rather ballicose to some. The editor, however, believed that "this speech turns out to be reasonable, straightforward, comprehensive"; and nobody with "an impartial mind can doubt that the points of policy laid down by Herr Hitler may fairly constitute the basis of a complete settlement with Germany--a

⁷The Times (London), May 22, 1935, p. 16.

⁸Shirer, Third Reich, p. 286.

free, equal and strong Germany instead of a prostrate Germany [upon] whom peace was imposed sixteen years ago." He said Germany would reenter the League as an equal, promising to adhere to all treaties, including the unreasonable demand for demilitarization of the Rhineland. The editor continued, "It is hoped that this speech will be taken everywhere as a sincere and well considered utterance, meaning precisely what it says."⁹

Reaction to Hitler's speech was divided; the French were split and the Italians non-committal. Speaking for Britain in the House of Commons, Baldwin welcomed Hitler's "striking declaration." He admitted that Germany now had air parity with Britain, and that earlier, in November, 1934, the British Government had miscalculated, but there was no cause for alarm since "the whole Government took responsibility for not doing more in the past" and would strive for more accuracy in the future.¹⁰ Some in Parliament felt that such a promise was very unlikely to be fulfilled.

On November 28, 1934, Baldwin had been forced to reply to Winston Churchill because Churchill had charged throughout the summer and autumn that Germany had built a secret, illegal air force and that it was almost as large as Britain's. Within twelve months, continued Churchill, it would equal Britain's; within twenty-four months it would be fifty per cent greater than Britain's, and in thirty-six months it would be twice the size of Britain's.¹¹ Baldwin, after

⁹The Times (London), May 22, 1935, p. 17.

¹⁰The Times (London), May 23, 1935, p. 16.

¹¹Cato, Guilty Men, p. 34.

much hesitation, replied to Churchill by saying that the "real strength [of Germany] is not fifty per cent of [Britain's] air strength today," and that Britain would never be inferior to anyone in air power.¹² Hitler, in March, 1935, had told Simon and Eden that Germany had air parity. Baldwin attempted to alleviate public fear by stating it was not the fault of any one individual, but rather that of the government. Baldwin was well warned about Germany's air buildup, but, as stated before, these warnings were not noticed by the government. That the government ignored these warnings was in itself incredible, considering the importance, and the availability of this information. Baldwin had left the impression that Britain planned to step up her own buildup, but she did not.

The Times' defense of Baldwin's speech showed Dawson's unwavering confidence; "Mr. Baldwin seldom fails to rise to a great occasion, and the impression which he made in the House of Commons is rightly described as profound." Dawson agreed that Hitler's speech was an "elaborate striking declaration" and a genuine response from Germany in helping to solve European difficulties. Baldwin paid no attention "to the absurd criticism already heard in Paris, and even in some parts of this country, that the Chancellor's proposals were too vague to be of value." The frankness Baldwin wanted between Germany and Britain was possible now that the truth of Germany's rearmament was publicly known.¹³

The real result, however, was that Hitler had succeeded in

¹²Young, Baldwin, p. 182.

¹³The Times (London), May 23, 1935, p. 17.

placating the gullible, and nobody could have been any more taken in than Baldwin and Dawson; Britain had accepted the unilateral breaking of a treaty.

German reaction to Baldwin's speech was favorable, from the Führer to the "man-in-the-street." The Germans hoped for a British-German understanding, and The Times was happy to report this reaction.¹⁴

During June Baldwin became Prime Minister officially, and the Germans obtained a naval treaty with Britain. The effects of the treaty, however, were not recorded in the paper. Lord Halifax, on June 1, emphasized the British people's desire for peace, and asked them to try to understand "the mind and feelings of other nations." World peace, continued Halifax, cannot be achieved by a system of "discriminating alliances between certain powers leading to other alliances between other powers." Halifax declared that the only way world peace could come about was by all nations acting for a common interest. He believed Britain had a very heavy obligation; she "might under Providence be the link to draw other nations together."¹⁵

The House of Commons held a foreign policy debate on the same day. The Foreign Secretary, Simon, told the House that Britain was pursuing a Western air pact, and, reported The Times, "the whole House of Commons couples a vigorously conciliatory policy in Europe with no suspension of the preparation to expand the British Air Force." Only "Mr. Churchill was gloomy," and that notable malcontent still

¹⁴The Times (London), May 24, 1935, p. 16.

¹⁵The Times (London), June 1, 1935, p. 9.

pointed out that Britain was weaker than Germany.¹⁶

Dawson, commenting on this debate, said that this pact was one "upon which public opinion in this country has instinctively seized as the most practical and promising proposal of all those which were contained in the Anglo-French Communiqué of February 3." Now, said Dawson, finally, the government had seen the light, but it had allowed an air pact with Germany to slip past because the proposals of February 3 were all tied together. The Russian Government had urged France and Britain to regard the Eastern security pact as important as the Western air pact and to consider all proposals as tied together. Now, continued Dawson, four months had passed, and there was no doubt that, from a British viewpoint, that this "air pact has the greatest value. Britain would like this, it would be such a deterrent nobody would dare bother anyone."¹⁷ Dawson showed that he would gladly destroy the February 3 proposals to get a German air agreement, ignoring what such a breach of faith would do to French, Russian, and Italian feelings.

Meanwhile, the German Special Commissioner, Herr von Ribbentrop, arrived in Britain on June 2 for informal naval talks to lay the groundwork for the formal talks to follow. The June 4 editorial addressed itself to the "Naval Conversations," and it said that Ribbentrop would be sure Britain welcomed a frank discussion with him on "the possible limitation of future [naval] strengths." The Germans, with self-restraint, asked only thirty-five per cent of

¹⁶Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 15.

British tonnage because Hitler wanted to avoid a pre-1914 kind of naval race. Thus, continued Dawson, "there should be little difficulty, so far as Great Britain and Germany are concerned, in arriving at an understanding on naval programs." No excuse should be given to the charge of the skeptical that Germany was seeking her self-interest, Dawson said, ignoring the Stresa front and the fact that by now Britain sanctioned Germany's breaking the Treaty of Versailles.¹⁸

On the same day, The Times reported that Ribbentrop's host, Ramsay MacDonald, would resign as Prime Minister. The assumption was that Baldwin would be the new Prime Minister, and, of course, this was correct. Baldwin on May 4, 1935, had spoken with Dawson on the makeup of the new cabinet, and both agreed to exclude Winston Churchill because he was too disruptive in foreign affairs.¹⁹

The Times, on June 7, wrote an editorial called "Change-Over Day." Dawson said that MacDonald did not resign because of political pressure, but because of his health; his eyesight was bad and he suffered from insomnia. With admirable gentility the article avoided mention of his mental health, stating that the National Government had worked for all the people and was solid. The Times said that Baldwin "is entirely devoid of self seeking, and loyal service comes as second nature to him."²⁰

When Baldwin became Prime Minister, the cabinet was reshuffled, but not really changed; Baldwin still waited for events to unfold

¹⁸The Times (London), June 4, 1935, p. 17.

¹⁹History of The Times, IV, Part II, 892.

²⁰The Times (London), June 7, 1935, p. 17.

rather than attempting to master them. Sir John Simon, the Foreign Secretary, became the new Secretary of State for Home Affairs, and The Times believed this position was more suited to Simon's talents.²¹ Dawson was not pleased with what he considered Simon's slowness in recognizing Hitler's obvious trustworthiness. Baldwin appointed Sir Samuel Hoare as the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, at the suggestion of Dawson and Lothian.²² Anthony Eden recorded in his Memoirs that Hoare was selected Foreign Minister because the Prime Minister's personal friend had interceded for him. Dawson thought Hoare's policy toward Germany was closer to his own than Simon's had been.²³ Neville Chamberlain believed Hoare to be a man of "imaginative shrewdness."²⁴ Because Hoare was flexible and not an absolutist, Baldwin believed Hoare's talent for accommodation might "find a way through and save Baldwin and the government from what must otherwise be disagreeable decisions in a dangerous future."²⁵

To assist the new Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden was made Minister without Portfolio for League of Nation Affairs. Eden's job was never really defined, but it appeared to many that there were actually two foreign secretaries. Winston Churchill believed Baldwin appointed Eden to the job "to conciliate the strong tide of public opinion associated with the League of Nations" in Great Britain by

²¹Kennedy, Britain Faces Germany, p. 107.

²²Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 109.

²³Eden, Memoirs, p. 245.

²⁴Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 165.

²⁵Eden, Memoirs, p. 244.

"showing the importance which he [Baldwin] attached to the League and to the conduct of our affairs in Geneva."²⁶

The newly arranged government was intimately known to Dawson. The Prime Minister (Baldwin), Chancellor of the Exchequer (Chamberlain), the Secretary of State for War (Halifax), Foreign Secretary (Hoare), and Secretary of State for Home Affairs (Simon) were all Dawson's friends. Because Dawson influenced all of these people, as editor of The Times, he could be rightfully regarded as the public voice of the government.

The June 8 editorial, "Mr. Baldwin's Problem," said that the short duration of elective office could not attract men like Lloyd George, and that Baldwin and MacDonald were merely changing roles. Despite this, Dawson predicted that Baldwin would do an excellent job, capably assisted by his new foreign secretary, Samuel Hoare, whose "reputation for resource and determination has grown out of all recognition," and for whom no place in government was "beyond his deserts or his capacity."²⁷

Speaking the same day in defense of the National Government before an audience of 15,000 in Worcestershire, Baldwin said the government wanted peace, which could best be achieved if Europe joined in the system of collective security. In his editorial on Baldwin's speech, Dawson also defended the National Government and the one-party system: "No pure party government could have done half so much,

²⁶ Churchill, Storm, p. 136.

²⁷ The Times (London), June 8, 1935, p. 15.

nor done it half so smoothly."²⁸

Dawson again praised the National Government and Baldwin in the June 13 editorial; he said "striking proof" that Mr. Baldwin was doing a magnificent job was that "the opposition can find so little to say against it" and the changes that Baldwin made had left the Labour Party grasping at straws.²⁹ Obviously, Dawson ignored the impotence of the Labour Party, which constituted an opposition of slightly more than ten per cent of Commons.

A small article entitled "Germany and Locarno" appeared on June 12, criticizing the new Franco-Russian pact as a military offensive and defensive alliance, draped in the words of the League of Nations, and directed against Germany. It said Germany had no war-like intentions; she did not want to change the demilitarized zone, nor did she want a free hand in the East. This article was signed by the "Berlin Correspondent," but it had passed untouched through the editor's hands.³⁰

On the same day, the paper announced that the British-German naval talks would begin on June 15. It declared that Germany would get thirty-five per cent of British tonnage in each category, but not more than thirty-five per cent of the total British tonnage, and that Germany would not speed up her naval building.³¹

Ribbentrop arrived in Britain on June 13 to continue the naval

²⁸The Times (London), June 10, 1935, p. 11.

²⁹The Times (London), June 13, 1935, p. 13.

³⁰The Times (London), June 12, 1935, p. 11.

³¹Ibid., p. 12.

talks; word also came that the other signatories of the Washington and London Naval Agreements were notified of the Anglo-German arrangement and that the United States and Japan approved. The Times, however, did not mention the reaction of two other signers: France and Italy.

On the eve of the resumption of the naval talks, The Times, in its editorial, virtually told the people of Britain that a naval agreement would be signed and that Germany would accept thirty-five per cent of Britain's tonnage, and that this was to be used exclusively for Germany's defenses. This agreement would be "equally binding" on both Germany and Great Britain for an indefinite period "even if Germany received overseas possessions, or if other nations increased their relative strength at Germany's expense." The Times knew that Britain could not afford to pass by so favorable a proposal and predicted that an "agreement [would] be reached between two governments." The Times suggested that the British Government was not only talking about peace, for this agreement showed that peace could be achieved.³²

The Times stated that the next agreement should be a Western air pact, and, if this were forthcoming, "it will be generally welcomed in this country" and should be recognized everywhere "as a contribution to pacification and stability." In practice, "it involves a tacit disregard of the Treaty of Versailles," yet "it will constitute an important advance in the process of getting peace established upon a firm ground of agreements freely concluded." "There are parts of

³²The Times (London), June 14, 1935, p. 15.

the Treaty of Versailles which it is best to forget about." Dawson said, of course, the treaty still exists but just as the war was now a memory, so, too, "with the passage of time both are seen from a very different perspective." Britain's agreement "does not denote the cooling of British friendship elsewhere, but Britain feels it is time for Europe to settle down" and "to live no more as past or future enemies." Dawson continued, if there were more understanding between Germany and Britain, Britain might be able to "carry out further suggestions of Herr Hitler" and get an air pact. Such a pact added to France's defensive agreements along her frontier would give the French, said Dawson, a sense of security. It was a "nobler and more constructive activity than exclusive concentration on negative plans for preventing war."³³

The naval talks continued, however, and France told Britain on the 18th that she refused to approve a percentage increase of the German navy, for it was a flagrant violation of the Treaty of Versailles, and, if Britain should agree to this violation, France would feel free to increase her own naval tonnage unilaterally.³⁴ The French were vociferously antagonistic while the Italians were silent.

The naval talks were concluded on June 18 and reported in The Times on the 19th. Hoare and Ribbentrop signed the agreement, giving Germany thirty-five per cent of the British Commonwealth's naval tonnage, in each category of ships except submarines, and, under certain specified conditions, Germany could build up to one hundred per cent

³³Ibid.

³⁴The Times (London), June 18, 1935, p. 16.

of Britain's tonnage in submarines.

The Times reported the dismay of the French caused by Britain's action, which threatened all the Treaty of Versailles powers. Britain was acting as though her dealings with Germany were a private affair; France recalled the common front of Stresa, and stated that rearmament on land, sea, or in the air had to be treated collectively. The Times concluded its comment on the French position by the observation that "viewed on the whole the note could not be considered discouraging, in spite of its superficial lack of enthusiasm," implying that the French did not really mean what they said.³⁵

The Times also pointed out German reaction; the Germans officially and unofficially were delighted because they knew it was a freely negotiated agreement and the psychological effect was probably greater than the treaty itself, probably relaxing tension and creating a comfortable atmosphere for the negotiation of an air pact.³⁶ The German reaction duplicated Dawson's own feelings; he said as much in his editorial of June 19.

The conversations between Britain and Germany had "culminated in a far more definite and comprehensive agreement than was contemplated at first." This "agreement" was only an exchange of notes, but both countries agreed to regard it as fixed, permanent, and definite. Now, reasoned Dawson, people might be surprised that Germany was able to build submarines because they still remembered the submarine menace of the Great War, but there were other considerations to "take into

³⁵The Times (London), June 19, 1935, p. 14.

³⁶Ibid.

account which must moderate this first impression." The first was that "submarines are not antidotes to submarines, and reciprocal equality in their numbers or tonnage bears little relation to the measures--known to have been greatly improved in recent years--which can parry their activities." The admiralty, which attended the conversations, would not have given its approval if there were any risks to British security. The second consideration was that Britain was short on submarines--she had only fifty-one--but France had ninety-six, and there was no reason to assume that Russia had none. France, therefore, was still stronger on the sea than Germany. Dawson felt these two factors would remove any fear of Germany's increased underwater strength.³⁷

This naval agreement, affirmed Dawson, came about because both sides wanted an understanding in order to avoid a naval race such as that before 1914. He believed this agreement would serve as an example for all European countries wishing to enjoy naval limitations; Britain would determine her fleet size, and Germany would follow with her "modest tonnage," approximately one German ship for three British. He said Britain would like France, Italy, and even Russia to join in this agreement. The French, however, objected to this plan, insisting that it was contrary to the Treaty of Versailles and to the multilateral system of negotiating naval agreements. Dawson found that the "Anglo-German rapprochement [was] not wholly congenial to French susceptibilities." He was irritated to discover that the French had even hinted at expanding their fleet in violation of the spirit of

³⁷The Times (London), June 19, 1935, p. 15.

the Anglo-German agreement, which, after all, still left Germany inferior to France. If France persisted in her selfish naval aggrandisement, Britain and Germany would be forced to bolster their navies. Britain did not believe that this agreement would hurt British, French, and Italian relations, and Britain did "not seek new understandings at the expense of old friendships." The new British Government under Baldwin had "auspiciously begun their work for stabilization and peace," and Hoare must have felt very proud of his accomplishment.³⁸

Dawson denied the threat of the submarine, which was diminished by the modest agreement on tonnage. He found the French fears to be romantic notions, while Britain was now freed to achieve new understandings even at the expense of old friendships. He stepped carefully around the Treaty of Versailles, the February 3 Franco-British agreement, and Stresa, all of which were violated by this latest agreement. It pleased former foes and angered former allies. Baldwin, Samuel Hoare, and Dawson were delighted.

On June 20, The Times reported that the Germans were pleased with the agreement for two reasons; first, it had demonstrated to the world Hitler's successful method of diplomacy, and, second, it had broken the ice of European misunderstanding. The Germans praised the British for overcoming the Versailles mentality; Germany placed more faith in bilateral talks than in multilateral talks because two-way agreements could serve the national interests of both countries.³⁹

The French, too, liked bilateral agreements, and complained that

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹The Times (London), June 20, 1935, p. 14.

Britain had departed from Anglo-French cooperation of February 3 and that the united "front of Stresa no longer exists." The French believed that the agreement was a diplomatic triumph for Germany. The other party at Stresa, the Italians, also were annoyed at Britain for acting alone, and they felt that this "had dealt a further blow to the unity of the front established at Stresa." Although the naval agreement was at Britain's initiative, Britain had failed to fully inform France and Italy of what was happening.⁴⁰ The Times had no editorial on France's or Italy's sharp reaction.

Anthony Eden went to both Paris and Rome to try to conciliate these capitals; he arrived in Paris on the 20th, and on the following day Dawson attacked the French. He said the French resented the naval agreement, but "in British opinion the [French reasons] do not override the benefits actual and potential of the Anglo-German scheme of limitations." With irony, Dawson found that the French love of "logic and law combines with a sense of practical benefits received from the Treaty of Versailles." He further stated that to break these terms was to France a more serious matter "than it seems to British public opinion, which recognizes that its [the Treaty of Versailles] disarmament clauses were not meant to establish a permanent disproportion of force." This new agreement replaced the "dictated settlement of 1919." Dawson predicted that Paris and Rome would acknowledge that Britain had acted wisely.⁴¹

Anthony Eden left Paris for Rome on June 23; about the Paris

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹The Times (London), June 21, 1935, p. 17.

discussions The Times story stated that the result of these talks "have gone far to justify faith in the shock absorbing capacity of the Franco-British relations." "The principle of collaboration has been reestablished," and, although France had not fully changed her mind, she was willing to "let bygones be bygones."⁴² The editorial about the Paris visit said that it was evident that the sincerity of the British Minister "has once more triumphed over French scepticism," and in British opinion there was no contradiction between "a settlement with one country and a collective system," rather, bilateral talks could strengthen such a system. It continued that the policy of Britain "has regained its independence" and was determined "to make gains where these are possible if it will help collective security." It also said that, when Eden talked in Rome, it would be about the naval agreement and the Western air pact; he would tell the Italians that "Britain sees the air pact as a concrete result" of the naval agreement.⁴³

The June 27 editorial about the Rome talks stated that Eden had convinced the Italians that Britain was not deserting France and Italy for Germany. It also stated that Mussolini was a very realistic man in matters of rearmament and could appreciate the naval agreement since it was the "first practical measure of limitation in which Germany has voluntarily agreed," and Germany would never resort to "unrestricted warfare."⁴⁴

⁴²The Times (London), June 24, 1935, p. 14.

⁴³Ibid., p. 15.

⁴⁴The Times (London), June 27, 1935, p. 17.

The House of Lords debated the naval agreement between England and Germany, and Dawson's political mentor, Lord Lothian, defended the agreement "as the first concrete achievement in limitation of arms." Dawson's friend Lord Londonderry agreed wholeheartedly that it removed the threat of another naval race. Dawson's friends rejoiced that Britain had supported unilateral breaking of a multilaterally signed treaty.⁴⁵

By the end of June, 1935, Dawson was pleased to find the Diktat of Versailles in disgrace, and the British Government agreeing with his stated position. He believed Germany was now going to be a good neighbor and a probable British ally because the Germans now had equality in arms, which meant security for them. With this equality and security Dawson believed that the extremes of Nazism would naturally wither away; Britain, France, and Italy were, according to Dawson's reasoning, still allies, and if Germany returned to normal, perhaps all four countries could unite against the menace of the East, that is, Russia. He felt that France may have been annoyed with Britain, but she would recognize that Britain was only correcting the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles, and that her own fears of Germany were mostly imagined. It seems Dawson never realized that Hitler had driven a wedge between the united front of Stresa by maneuvering Britain into condoning Germany's unilateral breaking of the Treaty of Versailles, which Stresa and the League of Nations had denounced. Dawson did not recognize that neither France nor Italy would like Britain's dealing behind their backs, nor did he see the

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 16.

actions of Germany as a blow to the League of Nations. France, however, believed that Britain's action of June 18 was contrary to French vital interests.

Britain's action divided allies and friends and threatened the concept of collective security. Britain appeared to act from national self-interest, to the exclusion of French or Italian interests. Limiting the German navy to one-third of Britain's was satisfactory for Britain, but, because France and Italy were land powers, they were concerned about German rearmament in general.

The Russians must have been suspicious of Britain's actions because they believed if Germany had a navy one-third the size of Britain's, it would be able to dominate the Baltic region. Dawson did not consider the possible reaction of Russia worth mentioning.

The Times foreign affairs expert failed to realize that Germany's navy, whatever its size, would be new and would incorporate the latest technical developments.

Dawson saw no reason to fear the future; however, as a result of the British naval agreement, Italy worried about the selfish attitude of Britain, and decided that she, too, would have to act on her own behalf.

Lord Londonderry said that people really thought little or nothing about this paper agreement with Germany because it was only a statesmanlike gesture and Germany had no ships at sea.⁴⁶ But no treaty is ever merely a gesture, and this treaty created a problem for Britain in her relations with Italy.

⁴⁶Londonderry, Ourselves, p. 72.

CHAPTER VII

DAWSON THE NON-FASCIST

Dawson's pro-Germanism cannot be construed as intellectual pro-Fascism, as events later in 1935 were to prove. He believed that Hitler's actions, although illegal, were morally correct because Germany had been wrongly humiliated since 1919 and the means Hitler employed to remove this humiliation, although technically wrong, were justified by the ends of equality and justice. Hitler, in Dawson's eyes, was interested only in Continental Europe, and primarily the German-speaking area of Eastern Europe, which represented no danger to Britain. Although Dawson attempted to placate British public opinion when Germany broke the Treaty of Versailles and he defended the German-British naval agreement, he violently opposed Italian ambitions in Ethiopia.

Mussolini's interests were in Africa and not Europe. Dawson, as an imperialist, felt Mussolini sought territory where he had no business or interest legally or morally, and Dawson feared that Mussolini's presence in Africa would disturb British interests or colonies. Dawson always considered the welfare of the British Commonwealth first in his attitude toward foreign affairs. Dawson had only contempt for the Italians, who were neither strong nor solvent; they were not as powerful as the Germans, who stood against

Bolshevism in the West, and there was more possibility of economic benefit from Germany than Italy.

The rumblings over Ethiopia were very faint during the first half of 1935 because during this period Dawson and The Times were busy appeasing Hitler and they tended to ignore them. In December, 1934, Italy stated that Ethiopians were violating the border and that this action would have to be punished. Ethiopia protested to the League of Nations, whose delay was tantamount to no action.

Meanwhile, motivated by fear of Germany, France wooed Italy. On January 7 the two powers signed an agreement, which gave Italy almost 45,000 square miles of desert on the southeast border of Libya. Both agreed to guarantee Austrian independence on the Continent. The Times commented happily on this agreement as having "improved the whole outlook in Europe."¹ Lord Amery demurred, calling it a tacit French agreement approving of Mussolini's future plans for Ethiopia. Italy felt the European balance would be intact, and France thought of her eighteen divisions that could be moved from the Italian to the German frontier.² Anthony Eden believed this agreement to be an important step in achieving European stability.³ The Times' optimism reflected that of the Foreign Office and of the two signatories.

Dawson, on February 14, referred to the Foreign Secretary's speech before the House of Commons, saying that "so far there is no

¹The Times (London), January 8, 1935, p. 12.

²Lionel S. Amery, My Political Life, Vol. III, The Unforgiving Years 1929 - 1940 (London: Hutchinson, 1955), p. 164.

³The Times (London), January 9, 1935, p. 12.

indication that Italian military preparations, which have aroused a natural anxiety here and elsewhere, are of an aggressive nature."⁴

In March Hitler had aroused anxiety when he had broken part of the Treaty of Versailles, which France protested to the Council of the League of Nations. France, Italy, and Britain agreed to discuss Hitler's action in April at Stresa. Dawson's editorial, "Preparing for Stresa," accused Mussolini of instigating France's protest to the League and of "embarking upon what appears to be a warlike enterprise in East Africa."⁵ This was the first mention by Dawson of Mussolini's plans in Africa.

The results of the Stresa Conference were published in The Times, but there was no mention that the three powers had raised the question of Italian ambitions for Ethiopia. Laval, the French Minister, at Stresa, recalled in 1940 that Europe could have been saved; he said Italy could have saved Austria, and France and Italy would have been allies, with Abyssinia as the price. "That was the whole point of the Stresa Conference--Abyssinia."⁶

Mussolini believed that he had French approval to act in Abyssinia, and, when Prime Minister MacDonald and Simon did not raise the point at Stresa, Mussolini reasoned that Britain, concerned with German rearmament, "would turn a blind eye" to Italy's African ambitions.⁷ The British Government must have been aware of the Italian

⁴The Times (London), February 14, 1935, p. 13.

⁵The Times (London), April 8, 1935, p. 15.

⁶Boothby, Fight to Live, p. 205.

⁷Nicolson, King George V, p. 528.

aims in East Africa, but the subject was never raised at the conference. When the three powers stated that they opposed unilateral repudiation of treaties that might endanger Europe, Italy was convinced that this had no bearing on Africa.⁸ Therefore, Mussolini was certain that Britain and France would stand aside and let him devour Ethiopia. Mussolini was extremely well pleased with the conference, assuming tacit support from the other conferees.

Dawson was still uncertain about Italian arms in May. On the 15th, The Times declared that the January Rome Pact, between France and Italy, "tacitly recognized the new position of Italy in East Africa."⁹ The next day Dawson wrote an editorial entitled "Italy and Ethiopia"; he believed that the dispute was growing all out of proportion because of the December, 1934, incident at Walwal. The British, Dawson pointed out, had had incidents with the same tribes, but it had not bothered them. He stated the country was backward but reforms were taking place, and Italy did not need to build up militarily. Both Italy and Ethiopia were members of the League of Nations, and both had signed the Kellogg Pact.¹⁰

Dawson stated that the Rome Pact of January 8 did not grant Italy a free hand in Ethiopia; however, Dawson must have forgotten that on the previous day The Times had acknowledged that Italy had been given tacit approval to continue her plans for Ethiopia. No doubt he was a little confused about this issue because his main

⁸Churchill, Rise and Fall of Eden, p. 85.

⁹The Times (London), May 15, 1935, p. 13.

¹⁰The Times (London), May 16, 1935, p. 17.

concern was with Germany. The editorial concluded by saying that neither Britain nor France desired Italy to use force against a fellow League of Nations member.¹¹

The Council of the League of Nations agreed to hear Ethiopia's case on May 24 against Italy. Eden was to represent Britain, and Dawson declared that Eden's role was that of a mediator.¹² The Council, however, appeared to be deadlocked, but on the 27th both Italy and Ethiopia agreed to arbitrate the issue based on their 1928 Treaty. Both countries would select two representatives, and would agree to a fifth member. If they could not agree by July 5, 1935, then the Council would select a fifth member, and they would have until August 25 to work out a settlement.¹³ Mussolini's statement, released on the same day, said that "he will judge European States by their attitude towards this problem," and The Times showed editorial pleasure with Italy's agreement to consult with Ethiopia.¹⁴ Dawson believed Italy was influenced by Eden to abandon her militant position.¹⁵ Dawson ignored Mussolini's statement, and never suggested that it might be a maneuver on Mussolini's part to delay League action.

Although Dawson was pleased, the Italians were not. This was the beginning of Anglo-Italian friction. The Italian press insulted Anthony Eden, in particular, and the British attitude toward Italy in

¹¹Ibid.

¹²The Times (London), May 20, 1935, p. 14.

¹³The Times (London), May 27, 1935, p. 14.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 15.

general. The attack on Eden was "scurrilous and vulgar," but The Times knew that most educated people did not believe it. The Times noted that in the last few days many Italians felt that the "united front of Stresa has been broken." Italians, had they read The Times, could have seen the truth of this by The Times' attitude toward Germany, the flagrant violator of the Treaty of Versailles. The article continued that some Italians believed Italy might be better off with Germany for a friend, if Italy did not get satisfactory agreement.¹⁶

Dawson was too preoccupied with the German-British naval talks that were underway to comment on Italy. Hitler, however, probably was delighted when he heard of this Italian hesitation; after all, Germany had faced Stresa and Geneva, and with British relations improving, and a possible shift in Italy's position, Hitler recognized that Germany had nothing to fear.

The Labour Party stated on June 7 that it wanted Britain to urge the League to hold fast the Abyssinian dispute; Eden replied to the Labour demands.¹⁷ The Times vigorously attacked the Labour Party, saying "The Labour Party, with some outside support, urged the most bellicose measures in order to assert the League's authority in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute." The Labour Party wanted Britain to close the Suez, bar Italian planes from flying over Egypt, and close British ports to Italian ships. However, The Times said "these eccentrics were corrected in an admirable speech." Eden showed that it would be

¹⁶The Times (London), May 31, 1935, p. 15.

¹⁷The Times (London), June 8, 1935, p. 14.

economically disastrous for Italy to undertake such an adventure, and that Britain would not take sides in advance of any conflict.¹⁸

Dawson, within a month, would join these eccentrics, but for the moment he was only concerned with getting the naval agreement signed.

The Italian press still attacked Britain, and an article of June 12 noted that France did not like this difference between her allies.¹⁹ Another article appeared the next day, stating Italy's readiness to meet any aggression in East Africa, and her criticism of the League of Nations. To Italians, the "League is an insurance among the established empires." The League gave Japan a free hand in China, and, according to Mussolini's paper, Popolo d' Italia, it appeared that the only dynamic powers, Germany and Japan, were outside of the League.²⁰ The Times offered no comment.

Germany signed the naval agreement with Britain on June 18 and, as pointed out previously, Dawson was ecstatic. Italy, however, did not share the same views. The Times on the 20th recognized that "the conclusion of the agreement has been received here [in Italy] with anything but favor." The Italians believed that this pact "has dealt a further blow to the united front established at Stresa." The submarine issue, to the Italians, meant that Germany had hoodwinked Britain. Italy was angered at British initiative and, specifically, at her not consulting Italy.²¹

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹The Times (London), June 12, 1935, p. 12.

²⁰The Times (London), June 13, 1935, p. 12.

²¹The Times (London), June 20, 1935, p. 14.

There was no editorial on Italian displeasure with Britain's agreement. This action of Britain's must undoubtedly have made Mussolini angry, for he could see that Britain tried hard to placate Germany, who had broken the Treaty of Versailles and had been denounced by the League Council. Now, since Britain had signed a treaty approving Germany's actions, Mussolini must have thought Britain, analogously, could be expected to give tacit approval of his ambitions in Ethiopia, or at the most to react mildly. Therefore, he believed that London might ignore his breaking the League of Nation's treaty. He believed Britain surely would not break the Stresa front and lose his friendship; however, Mussolini did not know that the editor of Britain's most powerful paper was an imperialist and a moralist who did not want to see Italy in or near British African interests. After the naval agreement was signed Dawson turned his attention to Italy and directed the attention of The Times to Mussolini in particular.

Anthony Eden was sent by the British Government to Paris and Rome to explain why Britain had acted unilaterally. After leaving Paris, Eden spoke with Mussolini on June 24 and 25, and Eden recorded in his diary that Mussolini told him that France, as he understood it, was or had "disinterested herself from Abyssinia."²² Eden told the cabinet that Mussolini must be warned that Britain would not support Italy against the League and a peaceful Europe. The cabinet took no action.²³

²²Eden, Memoirs, p. 251.

²³Ibid., p. 273.

The Times editorial on Eden's visit said that he had tried to halt a possible war in Abyssinia, but Mussolini did not appear to be interested. Mussolini had chosen "singularly flimsy excuses for threatening the independence of Abyssinia." Dawson continued that Ethiopia had tried to have her case arbitrated, and she had even offered economic concessions to Italy, but, according to Mussolini, it was not enough. However, The Times concluded that Eden's mission was a success; he had convinced the Italians of Britain's good faith.²⁴ In the latter point, however, Dawson seems to have been mistaken.

While Eden was in Europe, the results of British Peace Ballot were announced on June 27. This ballot had been conducted after November, 1934, by people who were supporters of the League of Nations; forty per cent of all registered voters were polled. Ninety to ninety-five per cent voted positively for international disarmament, for Britain to be in the League, and for economic sanctions to be applied to any aggressor nation. Clause five was of particular interest; it asked if nations should combine to stop another nation, even if military measures were required. When the votes were counted, it was found that sixty per cent voted yes, twenty per cent voted no, and twenty per cent were non-committal.²⁵ The Times almost ignored the results, and Dawson editorialized that the government had learned nothing from the ballot that it did not already know, and "it is hard

²⁴The Times (London), June 27, 1935, p. 17.

²⁵Havighurst, Twentieth Century Britain, p. 244.

to see what good the ballot has done."²⁶ This appeared to be an understatement because this ballot, carried out by private organizations, showed that the British people favored a strong stand by the League. These people knew what was happening in Ethiopia, and indicated their positive stand for League action. There is no doubt that it did inspire the government, and possibly even The Times, to take a strong stand on Ethiopia. Both knew with an election shortly impending that the League of Nations would be a good issue, and this was exactly what occurred.

Baldwin, on June 29, in Yorkshire, stated, while defending the British-German naval agreement, that the "Covenant of the League of Nations is the sheet anchor of British policy."²⁷ Baldwin, when he first heard of the Peace Ballot, laughed and ridiculed it.²⁸ Neville Chamberlain, on the same day, declared that Britain would work "for the attainment of security by collective action through the League of Nations."²⁹ As a very close friend of Dawson, Chamberlain made the mistake of believing that "public opinion is what The Times tells him it is."³⁰ These statements demonstrated just how much the government had learned from the ballot; they made the League the issue in the November, 1935, general election.

Eden reported to the House of Commons on his visit to Paris and

²⁶The Times (London), June 28, 1935, p. 17.

²⁷The Times (London), July 1, 1935, p. 10.

²⁸Havighurst, Twentieth Century Britain, p. 244.

²⁹The Times (London), July 1, 1935, p. 10.

³⁰Cooper, Old Men Forget, p. 255.

Rome. He said that he told Mussolini that Britain's interest in Abyssinia and her foreign policy were based only on British membership in the League of Nations, and for no other reason. British public opinion was very strong on this issue, he said, overlooking the ballot just as the government (and Dawson) had done. Eden informed the House that he had suggested a solution. If Abyssinia accepted it she would have to give up some economic and territorial rights, and in return Britain would concede to Abyssinia some land that would have granted her access to the sea. Mussolini declined.³¹

Dawson editorialized on Eden's speech, saying that the "House was astonished and slightly displeased" with Britain's offer. Dawson, however, continued that the government only made this offer because "British policy is and must be founded upon the League." Dawson said, if this question were not solved, the feared breakdown of collective security would occur, and Italy should see that Britain wanted "a reasonable solution, the preservation of peace, and the maintenance of the position of the League of Nations." Mussolini wanted to control all or part of Ethiopia, said Dawson. Italy may have entered the colonial race late and with a handicap and she may have been irritated by the Ethiopians, but she had no right to "run counter to the treaties and other agreements she has signed." Her policy, reasoned Dawson, defied her 1928 treaty with Abyssinia, Britain, and France, the Kellogg Pact, the League of Nations, and the very foundations of the collective system. Such a policy "casts renewed doubts upon the value of treaties." "British public opinion

³¹The Times (London), July 2, 1935, p. 16.

views with profound misgivings the Italian policy towards Ethiopia," and would support the government in seeking any honorable peace.³² Every argument Dawson used could have been applied against Germany for her actions during the first six months of 1935 but he chose to use none.

France, in the meantime, appeared to be in a dilemma about recent British activities with Germany and Italy. France, still suffering from the shock of the German-British naval agreement, did not trust British diplomatic methods. Eden never told the French that Britain was prepared to make a deal with Mussolini to solve the Ethiopian problem, and France believed that the big issues were being solved without her approval. Now Britain asked France what her position and attitude on Abyssinia was and she requested France's strong support for the League of Nations.³³

The Times on July 5 acknowledged France's "Italian" dilemma. Dawson believed that France did not want to give Italy a free hand in Ethiopia, and neither did she want to oppose her new ally. Britain, said Dawson, had tried to solve the problem but failed, and now the League had the responsibility of settling the issue. France, reasoned Dawson, believed in the League, and if Mussolini flouted the League France had nothing. To Dawson the obvious course for France to follow was to back up the League of Nations. Dawson ignored the real reason for France's dilemma, that is, France mistrusted Britain and not Italy. The Times and the British Government had countenanced

³²Ibid., p. 17.

³³The Times (London), July 5, 1935, p. 14.

the German defiance of the League so why should France trust British action in the League? Dawson concluded that "public opinion will best be pleased if Britain can show herself firm, independent, inspired by faithfulness to the League and devotion to British interests, ready to take action for the maintenance of justice."³⁴

Mussolini told a rally on July 7 that "Italians prefer a life of heroism to one that is insipid" and "all the world must recognize the will and the spirit of Fascist Italy."³⁵ Dawson's response to Mussolini's speech recognized that Italy wanted to dominate Ethiopia. Regardless of the cost, declared Dawson, Mussolini's plans had been made to the last detail and it was useless to offer any more suggestions to ease the problem. The major powers should keep in contact with each other because "the situation is intensely distasteful and disturbing." Their "opportunity to limit the mischief may come," and they should stand together and exercise "their united influence when it does come." Britain must, however, keep in mind "the simple truth that the League of Nations is a league for peace and not a league for war." It cannot extend the area of conflict, and, if all its members act in unison, they "could prevent conflict altogether." The attitude of France was most important, continued Dawson. British feelers to France had met with little response. Since May, when France backed the principles of the League of Nations, she had begun to waver. Italy and France had signed an agreement in the hopes of establishing better relations; both had an interest in Africa, as

³⁴Ibid., p. 15.

³⁵The Times (London), July 8, 1935, p. 14.

well as in Austria. Naturally, both France and Italy saw Britain as performing an unfriendly act by interesting herself in Abyssinia when she was not prepared to commit herself on Austria. But the British people, said Dawson, believed that the "Austrian people are not averse" to joining in some type of union with Germany. Abyssinia was quite another matter; she was in a crisis; she had appealed to the League of Nations, and to the powers that signed the Kellogg Pact. The British people wanted Britain to remain vigilant and ready to enter collective action.³⁶

Dawson recognized Italian plans, and he believed that the members of the League must act in accord against them. He was afraid that France did not see the possible danger of the Ethiopian problem. Dawson did not say that this reluctance of France might be explained by her distrust of Britain, and her clandestine naval agreement of June. The French obsession with Germany and the Continent explained their position. The possibility of Austria's joining Germany had been suggested, but never in The Times. The Times again found "public opinion" useful to emphasize its own position as spokesman for the common voice of British people.

The Abyssinian-Italian Arbitration Commission, which was meeting in the Hague from June 25, collapsed on July 9. The commission could not reach a decision as to who the fifth member would be, nor could they agree on the frontier issue. Abyssinia wanted to discuss the entire frontier problem whereas the Italians pressed for a discussion of individual incidents.

³⁶Ibid., p. 15.

Shortly after these talks collapsed, Hoare spoke before the House of Commons (July 11) in defense of the German-British naval agreement. He devoted a small portion of his address to Italy; he believed that the Italians should recognize the fact that Britain did not want to trouble them, but Britain could not ignore her obligations to the League.³⁷ One cannot be impressed with the wavering position of Sir Samuel Hoare. He was prepared to ignore the German breach of the Treaty of Versailles, with its consequences to the collective system, but now he put particular emphasis on how Britain would carry her weight in that system!

The Italian reaction was one of amazement. If Britain did not want to disturb Italy, then why did she create this fuss over Ethiopia? The Italians felt that Hoare's statement needed clarification; they wanted acts of proof, not statements of Britain's good will. Would Britain help or hinder Italian ambitions? Was Britain prepared to let Stresa go? The Italians recognized the value of the collective system in Europe but did Britain want this carried into Africa too?³⁸

The answers to these Italian questions came in part on July 15 in the editorial "Italy, Abyssinia, and the League." Dawson praised Hoare's speech and said, if chances of preventing hostilities were dim, "the reason is not to be found in any weakness or ineptitude of Britain's policy, but in the obstinacy of Signor Mussolini." Dawson also said that only Italy considered war a feasible solution and that

³⁷The Times (London), July 12, 1935, p. 14.

³⁸The Times (London), July 13, 1935, p. 12.

Italian aims were simply to seize Abyssinia but Britain knew that the Ethiopians were not the best of colonial neighbors for they robbed, raided, and plundered. He continued, saying Italy needed to expand, and she might obtain economic advantages in Abyssinia and she might introduce an amount of civilization. Britain did not mind the civilizing of a backward nation, Dawson said, but Abyssinia was a member of the League, and a "brutal and unprovoked assault" on her would be an unusual way of civilizing her. He continued that the British Government never wanted Abyssinia in the League, Italy instigated its admittance, and therefore, the British Government could not "ignore the Abyssinian appeal to the League."³⁹ Dawson said that Britain backed Abyssinia and her claims in the League because these were "legal" as well as "moral" claims; thus, Stresa was gone, and Britain was prepared to deter the Italian ambitions.

For the next two weeks The Times reported but did not editorialize upon what was happening in Italy or Abyssinia. It was during this time that the position of both these countries became clear, that is, Italy wanted nothing less than complete mastery over Ethiopia while Ethiopia insisted on complete independence and territorial integrity. Sir Samuel Hoare announced in the House on July 25 that Britain would not send arms to either Italy or Ethiopia. The Council of the League agreed to meet on July 31 in Geneva to attempt a peaceful settlement.

Dawson editorialized on the eve of the conference that nobody

³⁹The Times (London), July 15, 1935, p. 15.

could foretell the effect the dispute might have on the Continent regarding the "validity of treaties, the future of the League of Nations, and upon the relations of the black races with the white all over the world." The Commonwealth with its large non-Caucasian populations in Africa and India, and its traditional friendship with Italy, was in a dilemma. The Times restrained itself for two weeks against countering the accusations of the "ill natured and fantastic truculence of the Italian newspapers." Dawson said that the people of Britain should not be critical of the government for having no precise policy because efforts had been made to secure a peaceful settlement on the whole issue; Britain wanted the Italians to solve their grievances with Ethiopia, but "they have never formally stated" what these were. The Council was now meeting to appoint a fifth arbitrator to the conciliation commission, based on the 1928 agreement between Italy and Ethiopia. Mussolini wanted to take Ethiopia by force; this was "a challenge to the universal renouncement of war as an instrument of policy, enshrined in the Kellogg Pact."⁴⁰

When the Council called its first session on August 4, it was agreed that Britain, France, and Italy should discuss this problem based on their 1906 Agreement. If they could not agree, the Council would study the Ethiopian problem on September 9. These three powers had agreed in 1906 to provide for Ethiopian independence and integrity, but had divided the land into spheres of influence in the event it should collapse. Meanwhile, Mussolini and The Times continued

⁴⁰The Times (London), July 31, 1935, p. 13.

their dialogue; Mussolini said that Italy alone was the "judge of her security in East Africa." He also said that "put in military terms the Italo-Abyssinian problem is simple and logical. It admits with Geneva, without Geneva, against Geneva," there was only one solution, and this "can only be totalitarian."⁴¹

Samuel Hoare spoke before the House of Commons on August 1, saying that the British Government would not take any rash action, but was "determined to do [its] duty under the Covenant of the League," and, if Italy had any complaints, the League would give them an impartial hearing.⁴² The Times supported Hoare's stand, adding that Italy liked to use force to settle disagreements and therefore preferred to ignore the League's peaceful overtures. Dawson again noted that the "Italian grievances against the Ethiopian Government are so far as they have been made known, singularly flimsy."⁴³

Although Dawson supported the League of Nations, he never defined the extent of his support and neither did Hoare. Dawson recognized that the body was needed, but he did not believe any one nation should tell the others what to do. By the end of August, however, Dawson reversed his position and pressed for British leadership.

The three powers agreed to meet and discuss the Ethiopian dispute in Paris on August 16. The editorial on the eve of these talks discussed the 1906 treaty, and how it could not be changed without the approval of the other two powers. Dawson emphasized the validity

⁴¹The Times (London), August 1, 1935, p. 14.

⁴²The Times (London), August 2, 1935, p. 12.

⁴³Ibid., p. 13.

of the treaty, and how it was being used in a concerted effort to make Italy change her warlike course. However, he said, if Italy proceeded with her plans she would be breaking all of her prior agreements, and he was certain that Britain could not consent "to the law of force, and condone the resort to war." The Italians, continued Dawson, made the mistake of believing that Britain opposed Italy for election purposes and selfish interests, which was not true. The British people, he said, would sacrifice anything for the League, and welcomed "a supreme effort to establish the Covenant as a substitute for war in the settlement of international disputes." Dawson continued, saying there were many people in Britain who were not against Italy's economic and commercial claims in Ethiopia because they believed that Ethiopia would benefit from them but the only British objection was over the possible loss of Ethiopian integrity. If Mussolini refused the French and British offer, Dawson stated, he would incur world resentment that would be "strongly and widely felt, and had a crystallization point in Geneva."⁴⁴ This article by Dawson informed Italy that if she caused the conference to fail, she would face a united and hostile League.

The Italian semi-government paper, Signor Gayda's Giornale d' Italia, rose to the challenge of The Times and Dawson. It denounced The Times "on account of its alleged threats made on Italy," which it called "political blackmail." The Giornale d' Italia declared that "The Times [was] committing a grave error by its attack on Italy." In their view, Dawson had threatened Italy before the conference

⁴⁴The Times (London), August 14, 1935, p. 13.

opened and had given the impression that Britain would impose a "pre-arranged solution" upon Italy. The Italian paper said that The Times had showed "with decisive proof that Britain is far from being disinterested in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute," and, by acting in this way, The Times had only hindered the possibilities of a peace settlement.⁴⁵

When the talks opened, a Times article noted that there appeared to be no change in the position of either side. The Times said that Britain's case was based on the contention that Italy had resorted to arms, in "disregard of several treaties," and felt this ". . . ruthless aggression by one League member on another . . . cannot be approved [under] any circumstances." If Italy pursues this course, The Times continued, then action must be implemented as directed; the story also pointed out that, since the League would meet on September 4, the Italians might still retreat.⁴⁶ This happy prospect was wishful thinking because another article from Italy indicated that Italy had no interest in changing her course. The next day the Italian press accused Britain of using the conference, the League, and the 1906 treaty as a camouflage to hide British interests in Abyssinia.⁴⁷

The three-power conference collapsed on August 18, and Dawson attacked the Italians in his editorial of the 19th, charging that

⁴⁵The Times (London), August 15, 1935, p. 9.

⁴⁶The Times (London), August 16, 1935, p. 10.

⁴⁷The Times (London), August 17, 1935, p.10.

Italy had "brusquely rejected" the reasonable proposals offered her by Britain and France as a means of settling the dispute. Dawson said Mussolini showed no respect for France or Britain, and, after having accepted the August decision of the League of Nations Council at Geneva and having agreed to the tripartite conference, he came unprepared to contribute to the solution. Dawson conceded that Italy had complaints, and possibly even economic rights in Ethiopia, but he added that she had signed the pact against war and was now behaving in a bellicose fashion. "She has ignored her pledges and contemptuously flouted the League." As of September 4, there seemed to be an imminent battle brewing between Italy and the League and Dawson felt a solution must be found that was not contrary to the principles of the League or it might mean its demise. Dawson noted that this was a grave time for Britain, but more so for France, whose foreign policy was based on the League. To preserve the opportunity for peaceful settlements which were at the heart of the League, Dawson urged during this period (August to September 4) that the British be deliberate and calm.⁴⁸

During the Parliamentary adjournment (August 2 until October 29), there were no speeches made by members of the government; however, a few members corresponded and left a record of their private opinions. Hoare, for example, told Chamberlain that Baldwin, who was about to go on a holiday, "would think of nothing but his holiday, and the

⁴⁸The Times (London), August 19, 1935, p. 11.

necessity of keeping out of the whole business at any cost."⁴⁹ On August 20, Eden recorded that both he and Hoare agreed that Italy would declare war on Ethiopia by September.⁵⁰

The historian, Alfred Rowse, had recalled telling Dawson at the time that the Germans were the real threat to Britain, not the Italians. Dawson's retort was: "If the Germans are so powerful as you say, oughtn't we to go in with them?"⁵¹ In other words, Dawson, who opposed the Italians on ethical grounds, was willing to join the Germans--right or wrong--as an expediency.

In late August, The Times proclaimed that Britain had to take the lead at Geneva. Baldwin returned from his vacation and called a cabinet meeting for August 22 to discuss the Ethiopian problem. In addressing the meeting, Dawson in The Times saw the dispute as "a conflict between the method of using war as an instrument of policy and the method of settling an international dispute by arbitration, diplomatic conciliation, or international conference." He said Italy had signed treaties against war, and "the British public instinctively felt" that unless the League of Nation's prestige was restored "the world will be back in the days when national ambition was considered a legitimate reason for making war." What, Dawson asked, would Baldwin and Hoare, who supported the principles of the League of Nations, do if sanctions were asked on September 4, or if Italy were denounced as the aggressor? He said there was no doubt that "a

⁴⁹Havighurst, Twentieth Century Britain, p. 286.

⁵⁰Eden, Memoirs, p. 286.

⁵¹Rowse, Appeasement, p. 28.

strong lead by Great Britain at Geneva would be followed by the other members of the League." He continued, saying "the conscience of this country has been touched and there is probably very widespread support of the view of the Archbishop of York." The cleric had said that "to fail now in loyalty to the League, because that loyalty might have grave consequences, would involve indelible disgrace."⁵²

After the cabinet meeting of the 22nd Dawson attacked the cabinet for not being more forthright in declaring that Britain would take the lead at Geneva to impose sanctions on Italy, stating that, if they failed to do so, "many people will be disappointed." He said Britain understood the French dilemma, that is, France did not want to impose sanctions and lose her ally, nor did she want the conflict extended, and, consequently, she delayed her intention of imposing sanctions out of the fear of angering Italy. Dawson asked how the British Government could allow Italy to go to war "after the repeated declarations by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in favor of the League of Nations." Hoare, said Dawson, stated that the British Government consciously recognized the Italian needs for new materials, but Italy's economic nationalism was "a reaction by a depraved country." He continued, regardless, Britain neither would approve of this crude violation of peace treaties nor watch a leading member of the League of Nations "revert to the simple method of spoliation for the gratification of its desires" and "the government will fail its duty if they do not uphold this principle."⁵³

⁵²The Times (London), August 22, 1935, p. 13.

⁵³The Times (London), August 23, 1935, p. 11.

The Times, and Dawson in particular, attacked the government for not taking a position on sanctions and taking the lead at Geneva. This was unusual. Dawson declared "the system of sanctions that commends itself increasingly to public opinion today is the withholding of supplies of all sorts to any country which has deliberately chosen war as an instrument of National Policy." If the British Government had made this declaration "it would have been gratifying," but the government's unwillingness to make a statement on sanctions "will be misconstrued if it is taken to be an unwillingness to apply sanctions in any circumstances."⁵⁴

Both the French and Italian cabinets met on August 28; the French were reported to have adopted a waiting position whereas Italy declared that she would tell the world and the Council of her position. She also made it known that Britain had nothing to fear from Italy and their friendship dated from before 1914, linked by Locarno and Stresa.

Dawson commented on these cabinet sessions; again he was extremely pointed regarding Italy. It was obvious to him what Italy intended to do, and, although Mussolini wanted a peaceful settlement, he felt it would be at Ethiopia's expense because Mussolini had demonstrated that "he prefers the ways of war to the ways of peace."⁵⁵

Then Dawson reflected on the French meeting; he said the French knew that Britain would support the League in this dispute, but France wanted to avoid the use of sanctions against Italy in view of

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵The Times (London), August 29, 1935, p. 11.

the length of time it had taken to gain friendship with Italy. The French, however, did express surprise at the strong feeling expressed by the British people on the Ethiopian issue; they could not understand why Britain did not denounce German rearmament, which also was against the League of Nations. Dawson replied, to the amazement of the French, that there was an easy explanation for this difference in Britain's attitude, that is, "Germany waited very patiently for ten years while the League tried to solve the problem." He said, in principle the right of equality had been recognized and only after waiting for years for the principle to be put into practice, "did Germany take matters into her own hands in violation of a treaty of which, in that respect, she had never admitted the validity." This answer was actually intended to clear up the doubt that lingered in the minds of the French officials. Dawson said Italy, on the other hand, had been offered economic concessions, which Mussolini had rejected, and now he wanted to conquer a nation that was prepared to arbitrate. Dawson continued, that Mussolini wanted to impose Italian will by force, to revenge Adowa, to impress the world with his fascist regime, to stake a claim for Italy in Africa, to use Ethiopia as a source of raw materials, to supply space for her extra population, to ignore treaties that he had signed, and to get Abyssinia out of the League after he had gotten her in. "This is the country and that is its mood."⁵⁶

On August 29 and 30, The Times published statements by many countries on their stands in regards to the League of Nations. All

⁵⁶Ibid.

pledged support for that body in its decisions.

Dawson, on the 30th, warned Mussolini of British public opposition to his position. He said Mussolini was going to the Council, but he did not have a case. Mussolini told Britain not to worry. Britain did not fear Italy, said Dawson, but "an ingrained love of justice and peace" moves British opinion to dislike war as an instrument of national policy. The British people were watching Italy with ever increasing anxiety, and they, continued Dawson, expected their government to play the game by the rules set up by the League. Dawson said the British delegates at Geneva were not deceived by "this universal solicitude of their countrymen for the future world order."⁵⁷ Dawson could have added that these delegates knew the attitude of The Times, which spoke for Britain.

Anthony Eden left on September 4 for the conference at Geneva, and Dawson reiterated The Times' position that Eden had "beyond all question the backing of public opinion" in Great Britain. Eden, supported by the cabinet as well as the public, would have a strong hand at Geneva, and it would be stronger when France saw Britain's sincere opposition to war. Britain was aware of the French dilemma: France must either condemn Italy as an aggressor or let Italy go unpunished, and permit "the opening of an indefinite era of licensed spoliation."⁵⁸

On the eve of the Council's meeting, Dawson commented on the possible lack of confidence in the future of the League "if it should completely fail to produce a solution on this occasion." He said

⁵⁷The Times (London), August 30, 1935, p. 13.

⁵⁸The Times (London), September 2, 1935, p. 11.

there is "an instinctive feeling in this country" which Europe did not understand--Britain saw the choice as between war and conciliation as a means of settling issues, which was also the position of the League. However, he continued, Mussolini stood for war and was prepared to challenge the League, and the British policy had "a clear cause to uphold--the cause of the League."⁵⁹

The Council meetings were held on the 6th. Dawson editorialized that the Italians had been obnoxious and used obstructionist tactics; Italy was trying to present "a novel, arrogant, and inadmissible argument" that Abyssinia was not fit to sit in the League. Again, Dawson pointed out that it was Italy who secured her admittance into the League in the first place.⁶⁰

The British Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, arrived in Geneva on the 8th to support Eden. Surprisingly, on September 11, he took the podium himself and shocked the Council by reaffirming British support of the League's collective system. He proclaimed that the obligations of the Covenant remained for all its members; "if risks for peace are to be run, they must be run by all." He said it was very unjust and dangerously misleading to believe that Britain was in the League solely for her own interest and the British government's attitude toward the League was one of "unwavering fidelity to the League and all it stands for, and the case now before us is no exception, but on the contrary, the continuance of that rule."⁶¹

⁵⁹The Times (London), September 4, 1935, p. 13.

⁶⁰The Times (London), September 6, 1935, p. 13.

⁶¹The Times (London), September 12, 1935, p. 7.

The Times said this was the "true range and depth of British policy and British feeling," and there was no longer any doubt of Britain's anger. The Times also said Hoare's speech was "an authoritative and historic declaration of British Policy" and that Hoare had expressed the views of the government and "of the country as a whole."⁶² This had been Dawson's view since August.

Hoare's speech was not created on the spur of the moment; he had shown Baldwin a preview of it. Baldwin, who had returned from his holiday, glanced at it and said "that is all right," but he did not seem to recognize its real importance.⁶³ The effect of the speech was electrifying. Italy was practically alone, France did not care for Mussolini or his insults, Russia did not feel particularly friendly toward him, most of Europe did not care for Italy, and all were prepared to follow Britain's leadership in the belief that Italy would bow to sanctions.⁶⁴ The people in Britain were aroused; it "united all those forces in Britain which stood for a fearless combination of righteousness and strength. Here was at least a policy" for Britain.⁶⁵ It was Dawson's policy and now the government declared support for it.

On September 12, Hoare spoke by radio to the British people and said that Britain and the British Empire were now highly regarded and respected "by the world" and that he and Eden were still working for

⁶²Ibid., p. 11.

⁶³Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 166.

⁶⁴Amery, My Political Life, Vol. III, p. 172.

⁶⁵Churchill, Storm, p. 155.

a solution to the Ethiopian problem.⁶⁶ In an editorial on the broadcast, Dawson said he recognized the statement of Labour leader Herbert Morrison, who, in Fulham, said that Hoare's speech commanded the overwhelming support of British public opinion. Dawson said that Hoare also "spoke . . . not only the mind of his own country, but [for] the great majority of the nations represented in the League."⁶⁷ This was a stern warning to Mussolini that Britain and the other League nations were not bluffing.

French Minister Laval, at the League of Nations on September 13, declared that France was faithful to the Covenant and pledged to fulfill her obligations to the League. Laval's speech brought forth an editorial by Dawson on its significance in which he said France, who could not commit herself to a policy beforehand, now through Laval "came out for the Covenant, the whole Covenant, and nothing but the Covenant" because that was the international law. Dawson continued that "unless Signor Mussolini has lost all sense of proportion," he should realize that France and Britain wanted peace, and there was more to gain by "timely cooperation with Great Britain and France than by an insensate policy which they can have no choice but to oppose."⁶⁸

Mussolini, however, was not thinking about cooperation. He declared on the 13th that there could be no compromise on the dispute. Dawson again answered him in an editorial, saying that Italy only

⁶⁶The Times (London), September 13, 1935, p. 12.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁸The Times (London), September 14, 1935, p. 11.

wanted deliberate and unnecessary war and that Mussolini was reckless, ignoring the possibilities of what might happen as a result of his action. Dawson also said the British Empire and most nations at Geneva were aware of "the risks of peace," and, if Mussolini should make good his threats, it would be the League's task to "bring its united weight to bear for the earliest possible restoration of order and justice."⁶⁹

How far was Britain prepared to go? What was The Times and Dawson prepared to say? The reader of The Times at the end of September had no doubt about the British Government's policy or that of The Times; both wanted strong support for the League of Nations, especially in its stand against any Italian threat to Abyssinia. If this was not the policy, what else could explain the balligerent stance of The Times from late July to September? The real question was one of Dawson's motives; he viewed Italy's presence in Africa as unwarranted, for the reasons mentioned above.

Another reason for Dawson's anti-Italian stand was the upcoming election. In June, he suspected that there would be an election, but he never said when it would be called. The anti-Italian and pro-League positions were recognized as the great issues on which the National Government would stand. The Times had stated in June that the Peace Ballot was not important, but, when Dawson learned that most people backed the League, he recognized that a strong pro-League position had unlimited possibilities as a campaign issue. Neville Chamberlain, Dawson's friend, also recognized this; Chamberlain told

⁶⁹The Times (London), September 16, 1935, p. 13.

Lord Amery that he agreed with Hoare's speech of September 11, adding that "we were bound to try out the League of Nations, for political reasons at home, and there was no question of going beyond the mildest of economic sanctions such as an embargo on the purchase of Italian goods or sale of munitions to Italy."⁷⁰ Chamberlain had two positions, then, a strong one for elections, and a mild one in practice; The Times reader knew only the former.

If The Times' stand at the end of September was in part for elections purposes, the National Government was given an added advantage on October 3. Italy attacked Abyssinia without a declaration of war, claiming self-defense. Dawson vociferously denounced Italy in The Times; he said the Italian claim against Abyssinia was ridiculous and "no one, from Swift to Lewis Carroll, could improve this argument." He stated that the invasion ran counter to League policy and "if the members of the League are prepared to tolerate inactively a concrete and unequivocal act of unprovoked aggression, then the Covenant and the Pact of Paris are dead."⁷¹ Dawson said Britain's policy was clear and the area of conflict could be restricted; he was prepared to act, up to the point of actual war.

On the day the war broke out, October 3, 1935, the Conservative Party held its annual conference at Bournemouth. All the speakers stated their support for the League, and for strengthening Britain's armaments. Chamberlain said that the government knew "its duty to the nation," which was to boost defenses, preserve the empire, honor

⁷⁰Amery, My Political Life, Vol. III, pp. 174-75.

⁷¹The Times (London), October 4, 1935, p. 15.

its obligations to other nations, and support the League in establishing peace by collective action.⁷²

The Times agreed with Chamberlain's position that Britain could either live in splendid isolation or intervene in "international affairs through the League," on the assumption that these events would sooner or later affect the empire. In order to follow either position, Britain should be strong, and, because the National Government has chosen the path of intervention, and correctly so, said Dawson, he never mentioned the nation's weakened military condition nor did he denounce the British Government for allowing such a state to exist.⁷³

Baldwin came out strongly for the League of Nations at the annual conference on October 4. He attacked those who advocated isolation while he pointed out that the events in Africa could pose a threat to the empire. He declared that "we cannot afford, either nationally or as an Empire, to refuse to play our part in the Continent [Africa] in which the hand of God had placed us." He said Britain was a member of the League, and "this country resented the doubts that had been cast on its integrity in defending the Covenant." He also said Britain would not act alone as "action must be taken totally by all."⁷⁴ This was a forceful declaration, and very similar to what Dawson had written the previous day. Dawson was delighted with Baldwin's statements; Baldwin, reasoned Dawson, had now silenced

⁷²Ibid., p. 14.

⁷³Ibid., p. 15.

⁷⁴The Times (London), October 5, 1935, p. 12.

the critics of the British Government and was respected beyond the party and as the unchallenged leader of the country. Dawson wrote that Baldwin showed that Britain could not afford isolation, and that there "cannot be one law for Africa and another for Europe." Dawson declared further that Baldwin favored economic and financial measures to smother the war, and, although British forces were weak, she would carry out her obligations to the League (neither Baldwin nor Dawson had mentioned military sanctions).⁷⁵

The League's Council on October 7 accused Italy of being the aggressor, and the Council agreed that Article 16 should be invoked, which would place economic and financial sanctions on Italy. This decision was binding on all League membership. A coordinating committee would be set up to devise economic measures. The Times was very pleased with the League Council's decision; it stated that the measures to be applied would be slow but that the League by nature was slow. It further stated that British opinion, however, "stands firm behind its representatives" while "the Covenant calls the nations which have signed it to the crucial test of collaboration and good faith."⁷⁶

While The Times agreed that the British public supported its government at Geneva, Dawson believed that the formal stamp of approval in the form of a general election in November would reinforce the government's position. This appeared to be a feeler to probe public opinion. Dawson had been talking with Baldwin, and

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 13.

⁷⁶The Times (London), October 9, 1935, p. 13.

noted how worried he appeared over the Ethiopian crisis and the upcoming election. Dawson told Baldwin that the sooner the election came the better.⁷⁷

The members of the government became more vocal in their support of the League. In Geneva, the Assembly of the League voted 50-2 in support of the Council's action. Eden recalled that the assembly knew how Britain felt, that is, there must be peace, and if not, action must be taken as it "is our duty to take action; it is essential that such action be prompt."⁷⁸ The Secretary of State for War, Lord Halifax, declared that Britain's friendship for Italy "could not discharge this country from an honorable bond that she had undertaken."⁷⁹

Labour leader Herbert Morrison accused the government of using the League as an election issue. He said that "it seemed certain the Tory wire pullers had persuaded the Prime Minister and the government to plunge the country into a general election almost at once." He felt that the Tories would utilize Britain's stand on the League of Nations as the issue, saying "the patriotism of the Tory Party was always a hypocritical patriotism."⁸⁰

Dawson denied Morrison's charge, saying this type of statement was expected from opposition parties, as this "is one of the illogicalities to which all oppositions are prone." The opposition, noted

⁷⁷Wrench, Dawson, p. 324.

⁷⁸The Times (London), October 11, 1935, p. 14.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 16.

⁸⁰The Times (London), October 12, 1935, p. 14.

Dawson, accused the government of having no support but this was untrue because the government had considered this election before the Ethiopian crisis, for there were also domestic problems and the government wanted national approval. The government, however, said Dawson, would carry more weight in foreign affairs if it could show the world that the people approved of its action and foreigners would realize that the British people were the inspiration for the government's policy, which would answer "once and for all the malicious insinuations of insincerity" from Italy and other critics. He said the sooner the British people could publicly manifest their support the better.⁸¹

Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, went to Glasgow, Scotland, to plead for unanimous popular support. He denounced those who advised Britain to ignore the problem, pointing out that the issue was not merely Abyssinia, but the "fate of the League itself." He said Britain supported the League and the empire supported Britain, and this was better protection than what the obsolescent alliance system could offer.⁸² This was said by the man who had told Amery that the League would be good for election purposes at home! Neither Chamberlain, nor anyone else in the government, had stated how far Britain was prepared to go. The people did not know, and could only assume that there were no limitations.

Since the middle of September, the British had reinforced the Mediterranean fleet for possible action. The French, by the middle

⁸¹The Times (London), October 15, 1935, p. 15.

⁸²Ibid., p. 16.

of October, fearing that British leadership at Geneva was really a subterfuge to protect British imperial interests in Africa, asked the British to reduce their Mediterranean fleet, and hoped that Italy in return might reduce her activity in Ethiopia, laying the groundwork for peaceful negotiations. Dawson, on October 18, criticized the French for this request; he said they were blind and could not see that it was Italy who challenged the League, who had broken the Covenant, and who used war as an instrument of national policy. Britain, said Dawson, recognized the French interest in Italy, but France refused to see the British point of view, which supported the League's collective action.⁸³

In spite of the strong stand of both the government and The Times in support of the League, neither had clearly defined their actual position toward the League. The Foreign Secretary, speaking before Parliament on October 22, reiterated the old theme that Britain, with Dominion and Parliamentary support, was not opposed to any form of government and only wanted to support the League. The Times and Dawson agreed with Hoare that Britain was not against fascism per se, nor was she selfishly interfering in this dispute. Mussolini, however, made the mistake of doubting that the British Government had the support of the people, said Dawson.⁸⁴

The government, in order to obtain the official approval of the British public, declared on October 23 that November 14 would be election day. (The Times had printed this information on October 18.)

⁸³The Times (London), October 18, 1935, p. 15.

⁸⁴The Times (London), October 23, 1935, p. 15.

Dawson defended this impending election against its critics, saying there were a few who were calling this a "stunt election" but "no election in history has ever justified the epithet less." Dawson illustrated what he believed to be the two key issues, namely, the League of Nations and Britain's continued economic recovery.⁸⁵ However, the issue that the election focused on was the League.

The election campaign began on October 26 when Parliament recessed. The National Government published a manifesto which declared its program for foreign and domestic affairs and reiterated the well-worn line that the League of Nations was the keystone of British foreign policy.

Influential members of the government echoed their support of the government's policy for the League. Baldwin, on the eve of Parliament's recess, stressed over the air that Britain would not shirk her duty to the League of Nations.⁸⁶ Eden, on October 28, at Coventry, re-emphasized Britain's support for the League.⁸⁷ Foreign Secretary Hoare, on the 30th, at Chelsea, declared that British policy was "perfectly simple": "loyalty to the League."⁸⁸ Sir John Simon, Foreign Secretary, 1931 to 1935, on the 31st, said "put your trust in Mr. Baldwin" and his foreign policy.⁸⁹ Baldwin, on the same day, emphasized in particular that the League issue was not a party

⁸⁵The Times (London), October 24, 1935, p. 15.

⁸⁶The Times (London), October 26, 1935, p. 17.

⁸⁷The Times (London), October 29, 1935, p. 16.

⁸⁸The Times (London), October 31, 1935, p. 16.

⁸⁹The Times (London), November 1, 1935, p. 10.

issue, but a national issue.⁹⁰

The opposition contended that Britain was insincere in her motives toward the League. They asked, where was the British Government during the Manchurian crisis of 1931? They also charged that Britain had not specified what her course of action would be if Italy violated Ethiopian's political and territorial integrity. In rebuttal, Dawson editorialized in defense of the government's role in the League, stating that the government was sincere because it believed in the principle of collective action, and Britain did not act alone in Manchuria for there had been no concerted action against Japan as there was against Italy.⁹¹

Dawson turned his attention to the opposition's second charge that Britain was ambiguous in her League policy toward Italy. Italy knew of Britain's position since last winter, said Dawson. Mussolini was guilty, because he believed that Britain could not make the League effective. In evaluating the opposition's claims, Dawson reasoned that they had no grounds for a case.⁹² Contemptuously, Dawson had noted before that Britain's foreign policy was "clear enough for everyone to understand. No intelligent elector can say he does not know for what he is being asked to vote," for or against.⁹³

Dawson's argument was aided by the League itself during the British election campaign. Hoare had returned to Geneva, and, on

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 16.

⁹¹The Times (London), October 30, 1935, p. 15.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³The Times (London), October 24, 1935, p. 15.

November 3, the League decided to impose sanctions on Italy, effective as of the 18th. At this meeting, Hoare said that the League was reluctant to take such measures but that they were necessary for League survival. Hoare pointed out that Britain, France, and Italy were still holding talks, in the hope of ending the war, and, if any agreement could be reached, they would bring their plan before the Council. Dawson was very pleased with the position the League had taken; he felt it showed that the member states were determined "to maintain the high principles of collective security," and this was a great achievement.⁹⁴

The campaign continued, increasingly focusing on the League as the key issue. Baldwin spoke on the 4th in Liverpool, and "appealed for a mandate to enable the National Government to be the makers of the new state, and if God willed, a new Europe." He said Europe wanted peace and desired British leadership.⁹⁵ On the 6th, Baldwin sent a letter to all National Government candidates, defining "tested leaders" as those who "stood united in defense of the League of Nations, and world peace."⁹⁶ On November 10 Eden told a Warwickshire audience that the League would be victorious in Ethiopia, and Hoare told the Lord Mayor's banquet in London that the British Government with popular support would carry out her obligations "wherever they exist, and strive for peace wherever peace [was] threatened." "We [have] given our word in the Covenant, and we [are] bound to keep it,"

⁹⁴The Times (London), November 4, 1935, p. 13.

⁹⁵The Times (London), November 5, 1935, p. 16.

⁹⁶The Times (London), November 7, 1935, p. 8.

and Britain will not sacrifice her friends. If Britain had to fight to "defend the cause of peace" she would.⁹⁷ On November 12 in Newcastle Baldwin appealed for re-election on the grounds that a stable government "in this country will be a vital factor in the preservation of world peace through the League of Nations."⁹⁸ The Times, supporting Baldwin's position, called Baldwin the reason behind the rise of Britain's prestige at home and abroad.⁹⁹

The election was a complete victory for the National Government; it won by a majority of 421 to 179. Dawson called this a "triumph of steadiness" in a troubled time, and said this not only was a triumph for the government, but also for the British people. It showed the world their solid support of the government. He said this was the first time since World War I that a government had won consecutive victories and the credit belonged to Baldwin; he was "the man who [had] given this constructive turn to his party's outlook."¹⁰⁰ Dawson also found the combination of Hoare and Eden "a trump card of Mr. Baldwin's new deal," and the greatest assets Baldwin had in the election. Baldwin was indifferent "to the glamour of office," and Dawson speculated that this would probably be Baldwin's last term.¹⁰¹ Dawson probably knew more than he wrote in The Times; his diary at this time records a talk with Baldwin, in which Dawson suggested men

⁹⁷The Times (London), November 11, 1935, p. 17.

⁹⁸The Times (London), November 13, 1935, p. 12.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁰⁰The Times (London), November 16, 1935, p. 13.

¹⁰¹The Times (London), November 18, 1935, p. 15.

for his new cabinet and a plan for reorganization of defenses.¹⁰²

Throughout the whole election, Baldwin had been pictured in The Times as the man upon whom the British people could rely and, now The Times, after the election, introduced the suggestion that Baldwin really did not care for the job. Furthermore, of the two key campaign issues, one, economic progress, disappeared from The Times early in the campaign, leaving the League as sole issue.

Dawson recognized this on the 19th when he wrote an editorial entitled "As Others See Us"; he said the world had been greatly impressed by the victory of the National Government and the public support for the "firm and unequivocal foreign policy of recent months." He continued, saying British prestige was now "much higher than even people at home" were apt to realize and Britain was respected even at places where she formerly had been criticized. He felt Germany would "have to reckon on that fact" of British grassroots approval of the League because everywhere it was assumed that the British Government would "continue its foreign policy with greater assurance and authority."¹⁰³

The League of Nations in Geneva voted on the 18th to apply sanctions on Italy, prohibiting imports and exports, declaring an arms embargo and a financial embargo. At the same time, France and Britain were still trying to work out an agreement which would be acceptable to the League, Italy, and Abyssinia. Although there was no oil embargo, the League Council agreed to meet on the 29th to discuss the

¹⁰²Wrench, Dawson, p. 325.

¹⁰³The Times (London), November 19, 1935, p. 15.

possibility of adding iron and oil to the sanction list. On the 25th, Dawson noted this and predicted it would make Italy realize that the League was stronger than she had realized and the pressures on Italy would soon make her "recognize the wisdom of negotiating for a solution satisfactory to herself, to Abyssinia, and the League." Meantime, Dawson noted, Britain and France were still searching for peace.¹⁰⁴

When France asked to postpone the meeting on oil sanctions until December 12, Dawson hoped that the French "would not . . . justify postponement indefinitely" because the economic measures must be put into effect as soon as possible.¹⁰⁵

November, 1935, saw the British Government at its zenith in prestige and influence around the world. Britain, from September to the end of November, was the main force behind the action of the League and its stand against the naked aggression of Mussolini. Before the end of December, however, all this would change as Britain's reputation and prestige, which was created by her support of the League, would be destroyed when she abandoned it.

These events began innocently. On December 3, Hoare was considering his doctor's suggestion that he take a rest in Switzerland. The Times saw British foreign policy moving "steadily forward in an orderly plan" despite Hoare's incapacity and predicted that, when the December 12 meeting came, Britain, with League approval, would place

¹⁰⁴The Times (London), November 25, 1935, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵The Times (London), November 27, 1935, p. 15.

oil and other fuels on the embargo list.¹⁰⁶ Dawson stated that the delay of the League in acting was a sign of conscientious deliberation rather than weakness and that the British unanimously backed the League.¹⁰⁷

The British Foreign Secretary told the House of Commons on December 5 that Britain was "prepared to play our part fully" with regard to oil sanctions, but would not act alone. Britain did not want to destroy Italy, but merely show Mussolini that he could not flout the League with impunity. Seconding Hoare, Eden told Commons that there was "no change in the government's policy."¹⁰⁸ Dawson, noting the House's favorable reaction to both speeches, said Hoare's policy reflected "the feelings and wishes of the country." He said, distasteful as they were, sanctions vindicated the collective security principle. Britain and France were still working on a solution, which would not reward violence, and the League hoped that they would come to some agreeable conclusion. Hoare recognized that the British people were prepared to support sanctions, and that Britain was prepared to follow any action determined by the League on December 12. Dawson suggested that Hoare, on his way to Switzerland, might visit with the French Foreign Minister Laval.¹⁰⁹ Hoare took this advice. Just before he left for Switzerland via Paris, Hoare spoke with Baldwin, who advised him to push Laval as hard as he could--but "on

¹⁰⁶The Times (London), December 3, 1935, p. 14.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁰⁸The Times (London), December 6, 1935, p. 16.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 17.

no account get this country into war."¹¹⁰

Hoare and Laval held discussions on the 7th and 8th, and then Hoare went on to Switzerland. The Times in an article on the 9th noted that an agreement had been reached on the Ethiopian-Italian dispute. The next day The Times outlined the following proposals, which in effect made Ethiopia the victim: (1) Italy would receive Danakil and the Eastern part of Tigre including Adowa, Makole, but not Aksum; (2) in the South, Italy would get all the land between the frontier of British Somaliland, the 8th parallel of latitude in the North, and the 36th degree of longitude in the west, including most of Ogaden; (3) Ethiopia would receive the part of Asseb in Eritrea, and a corridor to this port through Italian land, or she would get Port Zeila; (4) Ethiopia would be independent, and the League would assist in carrying out reforms and to help in her development.¹¹¹

The British cabinet met on the 9th to discuss the proposals, when Hoare offered his counsel, Baldwin told him to stay in Switzerland and that he [Baldwin] "was in complete control of the situation."¹¹² The Times noted that the cabinet met on the 9th and discussed and approved the proposals, and decided to forward them to the Council. It must be said, The Times continued, that there was not much support for these proposals in the press, House of Commons, or the cabinet. The Times concluded that the French reaction to these talks was one of "astonishment" and disbelief that the British

¹¹⁰Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 178.

¹¹¹The Times (London), December 10, 1935, p. 16.

¹¹²Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 183.

Government would go so far along the road of concession.¹¹³

The cabinet met again on the 10th, and The Times noted that there "was no question at any time of refuting the proposals to which the Foreign Secretary had assented" because these were only the basis upon which the League, France, and Italy were to work.¹¹⁴

On the same day, Baldwin refused to disclose the proposals in the House. He finally stated, however, in a very cryptic manner, that his lips were sealed but, "if he could tell the whole story, not a vote would be given against the government." Baldwin was visibly annoyed that the proposals leaked out in France. Members of the House learned the proposals from The Times, and most of them believed "the proposals were a breach of the Covenant and a betrayal of the government's pledges at the election." The members felt that the election gave "a mandate [for] its [governments] strong foreign policy" to obtain justice through the League; "justice" did not mean rewarding the aggressor.¹¹⁵

Dawson tried to minimize the seriousness of the whole affair but it was evident he did not like the proposals. On the 11th, in his first editorial about the agreement and the subsequent indignation of the House of Commons, Dawson said that the British people should not be angry with the opposition for questioning the Prime Minister because "the picture was certainly of a kind to arouse misgivings." To Dawson, the proposed agreement constituted "a premium upon armed

¹¹³The Times (London), December 10, 1935, p. 16.

¹¹⁴The Times (London), December 11, 1935, p. 16.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

aggression" and "served as an encouragement to every future law-breaker."¹¹⁶

The Times reported world reaction to the proposals, which damned the British; it appeared to most nations that aggression was met with approval. Many League members were disgusted and distrustful. The people of Great Britain flooded the House of Commons with mail opposing the proposals. Dawson, during this period, was extremely worried about the fate of the British Government.

Dawson tried to shift the blame from Britain to France, and he said on the 13th that "the proposals of Paris" were not reconcilable "with the obligations of the Covenant" and that the Laval attempt had "in fact failed already." Laval's leaking the proposals to the press "was calculated to plunge the British Government, with its hands more than half-tied, into an acute dilemma," as was "common knowledge in this and every country." Dawson said Britain's drive for peace was hampered by her conciliation of France and now she must vindicate public opinion at home and prove "that aggression does not pay," and support the League to the end. If the British Government weakened in its support for the League, he continued, it would cause bitter "disillusionment and resentment at home, and lamentable injury overseas" to British sincerity and statesmanship.¹¹⁷

The official proposals were published in The Times on December 14, corresponding exactly to what The Times had published in its December 10 issue. Dawson recognized that Italy would get "the

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 17.

¹¹⁷The Times (London), December 13, 1935, p. 15.

effective ownership and control of a good half of Abyssinian territory."¹¹⁸ Dawson was troubled; the same night he wrote in his diary that he was trying "to write something useful about the deplorable plight of the government."¹¹⁹

The government published a White Paper [CMD5044] of documents important to the Italian-Abyssinian dispute. One important cable showed that Hoare, on the 10th, urged the British Minister, Sir Sidney Burton, in Addis Ababa to "use his utmost influence to induce the Emperor to give careful and favorable consideration to [the] proposals."¹²⁰

Dawson's editorial of the 16th, "A Corridor for Camels," damned the White Paper and the proposals. The only advantage Dawson saw for Ethiopia was that she would have an outlet to the sea. Dawson remarked that Hoare and Laval must have believed that Ethiopia's step toward civilization was worth the surrender of much Ethiopian land and integrity. Emperor Haile Selassie was forbidden to build a railroad along his corridor and thus the land was "restricted to the sort of traffic which [had] entered Ethiopia from the day of King Solomon, a corridor for camels." To Dawson the whole proposal appeared incredible, for it was even contrary to the most "cynical interpretation" of a civilizing mission. Dawson continued that the proposals were dead "the moment their general tenor was known." He believed British public opinion would never ask the League for these proposals as a

¹¹⁸The Times (London), December 14, 1935, p. 13.

¹¹⁹Wrench, Dawson, p. 325.

¹²⁰The Times (London), December 16, 1935, p. 14.

basis for negotiation; they wanted a solution, but not the one proposed. Dawson said excuses could be offered about press leaks, haste in meeting, etc., but the fact remained that the British Government "endorsed the peace proposals as an opportunity of negotiation" and the British Ministers had only themselves to blame, although Dawson, it will be remembered, had attempted to blame Laval.¹²¹

These proposals had been refuted in the House of Commons, the country, Dominions, and the world, and British Ministers could not press for League acceptance. The British Government, according to Dawson, should show that "Hoare's acquiescence in Laval's proposals was enforced by a fear of extending the war to Europe." Dawson concurred that there might be a remote possibility of such a war, but Britain was not alone; she was part of the League. Even if Britain were attacked, she could take care of herself.¹²² This editorial was a very strong indictment against the proposals and the action of the British cabinet.

Dawson's editorial reflected the mood of British official and unofficial public opinion. Baldwin himself recognized the fact that he had lost the support of the public, the press, and the House of Commons--he was bewildered after the 10th.¹²³ He was afraid he could not stem this tidal wave of public disapproval, which threatened to discredit the government and possibly dissolve it. He decided, therefore, to act and asked Hoare to recant; Hoare refused. Baldwin

¹²¹Ibid., p. 15.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Young, Baldwin, p. 217.

explained that he did not wish Hoare's resignation, but Hoare resigned on the 18th.¹²⁴

Baldwin's friend, Jones, commented that it was the press led by Dawson that had worked up the sentiment against the proposals in the country.¹²⁵ Dawson urged Hoare to resign.¹²⁶ Hoare recalled that Dawson came "like one of Job's comforters to mourn over my sins and misfortunes."¹²⁷ Dawson originally pushed Hoare's appointment as Foreign Secretary because he felt Hoare would aid in his policy of German appeasement, and, as Hoare had failed, Dawson now wanted Hoare ousted.

Foreign Secretary Hoare reasoned that the Franco-British agreement would save the Stresa front and keep Italy as an ally without Italy drawing any closer to Germany. This was why he asked the cabinet to accept the proposals. However, this line of reasoning ran counter to Dawson's pro-German policy, and the idea of holding the Stresa front, which was primarily directed against Germany, angered Dawson. He believed that Germany wanted to settle down and become a good European neighbor and there was no reason "to keep Italy out of her orbit."¹²⁸ Therefore, Dawson savagely attacked the proposals; he expressed not only righteous indignation, but also made it clear that the government policy had strayed too far from that of the "people,"

¹²⁴ Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 185.

¹²⁵ Jones, Diary, p. 161.

¹²⁶ Wrench, Dawson, p. 327.

¹²⁷ Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 186.

¹²⁸ Connell, The Office, p. 209.

as expressed in The Times.

The Times resumed its attack on the British Government on the 18th. Dawson said Britain should not have given these proposals her approval because to admit that this was all that could be offered was one thing but to approve it was another. He declared that "public opinion in this country, let there be no mistake, will not tolerate the present terms as expressing British notions of justice." There would be a debate on the 19th in the House of Commons, and the government would make a mistake if it succeeded in gaining a majority vote in support of its position. If it did get a majority it would be "utterly barren and unconvincing." Why did this action take place when Hoare was out of the country? "The only answer," said Dawson, was that the Cabinet believed these terms, however unsatisfactory, "would be a basis for negotiation," but these were not British notions of justice and they were unacceptable terms.¹²⁹

The British Government had found its scapegoat; Hoare resigned formally on the 18th, and Dawson commented editorially that this was correct since Hoare was at fault. The Times stated that a blunder had been made in foreign policy, for which Hoare was responsible, and "some sacrifice" was demanded by the "growing tide of resentment at the apparent acceptance by the British Government" of the proposals.¹³⁰ Now, The Times continued, Britain must show the world that her policy to the League had not changed.

Hoare, defrocked, appeared before Parliament on the 19th and gave

¹²⁹The Times (London), December 18, 1935, p. 13.

¹³⁰The Times (London), December 19, 1935, p. 13.

his reason for having accepted the proposals. He said he had been afraid of war breaking out in Europe, which would mean the end of the League, and he took the minimum terms France would accept to achieve British-French solidarity. Attlee, the Labour Party leader, wanted to know why the whole government did not resign. Baldwin replied to Attlee that he and the cabinet had to support an absent colleague, and he noted he should have called Hoare back from Switzerland for more consultation. Now, Baldwin said, the Foreign Secretary would travel no more and, because of the feeling against the proposals in the country, the proposals were dead.¹³¹

The House of Lords debated the proposals and Lord Halifax tried to defend the government. He said the terms of the proposals were not as bad "as public opinion had represented them to be"; the government acted in support of an absent colleague from its cabinet discussion. It was an honest error, and the whole government accepted the blame; the League still was the keystone of British foreign policy. Halifax's explanation did not satisfy the members of Lords. Lord Snell told him it was not all Hoare's mistake; the Prime Minister was involved, and Baldwin did not get a "mandate for trickery." The Archbishop of Canterbury stated that he was not "wholly relieved" by Halifax's statements. Lord Lothian unleashed his oratory on Halifax, saying "the Foreign Secretary had been made the scapegoat for responsibilities which rested on other shoulders," and noted the government would not be absolved by Hoare's resignation. Lothian charged that Britain had run away from Mussolini when she should have called his

¹³¹The Times (London), December 20, 1935, p. 6.

bluff.¹³²

Dawson treated Hoare sympathetically after his resignation and said that this was not the end of his distinguished career. He recalled that in September Hoare had "rallied the world, and his own countrymen" to the League's cause. Dawson added that this, more than anything else, "determined the issue of the General Election."¹³³

Dawson foolishly believed that telling the world that Baldwin admitted that the cabinet had not really discussed these proposals, and only agreed to them to support an absent colleague, would free the cabinet of complicity. Dawson felt Baldwin had now restored much of the British Government's prestige and recognized the power of British public opinion, by which Dawson surely meant that Baldwin recognized the power of The Times. Dawson said the British Government had profited by its mistake and realized Geneva was the only place to hold peace talks; the cabinet would now control British foreign policy and the Prime Minister would be present. The British Government would always be honest with the League and the public.¹³⁴ Dawson had forgiven Baldwin and the government and believed that the government's position was "almost as strong" as that before December 8.

On the 21st, The Times reported a statement by Chamberlain that "those proposals are dead" and "we [British Government] agree now . . . we made a mistake." British foreign policy had returned to the position it had held from September, in Geneva, until the election in

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid., p. 15.

¹³⁴Ibid.

November.¹³⁵

After Parliament recessed on December 21, it was announced that Anthony Eden would be the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The Times quickly pointed out the reaction of the powers at Geneva, that is, they now believed that Britain really stood for the League and collective security and they were pleased because they knew Eden to be a strong League supporter. Dawson agreed wholeheartedly with the appointment of Eden, who represented the necessary reconstruction in the British Government. Dawson believed Eden would please the British public, would answer the debates in Parliament, and would carry out the true desires of the House.¹³⁶

Baldwin, and no doubt Dawson, believed that Eden's appointment would be "a guarantee to the country that the policy of collective security on which the election had been fought and won was to be adhered to in the future."¹³⁷ To Dawson, British policy had been vindicated. He believed the war would be ended by a fair settlement and the British policy against aggression would prevail.

A strong case can be made to support the contention that Dawson was a non-Fascist, and indeed, philosophically, anti-Fascist, by following the disapproving position The Times took on racial and religious persecution of German nationals by the Hitler government. So strong was this expression of British fair play in Dawson's editorials and in the columns of The Times that the Nazis, on Christmas Eve,

¹³⁵The Times (London), December 21, 1935, p. 10.

¹³⁶The Times (London), December 23, 1935, p. 13.

¹³⁷Churchill, Rise and Fall of Eden, p. 258.

1935, compared "The Times reports on the persecution of the Churches in Germany with a serial thrilled."¹³⁸ Dawson, however, could not be put off with ridicule; his sense of decency and his sincere Christianity recoiled at the news from the German concentration camps, and he became especially vocal in the last half of 1935. He was primarily a moralist and he could forgive the crimes of the Germans, but not their sins. Although he could approve the breaking of the Treaty of Versailles because he believed the original terms to be unfair, he could not overlook flagrant disregard for human life, liberty, and property, justified on the flimsy grounds of racial superiority and forced unanimity, religious and political. With regard to freedom of conscience in the religious and political spheres, Dawson must be considered an anti-Fascist.

Although the attacks on German persecution had no serious consequences, neither The Times nor Dawson realized what the possible results of their anti-Italian stand would be. A major factor which influenced these results was the collapse of the Hoare-Laval proposals, and The Times had led in their destruction. The British Government, inspired by Dawson, saw the advantages of a strong anti-Italian and pro-League stand for the November General Election. After Britain's initial acceptance and subsequent rejection of the December 8 proposals, many countries were unsure about what stand Britain would take next. Advocacy of the League was the cry from The Times, and those persons who read it and believed it must have been shocked by the proposals of December 8. Dawson himself was shocked

¹³⁸The Times (London), December 24, 1935, p. 9.

and angry, and, as a result, he helped to bring about Hoare's downfall. Dawson and The Times told the government that British public opinion backed the League, and they forced the appointment of Eden, a strong League man, as Hoare's replacement. Dawson, by the end of December, was sure that Britain had regained the eminence of her September 11 Geneva position. In Dawson's mind Europe and most League members, at the end of 1935, were still in full support of British leadership in the League of Nations. Dawson, the foreign affairs expert, never once during this time tried to analyze the effects of British leadership on the rest of the world, Europe, or the League at the end of 1935.

Hoare was prepared to sacrifice Abyssinia to preserve the united front at Stresa, but Dawson was not because this would undercut his pro-Germanism. Favoring Germany was paramount in Dawson's mind, and he did not fear Italy.

The French believed that Britain was using the League's machinery against Italy to protect her imperial interest, and to the French Germany was the real danger to Europe. After Britain had signed the naval agreement allowing Germany to rearm, the French had no reason to trust Britain. Consequently, France was prepared to do anything to keep Italy as her ally, especially in view of the strained Anglo-French relations resulting from Britain's breach of the Stresa front.

The effects of British action, and her lead in the call for sanctions, only antagonized Mussolini. Since the sanctions did not cut off his oil supply, he was free to be aggressive. He knew the Stresa front was gone, and he did not care.

To the small nations who were looking for strength and direction, Britain appeared as "a friend not to be relied upon, and a foe not to be feared."¹³⁹

For Germany, 1935 was a very good year. Britain had ignored her breaking the Treaty of Versailles in March, and Germany had obtained a naval agreement in June, which meant military equality and eventual military superiority. Hitler's success was due "less to his own statecraft" than "to the lack of decision and unity among his opponents."¹⁴⁰ Hitler was very happy; France and Italy were divided, Britain had helped to tear down the Stresa front, and Germany and Britain appeared to be very good friends. All of this had changed his misfortune; at Stresa and at the Council of the League, his actions had been condemned, but now the French-Italian-British coalition was falling apart and the barrier against Germany had been lowered.

The biggest loser at the end of 1935 was the League of Nations; the Abyssinian crisis showed how impotent the League was and how its complete failure would be only a matter of time. To Englishmen, it was the beginning of the end of an institution which all British governments had said was a keystone of their foreign policy since 1919.

Not once did Dawson take cognizance of any of the above ramifications in his policy; he believed everything was fine, and that he could take a great deal of credit for Britain's position at the end of 1935.

¹³⁹Cooper, Old Men Forget, p. 193.

¹⁴⁰Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, p. 38.

CHAPTER VIII

DAWSON AND THE RHINELAND CRISIS

Dawson, on the eve of the New Year, 1936, was singularly unaware of the significance of the events of 1935. He remained pro-German and anti-Italian; he believed and publicly stated that, when the government denounced the Hoare-Laval agreement and replaced Hoare with Eden, Britain regained whatever prestige it might have lost since September 11, 1935. This, of course, was a disastrous assumption.

The British Government at the beginning of 1936 shared Dawson's belief in its regained prestige. In all fairness to Baldwin, however, one must mention that his health was failing and he looked forward to early retirement.¹ His colleagues noted "his lack of interest in day to day affairs, his absence from important debates, [and] his impatience with criticism."² Baldwin's friend, Jones, believed that there was nothing organically wrong with him except "he has lost his nerve and every burden became a nightmare."³ His prestige declined, and many of the wrong people, including Dawson, had his ear. This was the situation on the eve of 1936.

The first real crisis for Dawson and The Times in early 1936 was

¹Percy, Some Memories, p. 165.

²Havighurst, Twentieth Century Britain, p. 250.

³Jones, Diary, p. 273.

the German seizure of the Rhineland on March 7, which theoretically meant immediate war under Article 2 of the Locarno Agreement and Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. This news was surprising to The Times readers, but the event did not happen in a vacuum. Dawson, however, evidently failed to see the significance of what had been happening in Germany, even though The Times news columns reported the facts.

During January and February, there was, for all intents and purposes, a lull in the news. The attention of Dawson and The Times was focused primarily on Italy and the League. Dawson, like the government, reiterated the traditional line of support for the League and denunciation of Italian action in Ethiopia.

During the last six months of 1935, Germany was not active in foreign affairs. Mussolini was the center of attention, and Germany was content to watch and see what would happen. However, nothing happened; the handling of the Italo-Ethiopian affair by the League and Britain showed Germany that talk was very plentiful but action was not forthcoming.

The Times, on January 18, noted that Germany was in a "negative phase" in foreign affairs.⁴ This was only partially true because, by early January, Germany began to be active again and her activity would eventually culminate in the German seizure of the Rhineland. Dawson, of course, could not report what he did not recognize.

The Germans were suspicious of the close cooperation between France and Britain. They believed that the terms of the Locarno

⁴The Times (London), January 18, 1936, p. 12.

Treaty were not being maintained, because the guarantor powers were supposed to be impartial, and they believed there were clandestine agreements between France and Britain.⁵ The Times, on January 18, reported that Germany worried France because of her anti-French press. The paper noted that "responsible opinion feels that Germany" was willing "to use anything in the way of an excuse" that would weaken the demilitarized "zone provisions of Locarno."⁶ This was the first suggestion of a possible move on Germany's part in the direction of the Rhineland but Dawson did not comment.

In an article on the same day, The Times noted that the British and French ambassadors had paid a visit to the German foreign office and had told the Germans that British and French conversations dealt not with the Rhineland but with plans for the Mediterranean Sea. The Germans accepted this statement, and as a result the German press ceased its anti-French assault. The Times' article continued that many Germans were not looking wishfully at the Rhineland, but that Hitler would follow his Locarno obligations if the other powers continued to do so.⁷

Goebbels, on the 17th, made a speech entitled "I Prefer to Rely on Guns," in which he emphasized Germany's need for colonies because, as a poor nation, she required raw materials. He stated that Germany was neutral in the Ethiopian crisis "but we understand a nation like Italy must live." In addition, Goebbels declared that Germany had

⁵The Times (London), Januay 11, 1936, p. 11.

⁶The Times (London), January 18, 1936, p. 11.

⁷Ibid., p. 12.

learned from the British-Ethiopian-Italian crisis "that a nation without power is not able to preserve peace even if she is willing to do so, and that we can not rely on the League of Nations."⁸ The real lesson that Germany learned was that Britain had demonstrated her unwillingness to support League commitments with arms. Italy had marched into Ethiopia in spite of Great Britain and the League.

The Times editorial of the 20th showed its concern with Goebbels' speech and attempted to lessen its significance. Dawson noted that this speech "seems deliberately designed to check the growth of any sympathy for Germany in other countries"; Dawson was concerned with its effect in Britain. Dawson said although Goebbels was the German Minister of Propaganda it was "an embarrassment that the outside world never knows whether he [Goebbels] is the authentic voice of the German Government or not."⁹ Somehow, Dawson believed, Goebbels was really not speaking for the government and suggested that Goebbels did not always enjoy Hitler's confidence when, in fact, he was actually the voice of Hitler.

Dawson failed to see the end of the German "negative phase" in foreign affairs. He did not comment on the fact that the German press bombarded the public with the necessity of Germany obtaining colonies.¹⁰ He was not aware of the importance of the speech by Austria's Chancellor Schuschnigg on the 19th, declaring that Nazi

⁸Ibid.

⁹The Times (London), January 20, 1936, p. 13.

¹⁰The Times (London), January 3, 1936, p. 11.

propaganda had infiltrated Austria, and that the Austrians opposed any union between Austria and Germany, and that "they would never become a province of greater Germany, or rather greater Prussia."¹¹ Finally, Dawson made another grave error in judgment on a key issue.

On the 21st, he published the letter which Hugh Lester, High Commissioner of the Free City of Danzig, had sent to the League Council. Lester complained that German National Socialists in that city were ignoring the League's representative and were trying to control the city by unconstitutional means; they attempted to halt freedom of the press, they controlled the Senate, and they dominated the local government, ignoring the opposition. The key figure was Albert Forster, "a German national, and Deputy of the German Reichstag, and district leader for the Nazi party of Danzig." The Nazi party in Danzig, said Lester, was a branch of the German party. The Danzig Nazis took an oath to the German state. Every government member was a member of the Nazi party, and citizens were assaulted for refusing to salute the Nazi flag.¹² Such activity outside the German borders could hardly be construed as innocent. Nor could the German reaction to this article in The Times; the Nazis confiscated all editions of the paper in which it appeared.¹³

Dawson commented on the Danzig issue and said that "once again it seems Nazi extremists [such as Goebbels] by crude methods are repulsing those in other lands" who have been trying to understand

¹¹The Times (London), January 20, 1936, p. 11.

¹²The Times (London), January 21, 1936, p. 11.

¹³The Times (London), January 24, 1936, p. 11.

the post-war German people. These extremists were riding over the minority; they had censored the press, threatened leaders of the opposition, and even denied meeting halls to the opposition. The constitution, said Dawson, could only be changed by law after the Nazi Party had won a two-thirds majority. Until then it was still a League question or consideration. Dawson, however, saw a "hopeful factor," for when Hitler came to power he had agreed to observe the Danzig Constitution. Dawson believed someone failed to communicate to the Danzig Nazis the Fuehrer's respect for constitutionality and Dawson was sure that either Hitler did not know what was happening or, if he did know, he would have disapproved.¹⁴ Dawson saw two types of Nazis, the moderates, represented by Hitler, and the radicals, represented by Goebbels' madness.

Dawson editorialized happily on the Danzig question again on January 25. He said that, as a result of Eden's "tact and perseverance" at Geneva, the Germans in Danzig were going to adhere to the constitution as the Treaty of Versailles planned it. "Nothing went to show that the Danzig Nazis had been encouraged to [ignore] it by Berlin."¹⁵ Obviously, Dawson chose to ignore the High Commissioner's letter which accused the Berlin Nazis of being at the seat of the trouble.

Nazi foreign policy received unexpected help from the collapse of the Laval Government in France on the 22nd. It was replaced on the 24th after a vote of no confidence by delegates who believed

¹⁴Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁵The Times (London), January 25, 1936, p. 11.

Laval was the villain of the Italio-Abyssinian war in which they thought he had given Italy a free hand in Abyssinia.¹⁶ The new Prime Minister was Sarrout, and the new Foreign Minister was Flandin.

On the last day of the month, The Times reported that Hitler spoke on the third anniversary of his taking office; he claimed that Germans wanted and sought peace "because they loved peace," but not a peace without honor. "The world must realize that Germany would be peace loving as only one people could be if her honor was not touched." Hitler said Germany hoped for general understanding for the rights of all peoples in the world to be recognized; this would be a prime condition for world peace. He noted that the Germans could be proud of their world position as they had had "their honor restored before the world."¹⁷ This had come about in the three years since he had been in power. What Hitler meant by honor became clearer in later weeks when he entered the Rhineland, long considered essential to the rights of Germans and their honor.

In February, Germany's interest in the Rhineland became more pronounced, and The Times noted on February 1 that the price of a settlement between Germany and the Western powers might be the Rhineland. "Germany might take matters into her own hands" if the Locarno Pact were disturbed.¹⁸ When the Franco-Russian alliance was due for discussion in the French Chamber and Senate on the 11th, The Times pointed out that most Frenchmen favored final ratification as a

¹⁶The Times (London), January 23, 1936, p. 9.

¹⁷The Times (London), January 31, 1936, p. 14.

¹⁸The Times (London), February 1, 1936, p. 12.

lever against Germany. When the agreement had been signed in May, 1935, The Times accused it of being couched in the words of the League of Nations. Dawson, however, commented on the 11th that it was designed to "fit the Covenant of the League." The Germans, said Dawson, had criticized this alliance but Germany herself was "chiefly responsible for whatever modicum of truth the charge contains." Germany, according to Dawson, was the cause of the alliance because France and Russia were frightened of German activity in 1935. The treaty was open to other nations if they wished to join. Dawson found French and Russian "desire to protect themselves against a country which is openly reverting to power policy [to] be readily understood." It did not conflict with the Treaty of Locarno and it did not undercut the League.¹⁹ The editorial position of The Times had shifted full circle in one year but Dawson, however, would reverse himself again within a month.

The Germans, of course, were not pleased with the possibility of the Franco-Russian treaty being ratified. German comment rose to a "crescendo of bitterness" in the German press, and Great Britain appeared to be "the villain of the piece." Germany believed that if this pact were ratified "Great Britain was in a large degree responsible," and that the "Western Powers preferred to believe in Russia rather than in Germany." The Russians, said Germany, only wanted to use it to further their own revolutionary goals, and, thus, the pact would not help to unite Europe. They also said conversations among Britain, France, and Germany would be more difficult. The Germans

¹⁹The Times (London), February 11, 1936, p. 15.

accused this pact of being diametrically opposed to the "spirit of Locarno."²⁰

The Times, which took an identical stand a year earlier, now pointed out that the Germans had no basis for the charge, and it appeared that Britain stood prepared to approve the pact.

Eden, in the House of Commons on the 24th, while defending the government's Ethiopian policy, made a statement that appeared to comfort the Germans. The British Government, said Eden, wanted to distinguish between collective security (which was defensive) and encirclement (which was aggressive) and the government would "have neither lot nor part of encirclement." The hope of Britain was that there would be worldwide collective security, "the authority of which is unchallenged and unchallengeable." Britain had the power and was ready to help fully in the development of the League, and she must play her role and would work at "Geneva in an attempt to build up a new world order."²¹

Dawson recorded, in his editorial of Eden's speech, that Eden gave "a statement of policy drafted to embrace and express the opinions of the cabinet as a whole." The editor continued that there would be "no future for the League merely as an armed protector of the status quo," for Britain wanted the League to be all-inclusive and opposed "any conversion of security into encirclement."²²

The Germans reacted to both Eden's speech and Dawson's editorial.

²⁰The Times (London), February 12, 1936, p. 14.

²¹The Times (London), February 25, 1936, p. 8.

²²Ibid., p. 14.

Officially and unofficially they were pleased with the sharp distinction drawn between encirclement and security, and they were especially pleased with the insistence "of The Times that the League will have no future if it acts merely as a protector of the status quo."²³

While Germany approved of Britain's League position as stated by Eden and Dawson, the Germans and the French disagreed on the proposed French-Russian treaty. On the 22nd The Times reported that the Germans were most interested in the French Chamber's debate on the Franco-Russian alliance; the German hostility was "compounded of indignation, fear, and genuine regret." France, by linking herself to Eastern Europe and a Communist state, was "making an understanding in Western Europe more difficult." The Germans despised the Communists so much that the suggestion of their joining this pact was "dismissed as ridiculous." Russia was the enemy, and Stalin and the International were trying to dominate the world, said the Germans. Germany believed that if this pact were ratified, it would be anti-Locarno, if not in word, at least in spirit.²⁴

M. Herriot in the French Chamber said that the German Government acknowledged in a memorandum on May 23, 1935, that Locarno was not affected by the French-Russian pact. France had sent a copy to all interested Locarno powers. The French believed that Germany was trying to weaken Locarno, and "the German Government may therefore rest assured of a grim interest in any further developments" in Europe. The French counted on Britain to follow Locarno, and consequently

²³The Times (London), February 26, 1936, p. 12.

²⁴The Times (London), February 22, 1936, p. 11.

frighten the Germans into keeping this agreement; the German attitude toward the Franco-Russian pact was wrong, but the Germans needed an excuse to remove the barrier to the Rhineland. The French acknowledged that Stalin was a Communist, but France believed "she could look after herself in this respect." On what, asked the French, did "Nazi Germany base its sense of superiority of Soviet Russia?" The only reason Germany was annoyed, said the French, was that she could not get an agreement with Russia herself. Hitler, said the French, accepted Locarno when he came to power, and if Germany had any interest in collective security she would not be anxious for Eastern Europe and would remain within her bounds.²⁵ Dawson did not comment on this German-French disagreement.

As the Germans and the French disagreed, the Germans and the Italians appeared to be drawing closer. The German Ambassador to Rome, having just arrived from Berlin, visited Mussolini on February 24. The Times noted that many people assumed the Ambassador told Mussolini what effect the ratification of the French-Russian pact would have on the Treaty of Locarno and that Mussolini told him that Italy would not join Britain and France as long as sanctions were in effect against Italy, if Germany "were to violate her undertakings in the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland."²⁶

France reacted to this report by offering to send the proposed pact to the International Court at the Hague to see if it was incompatible with Locarno. Flandin declared that Russia was a League

²⁵The Times (London), February 24, 1936, p. 13.

²⁶The Times (London), February 25, 1936, p. 13.

member and she supported that body and had signed non-aggression pacts. Germany, on the other hand, he said, was completely opposite and would not try to work for collective peace.²⁷ No answer came from Berlin to this offer, and again Dawson said nothing on the issue.

The Times released the news that the French Ambassador to Rome had asked Mussolini for clarification on the recent German-Italian talks because it appeared to be a German-Italian rapprochement. Mussolini told him the air had been cleared between the two countries but nothing had been settled. He warned that, if France agreed to support more sanctions against Italy, this would change the Franco-Italian agreement of January, 1935, and there would "be a new balance of power in Europe."²⁸

On the same day The Times printed an article called "Doubts in Berlin"; it referred to the German-Italian talks as only an exchange of views on the Franco-Soviet pact. Many German officials believed that Italy was placing more importance on the conversations than they deserved because Italy wanted Germany to try to "relieve sanction pressure" from Italy.²⁹

The Germans were aware that Mussolini had declared that the Franco-Russian pact did not infringe upon Locarno, and as a result they questioned the military and political value of Italy. What could they do to help each other? The Germans believed that Italy would forget her obligations to Austria if Germany moved into the

²⁷The Times (London), February 26, 1936, p. 12.

²⁸The Times (London), February 28, 1936, p. 15.

²⁹Ibid.

Rhineland. This, in turn, they believed, would divert British-French attention from the Ethiopian crisis and relieve the pressure of sanctions. The author of this article, however, stated that Germany would not want to "estrangle Britain and France" by moving into the Rhineland. He continued that, if Germany's policy of cooperation with the West failed, the Germans believe an alliance with Italy "might be better than nothing" because Italy could be used as a lever to either kill the Franco-Russian pact or to change Locarno. The article concluded with the belief that these talks would amount to nothing.³⁰ If this anonymous author was not Dawson, the author surely published the article with his editor's approval.

The Franco-Soviet pact was passed in the French Chamber of Deputies by a huge majority. Germany violently protested, and the German press accused the "youthful Mr. Eden" of having had his hand in this agreement. The Germans declared that Britain's desire for the "security for her Empire is held to be responsible for the policy which is encircling Germany." By the end of February, both Germany and Italy shared this view while the Russians, on the other hand, were extremely pleased. They said that the pact promoted peace and was not "against a peaceful Germany."³¹

Not once during the last week in February did Dawson comment editorially on the Franco-Russian pact. Why? Possibly he and the British Government, disapproving of the final ratification but fearful of alienating France, preferred silence to hypocrisy. Nor had Dawson

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

at any time suggested what Britain might do if Germany marched into the Rhineland.

During March, 1936, events started innocently. The League Council planned to meet March 2 in Geneva to consider the possibility of applying oil sanctions against Italy, but this meeting was postponed until the 13th because the French urged that one more effort be made to solve the dispute between Ethiopia and Italy.

The Times noted that the League Council would attempt to make one more effort to halt the Abyssinian dispute at the next meeting. France, said The Times, would have no choice but to support an oil embargo if Mussolini ignored this final attempt to obtain peace. The French, however, knew what Mussolini might do in such an event, that is, Mussolini could leave the League of Nations, ignore the Treaty of Locarno, or denounce the French-Italian military agreement, and reman their common frontier. The conjecture was that the French Minister probably asked Eden if Britain would support France if she were attacked by Germany; the problem "which overshadows everything else is Germany."³²

Previously, on the 3rd the French Premier, Mr. Sarraut, had placed the Franco-Russian pact before the Senate for approval. There were, however, Frenchmen who believed that this action might be a "pretext for hostility in Germany."³³ France knew that with her Italian alliance she did not have to worry about remanning their common frontier, and could concentrate on Germany. There is no evidence

³²The Times (London), March 5, 1936, p. 14.

³³The Times (London), March 4, 1936, p. 13.

to report what Eden told France, except perhaps that they should wait and see. Dawson did not comment on the French dilemma or her fears.

The Times stated in the edition of the 7th that Hitler would give a foreign policy address before the Reichstag; they predicted its content. Hitler was expected to specify what Germany would do in the event that the Franco-Soviet pact were signed, that is, he was expected to ignore the Locarno obligation, including the Rhineland demilitarization.³⁴ This article was based on the assumption the pact, which had not yet been signed, would be signed.

On Saturday, March 7, Hitler told the Reichstag not what he would, but rather what he had already done, and The Times had to wait forty-eight hours until Monday, March 9, to report this news. Hitler had moved troops into the Rhineland and the Reichstag was told that "Germany was no longer bound by the extinct Treaty of Locarno," which had been nullified by the Franco-Russian pact. Hitler also broke the Treaty of Versailles. In place of the two treaties he offered a "new agreement for European security." Hitler suggested Germany, France, Belgium, and perhaps Holland conclude a non-aggression pact for twenty-five years, guaranteeing the inviolability and integrity of Western frontiers, with Britain and Italy as guarantors; Germany was also prepared to enter non-aggression pacts with her Eastern neighbors. Finally, Hitler suggested that Germany was ready to re-enter the League of Nations.³⁵

Eden had been told about Hitler's declaration by the German

³⁴The Times (London), March 7, 1936, p. 12.

³⁵The Times (London), March 9, 1936, p. 14.

Ambassador Von Hoesch at about the same time that Hitler reported to the Reichstag. The German Ambassador told Eden that the Franco-Soviet pact had cancelled Germany's obligation to Locarno, and Germany was free to act in her own interests. Eden replied that Britain would "take a most serious view of the German Government's violation of solemn pledges." The Times reported that Eden had conferred with the Locarno powers, Foreign Office officials, and with Baldwin. They deplored and condemned this action of Germany and Hitler's renunciation of Locarno; they believed that the Germans could have followed the provisions of that treaty to change what she did not like. The Times suggested, however, that high British officials, although condemning Germany's breaking of the treaty, thought that Hitler's speech had merit. Baldwin told Eden that Britain would not back up any French military action.³⁶

The Times Berlin correspondent, who was present in the Reichstag, noted that on the 7th, when Hitler spoke before that body in the "presence of Ministers whose earnest faces betrayed their natural anxiety about the outcome of what is legally an act of aggression, Herr Hitler looked pale and drawn."³⁷ This correspondent suggested that Hitler's action was a bluff.

The Times could not report this event until the 9th, which gave Dawson two days to formulate his own thoughts, which turned out to be strikingly pro-German. Dawson recorded in his diary that there was a "great hubbub in Europe, and the French were growing more and more

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

excited."³⁸ The Times correspondents in France and Germany, according to Dawson, were inclined to be unduly excited. He noted that he spoke with Eden at the Foreign Office, and had found Baldwin in good health and "determined to bring good out of evil."³⁹

The "Cliveden set" gathered at Lord Lothian's home, Blickling, in Norfolk on the 8th. Lothian, Dawson's foreign affairs expert on Germany, believed that Germany was justified in seizing the Rhineland; he felt that the Franco-Russian pact, "morally if not legally," was inconsistent with the Covenant of the League of Nations.⁴⁰ He believed that nobody should turn Hitler out of his "own backyard."⁴¹ Lothian said, if Hitler would agree to a limitation of military and air armaments with some type of inspection, and would also return to the League of Nations with its obligations, the situation would be highly satisfactory. Lothian opposed Britain's possible involvement in war to keep the status quo in the Continent.⁴² Lothian sent Hitler a cable of congratulations.

Thomas Jones, present at the meeting, recorded that the "set" phoned Baldwin and told him to accept Hitler's peace proposals. They said Germany was wrong, indeed, but the proposals should be considered a gain, and they would curry public favor. Jones continued that Baldwin must try to convince France of Germany's sincerity because

³⁸Wrench, Dawson, p. 331.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 212.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 213.

⁴²Ibid.

Hitler would be needed to halt the spread of Russian Bolshevism.⁴³

Baldwin was informed that he should accept Hitler at face value before he entered a cabinet meeting where he would encounter differences of opinion. Jones noted that the consensus of the "set's" opinion was that Versailles was dead and should be buried.⁴⁴

Another member of the set, although not present at Lothian's home, was Lord Londonderry. He also agreed with Hitler that the Franco-Soviet pact was the immediate cause of the Rhineland action, and he believed this troublesome pact "was obviously directed against Germany and in violation of Locarno," and to its effective destruction.⁴⁵ He thought Germany had the right to defend herself and her frontiers, and in so doing she decided to assume the sovereignty of the Rhineland.⁴⁶

Baldwin seemed to agree with the position of Lothian and Londonderry. He even echoed Lothian's diction: "why shouldn't a man walk into his own backyard?"⁴⁷ Baldwin believed that France must realize that a "Germany crushed by France and Russia would be a Communist Germany."⁴⁸ In late February Baldwin was already a sick man; his friend Jones noted that Baldwin had no longer a "sense of

⁴³Jones, Diary, p. 180

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 181.

⁴⁵Londonderry, Ourselves, p. 115.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 116.

⁴⁷Young, Baldwin, p. 223.

⁴⁸Ibid.

time of instinct for swift and decisive action."⁴⁹ He was morose and downhearted and his popularity had ebbed to its lowest point, as had his Parliamentary skill.⁵⁰ Churchill in March, 1936, declared that Chamberlain "was certain to succeed Baldwin in the immediate future."⁵¹

The Times, led by Dawson, reiterated the theme that Hitler was correct in denouncing Locarno and Versailles. Dawson's editorial of the 9th was titled "A Chance to Rebuild"; he defended the German action by saying that the Treaty of Locarno never allowed France and Germany to discuss their differences. He declared that the treaty failed to help the Germans because it appeared to embody those clauses from the Treaty of Versailles that seemed to guarantee, in German eyes, "inequalities in which the Nazi movement of resurgence and revolt had its birth." Dawson also said people in Britain had recognized "that the discriminatory demilitarization in the Rhineland was not destined to endure forever." Hitler ended this, Dawson continued, by an act that was not aimed so much at Locarno "as at the particular servitude which it borrowed from the Versailles Treaty." Dawson recognized, however, that the Locarno Treaty had been broken, and he noticed that "the most sensational minded" had stated it to be "an act of aggression." He said a distinction had to be made "between the march of detachments of German troops sent to reoccupy territory indisputably under German sovereignty and an act which carries fire

⁴⁹Jones, Diary, p. 177.

⁵⁰Young, Baldwin, p. 226.

⁵¹Churchill, Storm, p. 179.

and sword into a neighbour's territory."⁵²

Dawson, Lothian, Londonderry, and Baldwin all believed that Britain must remain calm in scrutinizing German policy, as Germany's action was caused by the Franco-Soviet pact. They felt the pact was born out of fear of Germany while Germany's action in taking the Rhineland was out of fear of encirclement, and Germany recognized a demilitarized Rhineland as an example of national shame. They believed her method of regaining her honor, albeit technically illegal, was justified, and they felt, if Germany signed non-aggression pacts with her Eastern neighbors and entered the League and conformed to its commitments, her impetuous nationalism in the Rhineland affair could be overlooked.

Hitler's offer was made subject to "no condition that can be ruled out as arbitrary or inadmissible." Dawson was sure that British opinion would be unanimous in seizing this opportunity to accept Hitler's proposals for "broadening and strengthening the collective system which opens with this German offer." "It is a moment not to despair, but to rebuild."⁵³ This editorial only reiterated what the "Cliveden set" and Dawson believed.

The French appealed to the League Council, the Little Entente, and, of course, to Britain; however, if the French read the March 9 editorial they would have realized that Britain would not assist them.

The reaction of the major powers on the Continent was noted by The Times on the 10th. The Russians believed that this was part of

⁵²The Times (London), March 9, 1936, p. 15.

⁵³Ibid.

Germany's "aggressive plans against the U.S.S.R." and that Germany was only trying to "hoodwink" the interested powers by her proposals. Poland did not care for Germany's action.⁵⁴ There was no comment from Italy.

Eden spoke before the House of Commons on the 9th denouncing Germany's seizure of the Rhineland, and he stated that the government and the British people abhorred this action. Eden said that a main foundation of peace had been destroyed but there was "a manifest duty to rebuild." Eden also said the German proposals would be studied to see if they "contained any possible chance of rebuilding the shaken peace structure," but he saw no reason to suppose that hostilities would ensue, declaring that, however, if Germany attacked France or Belgium, Britain would honor her commitments. Baldwin also addressed the House and declared that British foreign policy was still based on the collective system; he said Britain's role would be to bring Germany, France, and Britain into some type of tripartite agreement.⁵⁵ Eden and Baldwin were in complete agreement with Dawson on the matter that there was no reason for fear. Hitler must have been delighted to hear Eden's and Baldwin's speeches, and of course to see Dawson's printed word.

The Times, the next day, commented in an article from Germany that the German officials were scanning the foreign press to see the reaction to her denouncement of Locarno. The article continued that the Germans were pleased with Eden's suggestion that the proposals

⁵⁴The Times (London), March 10, 1936, p. 15.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 8.

should be studied and said the Germans believed that her willingness to return to the League would help bring about peace. The article stated that the Germans believed that "war or sanction could be safely ruled out on the ground British public opinion would revolt at the idea of drastic action against Germany for sending troops into her own territory." Hitler and the Germans probably based this conjecture on The Times editorial of the 9th.⁵⁶

Dawson's editorial of the same day strongly defended Eden's position in the House and of Germany's action in the Rhineland. The editor argued there was no threat of hostilities and that Britain would aid France and Belgium if attacked. He hoped to calm the excitable and allow "a dispassionate examination of the new situation." Dawson said it was not enough to deplore Germany's action, but Britain must also rebuild the edifice for peace. He said the proposals of Hitler must be examined to see what they can do to strengthen peace, and the "government will have the full support of public opinion." Dawson believed Britain's role was to bring France and Germany together to calm French worries over security and German worries of encirclement.⁵⁷

Dawson neither suggested a concrete reason for Britain to trust Germany, nor why France should not fear Germany. Dawson believed Germany's seizure of her own land had been approved. Treaty obligations, honor, and integrity were important factors for countries in their diplomacy, but these factors, however, were ignored by Dawson

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 16.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 17.

and the British Government.*

The French continued their protests against Germany, and stated that they would confer with Germany when they were assured that international law would be respected. The German Minister of Propaganda, Goebbels, spoke on the radio on the 10th and in effect replied to the French. He said Germany was only "restoring Germany's defense, freedom, honor, and her sovereignty over her own territory." He also said Hitler's foreign policy was supported by the German people and was not a threat to France. Goebbels declared that these were the "first steps towards the establishment of a new order in Europe," and France should recognize that Germany could be trusted. To Goebbels, "French policy today was in a blind alley." Goebbels believed Germany's seizure of the Rhineland was "a valuable contribution to peace," and Hitler's offers were the solutions to world peace.⁵⁸

There were men in other countries who doubted Germany's honesty; Goebbels was received skeptically in Czechoslovakia, Austria, Belgium, Poland, and Russia. Italy did not comment. Britain, which was represented by the most important British newspaper, however, expressed trust and confidence.

In the meantime France had called for the Locarno powers to meet in Paris on the 10th, but after the first meeting they all agreed to meet in London on the 12th, where they believed the atmosphere would be calmer. The Council meeting of the 13th was also moved to London

*The Times, on the 11th, noted that the Germans believed that Britain desired to show a "willingness to understand" Germany, and that they were highly pleased with The Times editorials of the 9th and 10th.

⁵⁸The Times (London), March 11, 1936, p. 15.

from Geneva.

Dawson was pleased that the Locarno powers and the League Council meetings were to be held in London, for he believed it would be easier for the Germans to send a representative to London to discuss Germany's position. Dawson was also pleased that Baldwin would be able "to participate in them or at any rate be available for consultation."⁵⁹ The ailing Baldwin--Dawson felt--would be an asset for Britain, if he, Dawson, were able to guide his actions.

Dawson continued to promote the German position because, to him, it was not the legality of Germany's action that was in dispute, but rather what could be done to repair the damage to that treaty and at the same time further peace. He believed Germany's proposals were not unreasonable and, if she were really sincere in her desire for peace, then what statesman "in such circumstances [would follow the] wholly negative process of law." Dawson could not understand who would propose war, justifiable war, when peace was so obtainable? Dawson measured the German use of force against the German proposals of peace and found that together they "demand question rather than counterblow."⁶⁰

The Locarno powers held their meeting and they all agreed that Germany had violated the Locarno Treaty and Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. France declared that she was not prepared to talk with Germany until the Rhineland situation was clarified.

That same night French Foreign Minister Flandin spoke with

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁰The Times (London), March 12, 1936, p. 15.

Chamberlain, who was then "the most effective member of the government."⁶¹ Chamberlain told Flandin that, if giving Hitler a colony would maintain peace, then he would consider it. Flandin also spoke with Baldwin, telling him that France wanted moral support rather than material help, and that France wanted to have a free hand. Baldwin replied that, although France might be right in her desired action, if there were "one chance in a hundred" that this could cause a war, Baldwin would not back her.⁶² Within a week after Hitler's seizure of the Rhineland, England broke her pledge of Locarno.

During the Locarno talks Eden suggested that Germany might agree not to reinforce her troops already in the Rhineland during the negotiations. The Germans answered no, which did not surprise the French. France now took the position that she would not talk until the German troops were removed from the Rhineland. The Times noted that France's allies supported her position, but France was still looking to Britain for political support. The Germans grew alarmed at this French position, but Hitler was sure of English approval.⁶³ From the position assumed by The Times, the Germans would seem justified in their conclusion.

While the Locarno powers were gathered, the League's Council met on the 14th and asked Germany to send a representative. The Germans agreed, provided Germany would be equal with other representatives at the meetings and the agenda would include a discussion of the German

⁶¹Churchill, Storm, p. 176.

⁶²Ibid., p. 177.

⁶³The Times (London), March 14, 1936, p. 12.

proposals to keep permanent control of the Rhineland. France violently opposed the second condition because she wanted to talk only about the violation of Locarno.⁶⁴

The Times supported Germany's presence at the conference as an aid to achieve peace, which, after all, it believed, was the League's business. The Times said the League could condemn German action, but to ignore Hitler's proposals would be unreasonable and unthinkable. Dawson continued that, if peace could be achieved, the mechanics of how it was achieved would not be important. "In the course of a year or two, the man-in-the-street would remember nothing of the moves or countermoves, the considerations of honor and prestige, and formal tests of good faith, out of which negotiation eventually emerged."⁶⁵

The Times reported that Ribbentrop would represent Germany at the Council sessions, for the Germans believed that their conditions had been met; The Times no doubt reinforced German opinion. Dawson was very pleased that Germany had decided to come to the sessions because he felt now there was "hope of a rational end" to the problem. By "all the evidence the belief is now widely and firmly held in this country that a breach of law must be measured by its occasions, by its intentions and by its consequences, and that it is of no service to peace to insist that the breach is infinitely graver than any reasonable interpretation will make it."⁶⁶

Dawson continued that, when Britain signed the Locarno agreement,

⁶⁴The Times (London), March 16, 1936, p. 12.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁶The Times (London), March 18, 1936, p. 15.

it was designed to keep the peace between Germany and France; it was not made with the idea of creating a crisis. "British opinion," said Dawson, did not justify Germany's action, but neither did it accept the position that "Germany's treaty partners have contributed nothing to the infringement of Locarno." The record of the Locarno powers on disarmament would not stand up to impartial scrutiny. "The task of the Powers is to secure from Germany obligations more reasonable and more valid in themselves and therefore more binding, than those which she has infringed." Dawson believed it was Britain's task to promote security; the "basis of security is consent and the way to consent is by negotiation."⁶⁷

Dawson ignored the letter of the treaty, or the manner in which that treaty was broken. How did one interpret the intentions or consequences? He never stated how the other signatories of the Treaty of Locarno had infringed on that treaty. Dawson believed Britain wanted security and consent based on negotiations that would provide that security, but was he willing to have peace at any price? Dawson set no limit on these possibilities.

Eden addressed the Council on the 18th and argued that it should declare that Germany had violated the treaty and inform the Locarno powers of this declaration. He again commented that confidence in peace had been shaken, but that the present problem was how to rebuild this confidence, provide for the sanctity of agreements, and secure the rule of law in international affairs. However, he continued, this German breach of treaties did not threaten hostilities. He said the

⁶⁷Ibid.

Council should try to prepare some way for peace and honor to be restored in international law. The French representative, Paul Boncour, noted that Britain appeared to be acting as a mediator and not as the guarantor of the treaty.⁶⁸

Dawson commented on this Council session, expressing his pleasure with Eden's reassurance that there was no immediate threat of hostilities. Dawson also defended Germany noting that Ribbentrop would present Germany's case and there were great possibilities for a settlement of the issue. Although Dawson agreed that Germany had broken the treaty, he said "it has not been broken without provocation, whether in the realm of fact or of sentiment." He continued, the Germans knew they had broken it and had offered to replace "the shattered obligation immediately with others that reach farther and [are] more difficult to escape." France, however, said Dawson, wanted satisfaction regardless of the justification, even though it was certain to result in "German humiliation." Dawson said there was no doubt that, if Germany agreed to go to the Hague Court, Germany would be found guilty. But, said Dawson, the Hague Court could not answer the key question--"is there a historical fear of encirclement in Germany and was the Pact [French-Russian] calculated to increase it?" This was a question of "psychology, now law." Regardless, Dawson said, the whole question must be settled, for it cannot "bar the work of peace making which is the hope of every intelligent man and woman in Europe."⁶⁹

⁶⁸The Times (London), March 19, 1936, p. 16.

⁶⁹Ibid.

Ribbentrop presented the German case before the Council. He said that Locarno had burdened Germany and that it had kept the Rhineland demilitarized "as dictated in the Treaty of Versailles." He said Germany complied because she hoped that others "would fulfill lighter obligations." However, continued Ribbentrop, the French-Russian pact was directed against Germany; Germany had no military alliances, and, as far as Germany was concerned, the pact terminated the Locarno agreement. The problem created by Germany's action was not a legal one, but a political, military, and psychological problem, Germany was sovereign, said Ribbentrop, and now the German people wanted to "close the sad chapter of moral and legal confusions and misunderstandings in Europe," as she had been the main victim of this period. He continued that "peace and friendship with neighbors" was Germany's policy, and she wanted to end the tension between France and Germany.⁷⁰ The arguments used by Ribbentrop might have been taken from Dawson's editorials.

That same afternoon the Council met and condemned Germany's March 7 action. The Council agreed that Germany had violated the Treaty of Versailles and the Locarno Treaty and sent this news to the Locarno powers. These powers decided that the Hague Court should decide if the French-Soviet pact was anti-Locarno and that Germany should accept the Court's decision. They also decided that a neutral force should police the demilitarized zone while peace talks were being held and new measures for security were being discussed. They said, if Germany were prepared to do this, there would be more talks.

⁷⁰The Times (London), March 20, 1936, p. 14.

Dawson commented that the discussion should not end until a stable agreement was reached. He said Ribbentrop's "contentions . . . were not a challenge to law," but Locarno was modified to Germany's disadvantage, especially with the pact. Dawson noted the political and psychological factors underlying the legal argument of the agreement, and Dawson agreed with Ribbentrop that it was time to clarify the moral and legal confusion. The offer of Germany, said Dawson, toned down the German action and "promises a new foundation for the law of Europe and its observants." Dawson commented on the Locarno powers' proposals to which Germany had to agree as a basis for discussion. He believed the Hague Court should cause no problem, and thus no delay, and he believed the others could be handled with dispatch.⁷¹ Dawson again campaigned for Germany.

On the night of the 20th, after dinner with Eden, Dawson spoke with Ribbentrop for an hour. Dawson recorded in his diary that Ribbentrop was upset and presented a very good case for Hitler's action. Dawson comforted Ribbentrop and told him to pursue the negotiations.⁷²

The Times reported that France expected Eden to encourage Germany to accept these proposals. The French Chamber was told by Flandin that the proposals were a British-French compromise. France accepted them, said Flandin, because of the "assurance of immediate support from Great Britain in case of aggression."⁷³ The French deputies

⁷¹Ibid., p. 15.

⁷²Wrench, Dawson, p. 332.

⁷³The Times (London), March 21, 1936, p. 12.

were heartened when they heard this. Britain, on the other hand, hoped the Germans would say what they would accept if the offer did not please them.⁷⁴

On the 20th, Eden spoke before the House of Commons and told how he had requested the Locarno powers and League Council to come to Britain. The Council, continued Eden, would only have to vote yes or no on Germany's breaking of the Treaty of Versailles and the Treaty of Locarno. For the Locarno powers the task would be more difficult as Germany had a fait accompli, which would make negotiations harder. He said the Locarno proposals offered Germany were reasonable and that Germany should accept them. The British Government had two objectives: the first was to "restore confidence in international law," rudely shaken by Germany's action; and the second was to "seize every chance to rebuild peace on securer foundations."⁷⁵

Dawson stressed editorially on the 21st that Germany was only offered proposals "and not the last stage of an agreement," and thus "further discussion is inevitable." He pointed out that if Germany did not like the offer she should not, however, say no finally, for it would be a discredit to her country. He suggested that, instead, she should "offer her own alternatives."⁷⁶ Dawson was prepared to bargain even though he knew the French government was not.

Although the official German reply was very slow, The Times reported that the German press was not pleased with the proposals.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 13.

It questioned Italy's role in a system of guarantees when she herself had ignored the Treaty of Versailles. The German press claimed that the proposals were a disguise for something to replace the Treaty of Versailles.⁷⁷ The press promised little or no hope for Germany's acceptance of the proposals; only Dawson was hopeful.

To Dawson the angry comments from the German press were deceiving, for he believed both sides wanted an agreement. He knew France at first wanted to retaliate with violence, but she was dissuaded from this by her friends, and now was prepared to negotiate, setting an example of moderation. "It is too much to hope, no doubt that the [first] German reply should be a simple acceptance" of the proposals. Dawson said the Locarno proposals "were not an ultimatum," and were open to discussion and amendment. He noted that some of the proposals "are disliked in this country little less than they are in Germans," but the French expected some guarantee of German good faith after March 7. Dawson concluded that Englishmen needed to be patient and to do or say nothing that would add to the difficulties in reaching an agreement.⁷⁸

The German answer still had not come by the 23rd, but Goebbels spoke before a large audience in Frankfurt, suggesting what the answer might be. "People abroad were under an illusion if they believed the Fuehrer would give way on any of his main points." The international zone, continued Goebbels, sounded like 1919, and not 1936; Germany wanted an "honest peace," not "a Diktat." "German

⁷⁷The Times (London), March 23, 1936, p. 12.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 13.

troops were now in the Rhineland. They would remain there and not a single one of them would be withdrawn." Goebbels continued that "the nations would have to negotiate with Germany on her peace proposals during the next few months whether they wished to or not."⁷⁹ Although Goebbels invited other nations to negotiate, he gave every indication that the German position was not open to change.

In The Times it was pointed out that the Germans did not like the proposals, but did not want to reject them outright. The Germans believed that British opinion supported Germany and that a flat rejection might mean that the four Locarno powers might join a military alliance. The Germans, however, rejected the international zone, and Hitler's diplomatic methods had convinced the ordinary German that he was right.⁸⁰

The French were alarmed by the idea of Germany making counter proposals; the French interpretation of the Locarno proposals was "that they must be taken as a whole, and the British view that they can be modified to suit German exigencies has caused bitter disappointment and some indignation." Britain, said the French, should support the proposals, and the international zone was part of them. The French feared that Hitler would impose his will on Europe if no line were drawn, and France believed that Britain should stand by her pledges.⁸¹

Lord Lothian, on the same day, demanded in the House of Lords

⁷⁹The Times (London), March 24, 1936, p. 15.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 16.

⁸¹The Times (London), March 25, 1936, p. 12.

that Britain deny that she had promised any military alliance with France and declared that the French interpretation was wrong. He noted that the breakdown of the Locarno policy was "inherently inevitable." The only stumbling block he saw to friendship with "the great German people" was the policy of the German Government in insisting on persecuting Christians, Jews, and others. On the other hand, he believed France, Russia, Belgium, and Czechoslovakia were all allied while "Germany . . . was immeasurably weaker than before the war."⁸² Lothian, like Dawson, was not interested or aware of this position in its relationship to French national interest.

French pessimism grew, and they doubted if anything constructive would be found, believing that the Germans were more "clever than candid." Germany lied, said the French, when she said she only took the Rhineland to be equal because France had always been prepared to discuss their differences and it was not necessary for Germany to act so. The French were concerned about the strength of Britain's pledge of support. If England failed them, France was prepared to settle with Germany "without taking England into account." In many quarters the French believed that, if Germany broke another agreement, France would ignore the League, "seek safety in [her] alliance system," and then, backed by force, talk to Germany.⁸³ France was showing the strain which Britain had placed on her. There was no editorial comment from The Times.

Eden went before the House of Commons on the 26th and discussed

⁸²Ibid., p. 7.

⁸³The Times (London), March 26, 1936, p. 14.

diplomacy; he said that Locarno was not a Diktat peace treaty, and agreed that Germany could have arbitrated the French-Russian pact. Eden deplored the use of force regardless of the reason but he said Britain had commitments as guarantor of Locarno, and he would not go back on Britain's pledge. He said the proposals were not excessive and were consistent with the treaty. He believed that Germany should make counter offers, so at least there would be a basis from which to work, which of course was completely opposite to French belief. He defended Locarno as a defensive agreement, which the League had approved, and said Britain would not get involved in aggressive agreements. He stated that Britain's policy was the League, and was not pro-German or pro-French. Eden declared that Britain only wanted peace, and peace would require unity on the part of all powers concerned.⁸⁴

Dawson agreed with everything Eden said.⁸⁵ The French were impressed by Eden's speech because they were sure that Germany would not present any gesture of peace and that, after the French election in May, a confident French government would be prepared to talk business to Germany.⁸⁶

The Germans responded differently to Eden's speech. Göring declared that Germany would not leave the Rhineland and asked, "Does Mr. Eden think we are the same sort of cowards as our predecessors whom we drove out of office?" If so, he "is certainly mistaken."

⁸⁴The Times (London), March 27, 1936, p. 7.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 15.

⁸⁶The Times (London), March 28, 1936, p. 12.

Göring continued that "peace can be maintained only if one carries a sword at one's side."⁸⁷

On April 1, Ribbentrop listed the long-awaited German counter proposals. They were: (1) Germany would not go to the Hague, (2) would not attack Belgium or France, (3) wanted a four months standstill along her Western Frontier, to be guaranteed by Britain and Italy, (4) wanted to conclude the security pacts that Hitler spoke of, and (5) wanted to discuss and negotiate disarmament. Eden received these proposals and sent copies to the other Locarno powers. The cabinet met and discussed them and noted that they were "conciliatory in tone" but did not suggest any gesture of good will. The Times noted that the cabinet felt there were still questions to be settled. The paper said the cabinet was convinced these German proposals were directed "more towards public opinion in this country than in France or Belgium."⁸⁸

Dawson believed that Hitler really desired peace and the proposals only reinforced his conviction. "Never before has Europe been offered a chance on this scale of agreeing to forestall and avert the next war." Dawson stated that Hitler would help peace, but Germany must not be discriminated against. Dawson believed that "no serious Frenchmen" could think Germany would attack France in the next few months and "practically all Englishmen accept Herr Hitler's assurance" that Germany would not attack "France or Belgium again." Dawson felt Hitler's proposals should be welcomed; however, he thought there was

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 11.

⁸⁸The Times (London), April 2, 1936, p. 14.

one omission because they did not mention that Germany would not reinforce the Rhineland during the four-month period of discussion.

Dawson noted this was not a big problem because little could be done during four months.⁸⁹

France, he believed, should not be frightened for she still had her Russian alliance and the League as well as Britain's guarantee. The British people believed that "mere suspicion, or mere prejudice" should not bar "the approach of an agreement to agree."⁹⁰ Dawson still believed firmly in Hitler's honesty. Dawson's friend, Lord Londonderry, just returned from Germany and was quoted in The Times editorial section to the effect that Hitler's "proposals gave him ground for great hope."⁹¹

Ribbentrop could offer these proposals with certainty because on March 29 Hitler was almost unanimously re-elected. Dawson said the election was a farce since there was no way of voting against Hitler; he stated that Hitler's speeches were impassioned and "the stage management of Goebbels" was very elaborate. Regardless, continued Dawson, Hitler's popularity was very high, and the Germans supported his policies. Dawson announced that "the present crisis [Rhineland] was precipitated in order to divert public attention from the growing economic distress" and to raise issues in foreign policy, which Hitler knew the people would support.⁹²

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 15.

⁹⁰The Times (London), April 3, 1936, p. 17.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²The Times (London), March 30, 1936, p. 13.

The landslide election of Hitler signified much more than the mere distraction of the German people from their economic troubles. Hitler was now at his zenith of power; he had broken the resistance of the Western powers by violating the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations, and the Treaty of Locarno with impunity. He recognized that his proposals had deceived Britain and therefore it was not surprising when the Germans failed to respond to or even acknowledge the questionnaire on German intent drawn up by the British on behalf of the Locarno powers on April 10.

As long as the Rhineland remained unfortified, France could use her influence. But now, she could not interfere, unless her own security were threatened because this would mean a war, which France could not fight without British support. The result was that her Eastern alliance system was allowed to come apart.

For Mussolini, the Rhineland crisis diverted the League powers from Italy and made sanctions very difficult to impose. Since he was already annoyed at Britain over its African stand, he would not support the Locarno position.

For Britain, it was a grave blunder. Perhaps she feared being allied with Russia; nevertheless, Dawson led the readers of The Times to believe that Hitler was only going into his own backyard. Dawson and The Times were willing to accommodate themselves to a Germany which they sincerely felt to be honorable, peaceful, and victimized by its neighbors. Dawson's pro-Germanism had intensified during the last year.

CHAPTER IX

THE EMERGENCE OF AN APPEASER

The Rhineland crisis had turned the focus of the world from Italy to Germany. In Africa Italy went her own way but in Europe she waited to see what would happen. Although she was a guarantor of the Locarno Treaty, she took no initiative whatever during the Locarno conferences convened to deal with the Rhineland crisis. Because she objected to Britain and France's stand against her in Ethiopia, she did not intend to support them in the Rhineland crisis.

The Times continued to protest Italy's activities in Africa. It pointed out that Ethiopia on the 22nd and 30th of March had sent a note to the League protesting the Italians' use of poison gas as well as their bombing, which killed women, children, and the aged. The note also mentioned that for fifteen months Ethiopia had appealed to the League but that no effective action had been taken.¹ In the House of Commons, Eden, on the 30th, acknowledged that the League Council had received the protest, and that the Council would act after Italy had been given a chance to reply.²

Dawson in his first editorial on the Italian-Abyssinian conflict

¹The Times (London), March 23, 1936, p. 11.

²The Times (London), March 31, 1936, p. 16.

since the Rhineland crisis was indignant at Italy's action. "Public opinion is shocked by reports that Italy has used gas"; and it "will be pleased to know the House of Commons, and House of Lords are checking to see if this is true." If the facts were verified, "they [the British] will take the only practical course open to them by way of protest," which would be of no little comfort to the Ethiopians.³

Dawson also said most people were skeptical of the reports at first because they found it difficult to believe that Italy would ignore the Kellogg Pact, the Covenant, and the Geneva protocol of 1925. It is puzzling why Dawson found this hard to believe as Italy had ignored the same pacts when she went to war in October.

Dawson believed there were three dangers in Mussolini's action. First, he thought Mussolini had committed a crime against humanity, but more important he used poisonous gas, which the world had outlawed. Second, Dawson felt problems between the races might arise if the "voice of collective civilization should remain silent in the presence of such horrors." Third, Dawson believed that, when "the League fails to check one dictator in his disregard of treaty obligations, there is--and has already been--a direct encouragement to others to follow his example."⁴

Although Dawson was blind to the role he had played in supporting Germany when she had broken treaty obligations, Winston Churchill on April 6 attacked the Baldwin administration for its role in the Ethiopian affair. He said the Prime Minister's prestige had dropped

³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴Ibid.

since last December and, if Abyssinia fell, "it will be the most melancholy chapter" in British history; "the aggressor would be triumphant" and would gain more than Hoare ever thought of granting.

Churchill also said the only thing Britain would have achieved "was to earn the undying hostility of Italy," as well as Hitler's complete disregard for the Rhineland treaty. Churchill predicted that Germany would fortify the Rhineland, close the door on the West, and turn East. He stated that the responsibility for Britain's pitiful role and position "must rest in a direct manner on the government; nor could he exclude the Prime Minister from his share of the responsibility."⁵

In answer to Churchill, Dawson proclaimed that the British Government still enjoyed great prestige, and he also defended Baldwin, saying "no section of the House has lost confidence in the Minister [on] whom the main responsibility for foreign policy in these anxious days must fall."⁶

While the Locarno powers were examining Germany's counter proposals the League Council met on April 8 to try to settle the Ethiopian dispute. Dawson commented editorially, accusing Mussolini of being the aggressor, and adding that Mussolini would pay someday. He declared that Italy's use of poison gas had placed her "zero in the scale" of a power claiming to be civilized. Dawson noted that there were no agreements left for Italy to break. Dawson suggested that, although Mussolini was in financial trouble, his armies had

⁵The Times (London), April 7, 1936, p. 8.

⁶Ibid., p. 17.

almost conquered the country. Dawson said, however, Emperor Haile Selassie had won admiration for his leadership, statesmanship, and he "alone comes with credit out of this test of civilization."⁷

The League Council would meet, said Dawson, when there would be proposals for a new statute for peace in Europe, but meanwhile the League should not abandon its policy against Italy. He agreed that the League had been right in acting against Italy from the beginning, for, if it had not, the League would have collapsed. He also said it had been right in rejecting the December Hoare-Laval proposals, for otherwise it would have condoned war, and the League must "hold together and play the hand out." Even in April, Dawson still believed the League was a viable institution.⁸

Eden, at the Council, denounced Italy's use of gas, and her lack of response in bringing about a peace settlement. Paradoxically, on the same day, April 8, Mussolini declared that he wanted "total annihilation of Abyssinian forces."⁹ Lord Halifax, in the House of Lords, noted that Britain had done everything but go to war to stop Italy and that the League would not have followed Britain on a course of war. Lord Lothian, in the House of Lords, condemned Italy in a speech directed mainly at Germany; he believed that the British Government should "not spend so much [time] casting aspersions on the trustworthiness of the Chancellor of the German Reich." Lothian believed the government should be more concerned with Italy, which

⁷The Times (London), April 8, 1936, p. 15.

⁸Ibid.

⁹The Times (London), April 9, 1936, p. 14.

had done everything contrary to humanity.¹⁰ To Lothian as to Dawson, Mussolini was the villain while Hitler was a misunderstood German nationalist.

Meanwhile, The Times reported French dissatisfaction with the League and the growing feeling that France felt she should base her foreign policy on her alliance system.¹¹ The French, in the midst of a hotly contested election, believed that the "time has gone" for any League action to hurt Italy; France wanted peace, the removal of sanctions, and "the restoration of the Stresa Front."¹²

France may have wanted to revive the Stresa front, but Dawson on the eve of the Council's meeting of the 20th wanted to hold on to the sanctions and the League. Dawson argued that the League must not loosen the current economic sanctions on Italy; he said the League "should refuse to be divided by an illusory and dangerous policy of peace at any price." He believed that, although conciliation had failed to establish peace, the League should still continue to try; because Italy had forced the League to act, the League could not retreat and it must defend the principle that "war must not again become a recognized means of asserting or securing national aims, material or other, to be used as a country pleases and in its own time." Dawson felt Great Britain and other members of the League were defending a vital position, that is, wars of aggression are wrong. Dawson recognized the League might have done more for Abyssinia but

¹⁰Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹The Times (London), April 13, 1936, p. 10.

¹²The Times (London), April 15, 1936, p. 10.

"the least it can do now--for him [Haile Selassie] and for future peace--is to maintain and, if needs must, increase its support."¹³

Although Abyssinia was almost conquered, Dawson still believed that the League must support her with public pronouncements. Dawson did not recognize that his strong anti-Italian stand was playing into the hands of Hitler, thus making any meaningful discussion on the Rhineland impossible.

Baldwin, realizing that his government was under fire, told an audience on the 18th that he would resign when he wanted to and not when others thought he should. He said the British Government's policy was based on the League of Nations and Britain wanted "the Covenant of the League to become the law of the world."¹⁴ He reiterated the viewpoint that collective security would work when all were prepared to fight for it to work. Dawson, of course, agreed with Baldwin.

The League could not come to a conclusion, according to Dawson, because Germany had seized the Rhineland and France was in the midst of elections. Dawson noted that "Italian policy has relied upon the embarrassments and the ambiguities of French policy," and after the election Dawson hoped that France would clarify her position.¹⁵

On the 20th the Council acknowledged that it could not solve the dispute. Eden declared that the British Government wanted to maintain the sanctions on Italy and that, "if there is to be a lasting peace,

¹³The Times (London), April 18, 1936, p. 13.

¹⁴The Times (London), April 20, 1936, p. 14.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 15.

the Covenant must be respected."¹⁶ Dawson supported Eden's speech as representative of the government's foreign policy, and the editor noted that the League could still be the best instrument for "the preservation of international peace."¹⁷

The Italian and German reaction to the Council's failure differed from Dawson's; the Italians knew the economic sanctions had failed, and the Germans believed that the "moral ruin of the League of Nations is, in German eyes, complete, as is the defeat which British policy in the Abyssinian dispute is believed to have suffered."¹⁸ The Germans were delighted when the sanctions failed because a precedent had been set, and, therefore, they knew that the Rhineland would not be touched.

Eden reported to the cabinet on the Geneva failure. He hoped that by the next Council meeting the French elections would be over and Germany would have replied to Britain's questionnaire. Dawson, in an editorial on the 23rd, again attacked France; he said after the elections France would have to face the issue of whether or not aggressive war by one League member against another was compatible with the Covenant. Dawson said the "British public" would like to know, and, if France did not agree, what was she prepared to do? As France knew that Britain opposed any unexcused act of aggression, Dawson believed that Britain could not ignore this or she "would forfeit [her] own self-respect and face genuine humiliation and ignominy."¹⁹

¹⁶The Times (London), April 21, 1936, p. 14.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁸The Times (London), April 22, 1936, p. 13.

¹⁹The Times (London), April 23, 1936, p. 15.

Dawson said Britain would learn which powers were against war and which powers Britain could rely on; if it became necessary to "turn away from the League as now constituted in order to save the principles of the Covenant, this experience will not be wasted."²⁰ This statement was the first public indication that Dawson realized the League's faltering position.

Nevertheless, on May Day Hitler and Baldwin each spoke for peace. Hitler said Germany had not threatened any nation in the past three years, and, in truth, she "offered the hand of friendship to others repeatedly"; but to no avail. Similarly, Baldwin declared that Britain wanted peace and his aim as "Prime Minister is peace."²¹

On May 1, as Hitler and Baldwin spoke, the Emperor of Ethiopia was forced to flee his capital; the Italians were at his doorstep. Dawson, as expected, was very sympathetic to the Emperor. On May 2, when news came of the Emperor's flight, he was at Cliveden and he spent the evening worrying about British foreign policy.²² Two days later, Dawson commented on the Emperor's plight, saying the Ethiopians led a gallant fight but the decisive factor had been Italy's use of poison gas; "it was a needless act of bad faith and barbarity." Dawson addressed himself to those who felt Britain should have acted against Italy; Britain, he said, had no quarrel with Italy. He noted Italy had quarreled with the League and Britain was only a member. He continued that there was never "the smallest question of a British

²⁰Ibid.

²¹The Times (London), May 2, 1936, p. 14.

²²Wrench, Dawson, p. 332.

declaration of war on Italy," which would have been diametrically opposed to Britain's policy of peace.²³ Many who had read Dawson's editorials from August to April had been convinced of Britain's actual leadership in the League and had been certain that Britain would stand firm in her responsibility.

Dawson now spoke quite differently, asserting that the British Government had discharged its obligations to the League. He concluded by declaring that the League was not finished because it had failed only this time. He said Geneva had solved many problems and Britain would continue to make her influence "effective in the League of the future." Meantime Britain, according to Dawson, would have to bring nations outside of the League into that body, "particularly Germany."²⁴

Meanwhile, during the Rhineland crisis and the collapse of Ethiopia the French were holding an election. On May 5 a victory for the Left was announced. Dawson's editorial, "France Goes Left," discussed whether or not the election result would make it easier or more difficult for France to come to terms with Germany. He noted that the Left favored a strong League and "united resistance to aggression by force" if necessary. Since the League had failed to halt aggression, Dawson regarded this as an academic question. He was convinced that the new French government could not get France to go to war if French interests were not involved, and, although the Rhineland was of vital interest to France, Dawson knew the British Government would not lend

²³The Times (London), May 4, 1936, p. 15.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵The Times (London), May 5, 1936, p. 17.

moral support for this cause.²⁵

Throughout the campaign, Dawson noted, the Left had deplored dictatorship, and "Hitlerite Germany was the favorite bogey man." But, said Dawson contemptuously, Russia was a dictatorship, a fact the French conveniently ignored. He did not believe that the French attitude would be conducive to a German-French compromise although he hoped that France would work for peace in Europe "and for reconciliation with Germany."²⁶

The German press reacted to the French election results as expected and the headlines read "Victory for Moscow," "Red Elections," and "Fruits of the Franco-Soviet Pact." The Germans believed that Hitler was correct on March 7 when he suggested that Germany had to consider a "Red regime in France."²⁷

On the same day the editorial page carried a long letter from Lord Lothian which stated that the main problem of the League was its ultimate reliance on war, as Articles 10 and 16 suggested, as a means of halting aggression. Lothian said security should be organized on a regional basis and the League should get rid of collective security because the roots of Europe's trouble had been caused by the encirclement of Germany. He also declared that Germany should take her rightful place in Europe under a revised League but this would depend on how Britain would negotiate when she and Germany talked about Hitler's proposals; if Britain were free of any prior commitments, she might be

²⁵The Times (London), May 5, 1936, p. 17.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 15.

able to convince Germany of the League's importance. Dawson most likely agreed with Lothian.²⁸

The Italians marched into Addis Ababa on May 5. Although The Times was silent, in the House of Commons Churchill declared that the fall of Abyssinia was a "mournful occasion" and that "everyone knew how lamentable that British leadership had been." He wanted the Prime Minister to speak because "he was the man with all the power and one could not have the power without having the responsibility." Hugh Dalton, the Labour M.P., blamed the government for the Ethiopian disaster, the destruction of the League, and of the shame brought to the British public. He insisted that, while Britain's policy angered Italy, it did not help Abyssinia.²⁹

Dawson defended the British Government in his editorial, declaring that Dalton was completely wrong and merely blamed the cabinet to bolster the Labour Party. The League failed "for the lack of the collective world to work it," and, said Dawson, it might never have been tested if it were not for British leadership.³⁰ This point was very debatable.

The British Government waited another month before acknowledging the League's failure. Baldwin, who was unable to decide upon anything, spoke in Albert Hall on May 14, again stating that, because the League had failed once, it was not ended, nor did he believe the League should end.³¹

²⁸Ibid., p. 17.

²⁹The Times (London), May 7, 1936, p. 9.

³⁰Ibid., p. 17.

³¹The Times (London), May 15, 1936, p. 16.

Dawson defended Baldwin again.³² Baldwin's friend, Jones, went to Germany to see Hitler on May 16 and told him it was one of Baldwin's desires "to get alongside Hitler."³³ After Jones returned, giving Baldwin a glowing report of Hitler, Baldwin told Jones he wished Hitler could come to Chequers.³⁴ Jones met Dawson on May 21 and told him of his German visit; Dawson, according to Jones, "was all for cooperation with Germany, but was worried over Baldwin's inertia."³⁵

On the 21st, Baldwin, at a private dinner with a select group of Conservatives in the House of Commons, stated that the National Government had to carry out the duty of the mandate it had received. He declared that Britain was the "greatest safeguard to peace in Europe and the world."³⁶ He completely ignored his critics.

Dawson wrote about Baldwin's speech on the 25th in an editorial called, "Mr. Baldwin," characterizing Baldwin as "vigourous, alert, and deeply concerned with events at home and abroad," this, despite the fact that Dawson told Jones on the 21st that he was worried over Baldwin's inertia. The critics of Baldwin, said Dawson, wrongly believed "he had lost his grip on affairs and ceased to function at all." Dawson declared that "his [Baldwin's] hold on the confidence of the country remains unchallenged to an extent which is not always appreciated in London." Baldwin's role, said Dawson, was "to make

³²Ibid., p. 17.

³³Jones, Diary, p. 200.

³⁴Ibid., p. 203.

³⁵Ibid., p. 202.

³⁶The Times (London), May 22, 1936, p. 14.

some definite contribution to the appeasement of Europe." For Britain, he said this would mean the promoting of better relations between France and Germany, which was "a task after Baldwin's own heart." About the German proposals, Dawson mused that "it would be profound misfortune if there were to be any change in British leadership when that discussion seems to be in sight." This was the first suggestion of Baldwin's retirement.³⁷

Chamberlain, at a dinner at the 1900 Club in London on June 10, declared that to continue the policy of sanctions toward Italy was "the very midsummer of madness" because Italy had won. Chamberlain thought regional pacts might be more successful in halting war.³⁸ One recalls Lothian stated exactly the same principle in The Times.

This speech caused a violent debate in the House the next day, when Attlee asked Baldwin if this was the government's policy, and Baldwin said it was not. Baldwin stated that Chamberlain spoke as an individual but the idea had merit. When Attlee pressed him further, Baldwin refused to reply.³⁹

Dawson defended Chamberlain by declaring that far too much was read into Chamberlain's speech and it was only Chamberlain's personal opinion and not government policy. Dawson commented that sanctions would end when the League of Nations so specified and Britain could not end them alone. Dawson knew this was untrue for Britain had the

³⁷The Times (London), May 25, 1936, p. 14.

³⁸The Times (London), June 11, 1936, p. 10.

³⁹The Times (London), June 12, 1936, p. 8.

power to sway the League vote.⁴⁰ Within a week, Britain would reverse herself and lift sanctions.

The Italians were bewildered by the comments of The Times; they believed Chamberlain's speech was the turning point in British-Italian relations for the abolition of sanctions. They wanted to know who was "standing behind The Times, that organ of clandestine relations." By mid-June they regarded The Times' plea for German, French, and British unity as "the height of hostility towards Italy."⁴¹

On the 18th, Eden told the House that sanctions had failed in their purpose and that Britain would inform the League Council of this in July, even though Britain would abide by the Council's decision should it wish to keep sanctions in force.

Dawson defended the government's proposed action to remove sanctions and declared that "public opinion" would support the government. Dawson declared that France was guilty because, if she had really helped between September and December, the League would have won. He said Laval was the father of the proposals of December 8, and "they were the sure beginning of the end." He continued that Italy was not forgiven, for she had broken her pledges, and nobody had confidence in her. Britain would not recognize her conquest; "it leaves in ruin the mischievous structure of the so-called Stresa front." Dawson believed the people of Britain wanted British leadership and powers strengthened and British policy in the future, especially in Europe, would only be strengthened by obtaining political and economic cooperation with and

⁴⁰The Times (London), June 13, 1936, p. 15.

⁴¹The Times (London), June 15, 1936, p. 12.

from Germany.⁴²

On June 3, Dawson stated what Britain's foreign policy was to be, namely, Britain should tell the world of (1) her commitments in Western and Mediterranean Europe, (2) her plans for imperial defense, and (3) her "firm grasp of the negotiations with Germany."⁴³

The Germans were so pleased with this editorial that they reproduced it in their papers; the stress on Western and Mediterranean Europe particularly pleased them as they felt that they could look to Eastern Europe, especially Central and Southeast Europe, now that Britain declared herself disinterested.⁴⁴

The Times noted that Germany was not prepared to accept the present boundaries of Europe--"the impression here in Germany is that Great Britain is not closely interested in Central or in Eastern Europe." This observation was strengthened by Dawson's editorial, and perhaps Chamberlain's speech of the 10th. The Times continued that, to many Germans, Austria was a German question because of the strong idea of racial affinity; Germany might offer in her proposals to hold plebiscites "among Germans of neighbouring lands."⁴⁵

The Times stated that there would be more emphasis placed on the question of Germany obtaining colonies because the Germans thought that Hitler believed that "the more Germany says about colonies the

⁴²The Times (London), June 19, 1936, p. 17.

⁴³The Times (London), June 4, 1936, p. 13.

⁴⁴The Times (London), June 5, 1936, p. 13.

⁴⁵The Times (London), June 12, 1936, p. 16.

more ready will Great Britain be to give her scope in Europe."⁴⁶

One sign of closer German-Italian relations was noted by the German Ambassador to Rome and Countess Ciano, wife of the Italian Foreign Secretary and Mussolini's daughter, both in Berlin; the Ambassador said that Italy had survived very well against British public opinion.⁴⁷ Another sign of closer German-Italian relations was seen in the Italian press, where it was stated that the Italians knew they had defeated the sanctionist countries, and they recognized the good "impartial, honest, and often friendly attitude" of Germany towards Italy.⁴⁸

The Italians were delighted when Eden told the House on the 18th that the British Government recognized the failure of sanctions against Italy. They believed Eden's words were an "expectedly frank and courageous" confession of miscalculation.⁴⁹ However, Dawson's editorial on the 19th left no doubt that Italy was still a pariah, for Dawson said Italy had not restored British confidence in her as she had broken her pledges. He stated Britain's policy for the future of Europe would be found by obtaining political and economic negotiations with Germany. As far as Dawson was concerned, Italy was to be ignored.

The Italian press was pleased that sanctions were removed but it did not like The Times editorial, especially its emphasis on a British-German rapprochement. The Italians stated that The Times was indifferent

⁴⁶The Times (London), June 13, 1936, p. 13.

⁴⁷The Times (London), June 15, 1936, p. 12.

⁴⁸The Times (London), June 17, 1936, p. 16.

⁴⁹The Times (London), June 19, 1936, p. 16.

to Italy and did not care to improve British-Italian relations.⁵⁰ The Italians correctly recognized Dawson's attitude.

On the 20th Baldwin defended the British action of lifting sanctions by saying they were removed because he was afraid of war in Europe and wanted to avoid its consequent horrors. Baldwin concluded by saying, "I have nothing to apologize for."⁵¹

The Labour Party called for a vote of censure against the government on June 23 but it was defeated. Dawson, who was delighted with this defeat of the opposition, called his editorial "Towards a New Policy." He said Britain must not condone Italian actions. He suggested that Britain state where her interests lie and, where she had an interest, military force would be used to defend it. He believed it was the "German-French disunion that broke down the sanctions policy," and there would be no League until a union was achieved; Britain should act and let nothing deter her from negotiations with Germany.⁵²

The Council met on June 25, the first time since May 13. Dawson's editorial, "The League of Tomorrow," said that the Council would be concluding the action it took last October, and, because the League had failed and Italy had won, the League would have to make a change. This meeting, declared Dawson, must look to the future and not the past; reconstruction must be undertaken, and the basic ingredient for

⁵⁰The Times (London), June 20, 1936, p. 12.

⁵¹The Times (London), June 22, 1936, p. 14.

⁵²The Times (London), June 24, 1936, p. 17.

this would be German, British, and French cooperation.⁵³

Two of Dawson's friends spoke on the 26th, and their talks were recorded in The Times. Lord Londonderry wanted the government to follow a straightforward policy of cooperation among France, Germany, and Britain. Lately, said Londonderry, the government appeared to lack direction, and he believed that Britain acted in a timid way which was costing her prestige. Londonderry continued that Britain should not be "niggardly" with the German gestures but should look on them with hope; bilateral talks were desirable and inspired confidence. He opposed those who said that Germany could not be trusted.⁵⁴

Lord Lothian believed that peace could be obtained "by good will, not force." He said too many people thought of the League as a war office, rather than a diplomatic office. He stated that war was terrible and Abyssinia not worth a war, as it was "a feudal and slave-owning state, not yet a nation." War would be justified, said Lothian, if there were a threat to Western Democracy or the British Empire, and he noted that he was not a pacifist. He declared that Britain had to tell the League where she would draw the line and where she would fight. Germany, said Lothian, might cause trouble, but justice was due her; Lothian believed Germany should get Eastern Europe and maybe Austria because her demands were just. He believed Britain and the League would have to settle these points of German justice.⁵⁵ Both of these speeches stressed the value of Germany and

⁵³The Times (London), June 26, 1936, p. 17.

⁵⁴The Times (London), June 27, 1936, p. 8.

⁵⁵Ibid.

her role in promoting peace.

Lothian had arrived at this position by June 1 when he had spent an evening with Ribbentrop at Sandwich. On the day after this meeting Lothian wrote to Eden, suggesting that, if Britain were to concede the Continent to Germany, Britain and Germany could get along together.⁵⁶ Lothian sent a copy of the note to Chamberlain, who fully agreed with this position.⁵⁷ This fact would explain Chamberlain's speech of June 10, in which he mentioned the "midsummer of madness." Lothian told Baldwin of his plans and emphasized the need for German justice, which would mean a new direction for Britain in foreign affairs.⁵⁸ A fair assumption to make is that Dawson himself adopted the same position as Lothian on German foreign affairs. Dawson met Ribbentrop on June 3 and, if he agreed with Lothian and Ribbentrop about accommodating Germany at Eastern Europe's expense, this would explain Dawson's deliberate policy of May and June in emphasizing British-German relations to the exclusion of Italy.⁵⁹

On June 24, Duff Cooper, Secretary for War, spoke in Paris and he said that the future of civilization would be determined by France and Britain. The Times, later on the 29th, reported that in the speeches of Chamberlain, Cooper, Londonderry, and Lothian there was a suggestion of a "lack of coherent policy, particularly in foreign affairs."⁶⁰

⁵⁶Butler, Lord Lothian, p. 215.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 216.

⁵⁹Jones, Diary, p. 216.

⁶⁰The Times (London), June 29, 1936, p. 14.

This was a valid observation, for Chamberlain noted in his diary that "we have no policy."⁶¹

On July 4, the League withdrew its sanctions on Italy and agreed to reconvene in September. On July 6 Dawson's editorial, "The League and Germany," explicitly declared how British foreign policy would be directed until 1939. He said the League would make a new beginning in September and there would be hope for the future. "The key to a stronger peace system still lies in the relations of Germany and her neighbours." Dawson noted that British opinion accepted as axiomatic the friendship of France because this was the nation's instinct. He said Britain was prepared to help guarantee the integrity of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands in accordance with time-honored policy but British opinion did not accept and would not accept French leadership in the whole field of foreign policy. Dawson declared that Britain would not be tied to France's liabilities "in the shape of alliances on the farther side of Germany." He continued that British opinion was determined to come to grips with Hitler's peace proposals as "the best immediate hope of the stabilization of Western Europe." "A clear understanding with Germany would not solve all the problems of the world, but it would be a strong foundation on which to build, and British opinion means to try it out."⁶² Thus appeasement had begun.

⁶¹Felling, Chamberlain, p. 295.

⁶²The Times (London), July 6, 1936, p. 15.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this dissertation has been to show that The Times of London played an influential role in the formulation of the British policy of appeasement and that, in turn, the foreign policy orientation of the paper reflected almost exclusively the conceptions of its autocratic editor, Geoffrey Dawson. The study does not recount the full story of the appeasement policy, but focuses rather on the months of its initial conception. This is not to suggest that the British Government could not have changed from a policy of appeasement after the middle of 1936, but only to demonstrate that the practical and moral reasons for its acceptance had been by that time well circulated in the nation's leading newspaper and tentatively applied by the Baldwin administration. One of the salient features of Dawson's thought, especially striking on problems of foreign affairs, was his failure to give careful consideration to possible alternative policies. If the course of British foreign policy was not set by the middle of 1936, the assumptions, expectations, and goals of Dawson were.

Dawson was not simply the editor of The Times, he was also one of Prime Minister Baldwin's most trusted and long-standing advisors on questions of foreign policy. Many of the other men who influenced

Baldwin in foreign affairs shared the editor's fundamental assumptions. The few dissenters who doubted Dawson's wisdom were in turn doubted by the Prime Minister. The impact of this clique was all the more significant, because Baldwin was not equipped by temperament to grapple with the complexities of international problems. He looked upon Dawson as an expert, and the self-confident editor gladly offered easy solutions, regardless of the intricacies involved or the limitations of his knowledge. Dawson gave to Baldwin and The Times' readership the best information he had and the fruits of his own judgment. This, unfortunately, was information from a man who read no language other than English, who knew little history, and who lacked an elementary knowledge of the European peoples. So much did Dawson control Baldwin's judgments that the position of the British Government in foreign affairs during 1935-1936 followed the lines of action set forth in The Times. The Times was a major instrument in policy formation.

The editorship of a great newspaper is not a proper training school in political science, for, unlike other institutions, it fails to provide an essential element of education, that is, a master who can tell the pupil that he is in error. Dawson may have learned something about politics while he was editor of The Times, but the job of chief administrator of any major institution is not conducive to teaching the concept that humility is necessary to true learning.

The blame cannot be placed on Dawson alone, for the whole of British tradition was to some extent built into the man. Dawson was educated at Oxford, which for centuries has supplied Great Britain

with gentlemen and scholars; his education made him a gentleman, not a scholar. He was destined, in the centuries-old tradition of his university, to seek his career on the basis of his social rank, rather than his intellectual education. His advancement rested on who he knew, and not what he knew. His biography substantiates the fact that every step of his career was paved with introductions from social friendships dating to college days.

The forces that impelled Dawson to conceive of British policy as he did, in the 1930's, were also part of the British system to which he contributed by his participation in it. Dawson was in one of the major mainstreams of British thought in his anti-communist stand. It was the major cause for his pro-Germanism and his early acceptance of Hitler. It is no surprise that he feared that Bolshevism would spread to the West, and he regarded Germany as the bulwark which could stop it. Dawson's imperialistic experience made the welfare of the British Commonwealth the chief assumption upon which his ideas on foreign affairs were built and it was the second major factor that led to his pro-Germanism. Every issue in foreign affairs was subordinated to the welfare of the Commonwealth. Reinforcing these two major elements in his acceptance of Germany, his anti-communism and his imperialism, was a cluster of other pressures or influences, all of which were really social. For his information on Germany, he relied on Lord Lothian; the "Cliveden set" of Lord and Lady Astor, which counted Joachim Von Ribbentrop among its guests, found Dawson in its inner sanctum. This "set" also regarded Lothian as its foreign affairs expert.

Although pro-German, it would be unfair to call Dawson a fascist

in ideology. He opposed Italy's imperialistic conquest in Africa because it ran counter to Britain's imperial interests. He even brought about the downfall of Britain's Foreign Secretary, Samuel Hoare, in December, 1935, because Hoare had tried to appease Italy at the expense of Ethiopia. He opposed Hitler's racial and religious persecutions on moral grounds but never objected to German imperialism, because it did not threaten British interests. It is logical to assert that he opposed only those things which affronted British national policy or British moral sentiments. For him, abstract political theory had no relevance. His position, both public and private, was a moral one. When the moral position was incompatible with the acceptance of fascism, he always opted against the fascist position. When, on the other hand, the interests of Britain, as he conceived them, called for cooperation with a fascist government, questions of morality gave way to expediency.

The pro-Germanism of Dawson and The Times became apparent by the end of June, 1935. He first defended Germany for breaking the Treaty of Versailles in March, and again, after the April meetings of the Stresa Conference, and the League Council, after both groups had condemned Germany's action. The height of his pro-Germanism was expressed in his stand on the British-German Naval Agreement in June.

Since fascism as such was not an issue, Dawson could draw the conclusion that Britain's only hope was Germany. By July, 1936, The Times made it very clear that its future policy would be to press for harmonious relations with Germany regardless of the price. Dawson recognized that Hitler would demand territories in Eastern Europe, but

this made no difference to him. In this, he contributed to the initiation of the policy of appeasement in Britain.

One of the last to acknowledge the failure of appeasement, Dawson defended it adamantly through late 1940. On May 23, 1937, he wrote to The Times Berlin Correspondent, Ebbuitt, and begged him to work for a better understanding with Germany. The editor admitted how hard he worked to make the Germans seem friendly toward Britain. He noted that he spent half the night deleting everything from the copy that "might hurt their susceptibilities."¹ Only the Battle of Britain convinced him that war could not be averted, but even then he endorsed the Munich agreement, as he assured Chamberlain on November 8 that "we owe it to you that it [war] " " [came] later rather than sooner and that we are assuredly going to win."²

¹History of The Times, IV, Part II, 909.

²Wrench, Dawson, p. 433.

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