

Parliament

GERMANY AND AUSTRIA

LORD HALIFAX'S ADVICE

"EUROPE CONFUSED, NOT DANGEROUS"

HOUSE OF LORDS

THURSDAY, FEB. 17

The LORD CHANCELLOR took his seat on the Woolsack at a quarter past 4 o'clock.

A Royal Commission, consisting of the LORD HANCELLOR, LORD RANKEILLOUR, and LORD HUTCHISON sat and signified the Royal Assent to the Unemployment Insurance Act.

The London County Council (General Powers) Bill, the Middlesex Hospital Bill, the Stockton-on-Tees Corporation Bill, the Plymouth Extension Bill, the Salford Corporation Bill and the Wakefield Corporation Bill were read a second time.

A WHITE PAPER ON INDIA

The MARQUESS of LOTHIAN said he had given private notice of a question which he proposed to put to the Secretary of State for India. Their lordships would have observed that an unfortunate crisis had arisen between His Majesty's Governors and his Majesty's Ministers in certain Provinces in India. He asked the Secretary of State, not to make any statement to-day, but whether he could supply the House, possibly in the form of a White Paper, with some information as to how this had arisen, and in particular any statement issued either by the Governors or by the Ministers explaining their attitude in this crisis.

The MARQUESS of ZETLAND.—In answering the noble marquess may I take this opportunity of saying how profoundly I regret that two of the Ministries should have found it necessary to resign, more particularly since, as it seems to me, the difference between them and the Governor-General which is the cause of their resignation seems to have been one of degree rather than of kind, as I hope will become clear when I supply your lordships with the information for which the noble marquess has just asked. I shall be only too happy to provide the House with the information which the noble marquess seeks in the form of a White Paper. He will understand, of course, that some part of the information required to make the statement complete will have to be obtained from India, and in those circumstances I cannot give him any assurance as to how soon it will be possible to issue the White Paper, but he may rest assured that it will be issued with the least possible delay.

The Divorce and Nullity of Marriage (Scotland) Bill passed through Committee.

The Poor Law (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, which has passed the Commons, was read a second time.

LORD LOTHIAN AND THE LEAGUE

"A CHANCE OF RECOVERY"

The adjourned debate on foreign policy, and Lord Arnold's motion for papers, was resumed.

The MARQUESS of LOTHIAN asked for further explanation regarding the position of Sir Alexander Cadogan and Sir Robert Vansittart. The Earl of Plymouth had referred to their activities as Secretary of State and

seem to him that any peace would be secured except by recognition that our interests as well as our moral obligations lay with the democratic and not with the totalitarian States.

Several speakers had referred to the position of Germany. He was most anxious to be just to her. He wanted us to recognize her rightful position in Europe; he wanted to see her once again a colonial Power and all the rest; but he was not going to make a political pet of her and to assume that she was the entirely guileless organization that had been suggested. Let the needs of Germany be examined in a thoroughly generous spirit: let us make, so far as we could, our own contribution to remedy those grievances; but we had at the same time the right to expect that, inasmuch as she had also a moral responsibility for the future of civilization, she should make her contribution to the solution as well as ourselves.

He would have expected that in yesterday's debate and in the speech to which they had listened to-day that the new situation in Austria, and in consequence in Czechoslovakia, would have formed part of their lordships' considerations; but this important event had not, so far as he knew, been dealt with. Yet we were very interested, and he asked for some information about it. Could the Government tell the House, for example, anything that would relieve our anxieties? He would like to know whether the Government still stood by the Stresa joint declaration of Great Britain, France, and Italy, made in February, 1934, to the effect that the integrity and independence of Austria was a matter in which we had some considerable interest.

LABOUR BELIEF IN THE LEAGUE

Turning to the position of the League of Nations, Lord Snell said he welcomed the statement of the noble Marquess that he felt that the chance for the League to-day was more hopeful than it had been because the old interpretation was dead, and a new interpretation would have a better chance. The Labour Party would not join in the acrimonious chorus of the League of Nations. They continued to believe, being simple people, that the League of Nations was full of possibilities for the future good of the world. Lord Arnold had said that it was only half a League. If he (Lord Snell) might use a cheap illustration, let it be half a League onward rather than half a League backward. The noble lord had said also that the League had failed in everything it had set out to do. He (Lord Snell) did not accept that interpretation of the history of the League, and even if it were true that would be a fault in the nations themselves rather than in the institution which was set up for them to use. No institution, country, or individual existed to which a whole pile of objections could not be raised; all of us fell short of our own ideals.

Let us admit that the League had not fulfilled its expectations. It had not been served by its friends. It represented more of an ideal than an achievement. But, as a distinguished friend of his had written, "History is the biography of ideals," and if we did not have ideals we did not make progress. He agreed with what was written in *The Times* the other day, when it was said:—

Deep in the conscience of the British people—and certainly in other peoples' also—there exists a profound conviction that the principles of the Covenant and of the Kellogg Pact must somehow be made to prevail, unless we are all going back, as Mr. Eden said the other day in the House of Commons, to the ways of cave-dwellers, living in the perpetual shadow of fear—fear, not now of wild beasts, but of barbarities more terrible for being humanly devised.

He felt it necessary to reaffirm that faith whenever a note of pessimism was struck, because we were all tempted to despair of the situation as we knew it.

His difficulty about the Government was that he could never reduce its mind to a coherent move. As a composite photograph, the Government appeared to him to represent rather intellectual debility than one of real competence and attractiveness. The Government were political sleep-walkers who did not know when they were moving and where they were going.

The next war which was always being talked about need not happen; the arms race could be stopped, and the League could again be made strong. The Labour Party would make an immediate and powerful appeal to the Powers for a general disarmament treaty, and they would continue to work for a durable peace based upon friendship and justice

as part of an all-round settlement, in which there was give and take on both sides, and in which their German friends not only received consideration of that problem but themselves contributed to the necessary security which we needed if there was to be a peace settlement for Europe.

LORD HALIFAX'S REPLY

"WAR NOT IMMINENT"

VISCOUNT HALIFAX, Lord President of the Council, said that before he came to the wider issues raised in the debate, it might be convenient if he were to deal with two rather specific subjects on which he had been asked specific questions. The first was the question asked by the Marquess of Lothian concerning the functions of the Chief Diplomatic Adviser, to which Lord Ponsonby yesterday was the first to direct their thought.

He could tell the noble marquess quite definitely, as he thought Lord Plymouth made it plain yesterday, that the Chief Diplomatic Adviser was not concerned with the current affairs of the Foreign Office, but that, as was made plain in the statement at the time of his appointment, he would advise the Secretary of State upon major questions of policy, and so on, remitted to him for that purpose. He thought his noble friend came as near a precise definition as was possible when he spoke about parallel lines, for one of the first properties of parallel lines was that they never met, and therefore never clashed. (Laughter and cheers.)

The other specific question which had been put to him was whether he could say precisely what was the position of his Majesty's Government with regard to events in Austria, and more precisely if the Government still stood by the joint declaration known as the Stresa Declaration of 1935. Perhaps the most convenient course (continued Lord Halifax) would be if I were to read the answer given by the Foreign Secretary to-day in the House of Commons, which I think summarizes the latest information on the general question that is in the possession of the Government.

The noble viscount then read the reply given by Mr. Eden to Mr. Attlee. On reaching the point in Mr. Eden's answer where he said: "While at the present moment I am not in a position to estimate the exact effects of this agreement," Lord Halifax remarked:—"Per agreement," Lord Halifax interposed that happens in that connexion I might interpose that I think a certain element of reserve is prudent in our judgment of these events at the present time.

THE STRESA RESOLUTION

With regard to Lord Snell's question as to the Stresa Conference, I think the reply that I should give to him if he were here would be that the policy of his Majesty's Government continues to be inspired by the joint resolution of the Stresa Conference, but, as he would remember, the efficacy of that resolution depends on the real collaboration of all the parties to it—namely, ourselves, France, and the Government of Italy—and not of his Majesty's Government alone. So far as the resolution referred to the maintenance of the independence and integrity of Austria, his Majesty's Government are not yet in a position to estimate the effect of the recent agreement between Germany and Austria; but, as my other answer has made plain, they are watching the situation there developing with close attention.

In so far as the speeches had been concerned with the League of Nations (the noble viscount continued), there had been those who had found fault with the Government's policies for being too weak and who would wish to go farther and act with far greater firmness, and those who frankly regarded that article and the other articles connected with it as dangerous and provocative and as genuine hindrances to international cooperation. Nearly everybody had had a natural tendency to think and he rather pleased to think that they were either more virtuous or more perspicacious than their neighbours. (Laughter.)

He would ask them not unnecessarily to magnify their difference with the Government. Lord Arnold was apt to speak as if he were the only realist in the House while Lord Cecil

be ground between those two extreme positions in which his Majesty's Government of the day must judge whether they will advise the country to fight or not.

MONASTIC SECLUSION IMPOSSIBLE

I go the whole way with Lord Arnold when he says that no Government in this or any other democratic country can commit the country to war unless they have a preponderating public opinion with them. But I would add this one observation on the policy of isolation. Such a policy is, I suppose, attractive if you think it will work, just as retreat into a monastery has throughout history offered attractions to anxious souls tormented by the insoluble problems of the world.

But those who went into the monastery were at least sure that while they were there they were out of the storms. I am not sure that any great nation can feel the same degree of assurance as those pious and devoted men. While I share, as we all do, repugnance to war and the need for public opinion being behind any war, I cannot feel that it is either politically practicable or morally justifiable for this country to pretend that it can disinterested itself in what goes on in the great world outside.

There was a tendency in many quarters to think and to speak of international affairs in terms of domestic politics. It had been urged that the League of Nations must be made to prevail. In domestic politics the Government is free to make its decisions subject to criticism and attack, but it could take the risk. But in international affairs there were only three ways he knew of in which things could be settled. There was the way of agreement; there was the way of war; and there was the way of the fear of war. It took at least two parties to make agreement, and therefore when he heard the noble lord say that in some way the League of Nations must prevail he rubbed his eyes and wondered if he really thought that any one Government could really bring about the result demanded.

During these last years every one knew only too well of that necessity for agreement and of the fact that advance was only possible by agreement; of that they had abundant and all too much evidence. Of the kind, of course, that had been pressed more than once on his Majesty's Government for more vigorous action here, there, and elsewhere, he would only say that they might or might not have been successful, but it certainly would not have been successful by way of agreement, and in so far would have ruled out the possibility of agreement in international affairs and have brought nearer the other alternative which all desired to avoid, that was war.

WORLD PEACE THE AIM

Let us not forget (went on the noble viscount) that, whatever be the place in our philosophy that we give to the League of Nations, the League itself is only a great means to a greater end of international peace, and if it is possible to reach agreements which really offer international appeasement through machinery other than the League I can hardly suppose that there would be any member of the League so shortsighted as to grudge them conclusion.

I do not wish to see the world divided into blocks of democratic and non-democratic States, as was hinted by Lord Snell. His Majesty's Government have repeatedly made it plain that they earnestly desire world appeasement, to which all nations have gone to make their contribution. And to such conditions we should be very willing to make our contribution.

Proceeding, the noble viscount said that in any such discussions that might be undertaken there must be no jealous balancing of bargaining items one against another, for that way lay only irritation, suspicion, and disappointment. Rather must those matters be approached from the angle that all nations must be prepared to make contributions to that which was the common goal of each of his Majesty's Governments, he hoped, opportunity offered, in a spirit of willing determination, to make the fullest contribution that might rightly lie in their power towards the end that all desired to secure namely, that of a full and peaceful world standing.

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very dangerous phrase to use, and he thought it advisable to refrain from using it.

He (the noble marquis) agreed that the conditions under which the League of Nations functioned to-day were very different from those which prevailed when it first came into existence. It was no longer universal, and some of the most powerful nations of the world—five of them—if not actively hostile were outside it. Referring to the maintenance of the rule of law by the League, the noble marquis said that that rule only began when one had an institution which could alter the law as well as act as policemen to enforce the law.

The League was now going to have a chance of recovery. It was now clear that the automatic interpretation of Article XVI involving the obligation to go to war no longer existed, because the League was no longer universal, and an increasing number of the members of the League had said emphatically they refused that interpretation. He was more hopeful to-day about the League of Nations than he had been for a long time, because it had ceased to be an instrument trying to perpetuate the *status quo*, which in a rapidly changing world could not be expected to exist.

## THE GERMAN PROBLEM

The fundamental problem of the world to-day was still Germany. The reason was that at no time since 1919 had the rest of the world been willing to cede reasonable justice or reasonable understanding with Germany. It was still widely believed that Germany was largely responsible for the last War. A group of German and French historians had studied various documents on the matter and had issued a statement expressing agreement that the documents did not warrant the view that a deliberate desire for European war could be attributed to any Government or people in 1914.

What followed Versailles was more serious than what was done at Versailles itself. We had now convinced Germany by long experience that the only way of altering treaties was to have the power to compel their alteration. We and our associates must share a considerable measure of responsibility for the situation which now confronted us. It was because Germany was now totalitarian, because we were afraid of her, because she was a formidable menace, that we were unable or felt it difficult to give her those things which we would concede to a democratic Germany. The root of the trouble, the weight hanging over the world, was that our own follies in the past were coming home to roost.

He was not an isolationist: it was not possible to be one. Once the machine of war began to move in the world it was not possible for anybody long to avoid being dragged into it. He was against the League of Nations Union interpretation of the obligations of the Covenant.

There was only one solution. We had to combine collective justice with collective security. We had to concede to those nations who were entitled to remedies—and one was Germany—alterations in the *status quo* and incur obligations with other like-minded nations to resist changes which went beyond what impartial justice regarded as being fair. He was being driven to the conclusion that unless the democracies were willing to face the obligations of war we should be driven inexorably to retreat in the face of the kind of menace that we had seen applied to Austria in the last few days.

## LORD SNELL'S VIEW

### COOPERATION WITH DEMOCRACIES

LORD SNELL said he had always felt that the essential of British foreign policy could never be one of undeviating directness: it could never be simply or eternally consistent. A self-satisfying nation had an easy task in comparison with ours: it had only to defend its shores, but we were faced with varying and complex factors that we could not control. British foreign policy had never been one of mere self-interest, nor, on the other hand, a mere irresponsible idealism. Our fathers sought to secure the peace of the world by obtaining the cooperation of the democratic nations of their period, and now it did not

now. Foreign affairs had been grievously mismanaged. Had the courageous world been world-to-day would be a better place to live in.

## "UNREALIZABLE IDEALS"

LORD STONEHAVEN said he wondered why those who said the League must prevail refused to realize that Great Britain was only one of 50 nations. What more could we do than we had done to make the League prevail? Certain nations had found that they could ignore the dictates of the League with impunity. What was the use of reaffirming belief in the principles of an institution which had been proved unworkable?

He was surprised that Lord Plymouth had indicated, while apologizing for the failure of the League, that the Government still preferred half a League to no League. The League in its present condition was not only dangerous but mischievous. It had deluded the Chinese and the Abyssinians into thinking that they had security against aggression, and we had been humiliated by having been identified with an effort to bring pressure upon the aggressor and finding we could not bring pressure to bear.

The Government ought to take their courage in both hands, as they had done on free trade and disarmament, and say that they had done their level best by example and running great risks to make the League work, that they could not continue to take risks, and that therefore the time had come when it would be wise to put it into the category of unrealizable ideals.

He yielded to no one in the desire for improved relations with Germany, but there must be shown a greater disposition on her part to meet us half-way. There must also be a great alteration in the tone of the speeches of the German leaders. If Germany wanted attention paid to her claims she would be wise to adopt the phrasology and manner in use among nations. In considering Germany's desire for the return of some of her overseas possessions it was necessary to bear in mind the need for maintaining our strategic safety and also the interests of the inhabitants of the countries involved. If a suitable, sensible, and businesslike arrangement could be made between Germany and the rest of the Powers concerned, well and good. But noble lords opposite and people outside were doing a disservice to Germany by raising hopes for meeting her point of view while ignoring the British point of view.

## CONFLICT OF PRINCIPLES

LORD ALLEN, who was heard with difficulty in the Press gallery, was understood to say that the Covenant of the League made ample provision for making changes in a *status quo* by the machinery of the League. There was no impediment to collective action if the will to action was there. There had now come about something which should never have happened—a conflict between the principle of law and the principle of growth.

He had already, in a letter to *The Times*, pleaded that we should in no circumstances at this moment strike Article XVI out of the Covenant, and that for the purpose of common action between League and non-League Powers we should bring Article XI into the forefront of our activities—the article which enabled a more elastic procedure to be adopted. When he pleaded for appeasement, he did not mean making concessions to aggressors in the form of baits that might serve their ambition. It was not right or proper that we should be continually inviting aggressor nations to come into the League. This country had taken a lead in the visit of Viscount Halifax to Germany, which was of notable value, and it was necessary that the next step should come from another source—perhaps from the nation which Viscount Halifax visited.

The Austrian situation which had now occurred was a tragic disaster. To-day we were faced with another attempt to make a change, and to make it by forcible means. Could the Government tell the House anything of the kind of steps that were in contemplation towards reaching, not a bargain of weakness, but one of conciliation, peace, and strength? They could not solve the colonial problem by handing round colonies as if they were cards in a game of beggar-my-neighbour. There was only one way in which the colonial question could be dealt with at this stage, and that was

was apt to suggest that most people except those who agreed with him were in danger of betraying or being untrue to the ideals by which he would wish to see them inspired.

## REALIST AND IDEALIST

The wise man, however, was he who could combine qualities of both the realist and the idealist. Those two attitudes were not by any means incompatible, and it would be a great misfortune for human life if they were, because most of human life for most of them consisted in a reconciliation of New Year resolutions with New Year deeds. The whole of human life would stop unless it were possible for all, in their respective ways, to make some effective reconciliation between realities, often ugly, and ideals which, as had been said, were the foundation on which all progress depended.

It was quite possible with Lord Arnold to recognize disagreeable facts and yet to doubt whether he drew the right conclusions from them. Nobody felt more strongly than he (Lord Halifax) did how vulnerable to-day was the position of the League with the so-called coercive articles in the Covenant, and they were bound to realize how limited was the power of the League to enforce them. Lord Allen had said, "Look how successful was the Nyon Conference, where the principles of the League were in operation," and he said that the will to act was there.

Exactly: that was the whole point. It was just when there was a situation in which the will to act was there that the League principles of collective security would work. It was because the will to act was not always there with all nations that it would not always work.

No one was more sensible than the Government of the complications caused by the non-universality of the League, and he personally would make great sacrifices to redeem the League from that truncated state. But were they sure that there was no ground for the fear expressed by Lord Cecil that if, moved by those considerations, they were to follow the course of expunging Article XVI, they would not find themselves unwittingly weakening if not destroying for years to come the whole conception of international order that those articles were designed to express and promote? It was quite certain they would not get agreement on such a course, and the Advisory Committee of the League was wise, having regard to the widely differing views held in the committee on the advisability or otherwise of amending the Covenant, when it decided to adjourn and give further opportunity for consideration.

## BRITISH OBLIGATIONS

### FREEDOM TO ACT

A statement made by Lord Arnold, in arguing the case for isolation, was sufficiently important to deserve specific reference. He said: "In isolation there is a very good chance of keeping out of the next war, whereas under League policy there was no such chance at all. Under League policy, whenever war comes, wherever it is or whatever it is about, Great Britain is bound to be in it, and not only in the next European war but in all European wars."

He really cannot believe (Viscount Halifax continued) that that statement in these simple terms is true, and I am sure that on reflection he would agree that in these simple terms it is apt, to one less informed than himself, to be dangerously misleading.

It is important, I think, for me to remind your lordships how the Foreign Secretary some 15 months ago defined quite clearly the military obligations of this country in a speech at Leamington. He there defined them in specific terms. I make this assertion with complete precision that there are no other military commitments for this country and that in every other case his Majesty's Government would be wholly free to act as they might in all the circumstances of the time think right.

I do not think that it is either possible, or even always desirable, for any country to state precisely when it would or would not feel it right to enter upon armed resistance. I am quite certain it is not possible. Unless you are prepared to say, "I will always fight when the Government is attacked anywhere or that I will never fight unless I myself am directly attacked," there is always bound to

I hope it is unnecessary for any speaker of his Majesty's Government to say that effort to reach such understandings not further from the thought of that Government than an attempt to impair the smooth working of the Berlin-Rome axis, any more than conversations that we might have or that be held elsewhere we should ascribe to Germany or to Italy any Machiavellian policy of trying to interrupt close relations existing to-day between ourselves and Italy. As to Germany, the suggestion of Lord Buxton and Lord Noel-Buxton that this country be responsible for failure to reach a standing will not, I venture to assert, be a verdict of history. (Hear, hear.) I think leaves too much out.

The Prime Minister made it plain in a statement after the visit of the French Minister a few weeks ago that we were engaged in pursuing the examination of questions when I had the opportunity recently of meeting the German Chancellor. I am not in a position to-day to add to that statement beyond the assurance that it remains as true to-day as it was three weeks ago when the Prime Minister made it.

As regards Italy, I do not believe that good will on both sides it should be difficult to re-establish the relations which for so many years prevailed between our two countries, which, I believe, the peoples of both countries wish to see restored. Whatever may have our judgment on recent events, it is no way of the British people to maintain differences when the circumstances from which arose no longer remain unchanged.

## "TIME ON THE SIDE OF PEACE"

The broad purpose of foreign policy of Government of this country must be to put that which was the greatest of all British interests—namely, peace, and if at any time per cent, success in that pursuit is impossible and that is not a matter that lies within the hands of the British Government—will remain the object of the British Government protect as much as possible the cause of peace. We believe that the future of the world depends on its willingness to prefer the way of reason and of law in international affairs to the use of force.

But inasmuch as the world never stands still we have to be on our guard to see that assertion of those principles is not distorted into an attempt to obstruct all change, which one of the primary laws of all human beings. Nothing the Marquess of Lothian said greater force than his observations on this thought. I agree with him that not the least of the problems confronting us to-day is to make provision for the security of peace which must not exclude peaceful revision and change where such may rightly be required.

I do not believe, and I have never believed in the imminence of war, and in more dire conditions than one I believe time to be on the side of peace. Greater progress would in my judgment be made if we could rid our minds of the catastrophic conception of Europe on the brink of the abyss—which I think is itself largely responsible for maintaining the background which makes the whole picture look so dark.

As I see it, the truth is that Europe is in so much danger as is confused. For years since the War Europe sought, in appearance at least, to build its policy upon the League, and it is naturally disturbing when that League is the object of direct and open challenge as it is to-day. None of these considerations is absent from the mind of his Majesty's Government. I hope I have said enough to show that we are particularly sensible to the force of all the arguments that may be urged from all the different angles of this highly complicated collection of problems with which the world is faced.

I can only say that, in face of the conditions of advice that is tendered to his Majesty's Government from many quarters of the House, representing as it does sharp differences of opinion outside, they will relax their efforts that they are able to make, by whatever machinery that seems to them appropriate, to remove misunderstanding, that endange peace, and support those things that may reinforce it. (Cheers.)

The motion was, by leave, withdrawn. Their lordships rose at 14 minutes past 7 o'clock.

parallel lines." That seemed to him to be a very dangerous phrase to use, and he thought it advisable that the position should be made clear.

He (the noble marquess) agreed that the conditions under which the League of Nations functioned to-day were very different from those which prevailed when it first came into existence. It was no longer universal, and some of the most powerful nations of the world—five of them—if not actively hostile were outside it. Referring to the maintenance of the rule of law by the League, the noble marquess said that that rule only began when one had an institution which could alter the law as well as act as policemen to enforce the law.

The League was now going to have a chance of recovery. It was now clear that the automatic interpretation of Article XVI involving the obligation to go to war no longer existed, because the League was no longer universal, and an increasing number of the members of the League had said emphatically they refused that interpretation. He was more hopeful to-day about the League of Nations than he had been for a long time, because it had ceased to be an instrument trying to perpetuate the *status quo*, which in a rapidly changing world could not be expected to exist.

## THE GERMAN PROBLEM

The fundamental problem of the world to-day was still Germany. The reason was that at no time since 1919 had the rest of the world been willing to cede reasonable justice or reasonable understanding with Germany. It was still widely believed that Germany was largely responsible for the last War. A group of German and French historians had studied various documents on the matter and had issued a statement expressing agreement that the documents did not warrant the view that a deliberate desire for European war could be attributed to any Government or people in 1914.

What followed Versailles was more serious than what was done at Versailles itself. We had now convinced Germany by long experience that the only way of altering treaties was to have the power to compel their alteration. We and our associates must share a considerable measure of responsibility for the situation which now confronted us. It was because Germany was now totalitarian, because we were afraid of her, because she was a formidable menace, that we were unable or felt it difficult to give her those things which we would concede to a democratic Germany. The root of the trouble, the weight hanging over the world, was that our own follies in the past were coming home to roost.

He was not an isolationist; it was not possible to be one. Once the machine of war began to move in the world it was not possible for anybody long to avoid being dragged into it. He was against the League of Nations Union interpretation of the obligations of the Covenant.

There was only one solution. We had to combine collective justice with collective security. We had to concede to those nations who were entitled to remedies—and one was Germany—alterations in the *status quo* and incur obligations with other like-minded nations to resist changes which went beyond what impartial justice regarded as being fair. He was being driven to the conclusion that unless the democracies were willing to face the obligations of war we should be driven inexorably to retreat in the face of the kind of menace that we had seen applied to Austria in the last few days.

## LORD SNELL'S VIEW COOPERATION WITH DEMOCRACIES

LORD SNELL said he had always felt that the essential of British foreign policy could never be one of undeviating directness; it could never be simply or eternally consistent. A self-satisfying nation had an easy task in comparison with ours; it had only to defend its shores, but we were faced with varying and complex factors that we could not control. British foreign policy had never been one of mere self-interest, nor, on the other hand, a mere irresponsible idealism. Our fathers sought to secure the peace of the world by obtaining the cooperation of the democratic nations of their period, and now it did not

between nations and respect for international law. Foreign affairs had been grievously mismanaged. Had the courageous word been spoken in 1932 and on occasions since the world to-day would be a better place to live in.

## "UNREALIZABLE IDEALS"

LORD STONEHAVEN said he wondered why those who said the League must prevail refused to realize that Great Britain was only one of 50 nations. What more could we do than we had done to make the League prevail? Certain nations had found that they could ignore the dictates of the League with impunity. What was the use of reaffirming belief in the principles of an institution which had been proved unworkable?

He was surprised that Lord Plymouth had indicated, while apologizing for the failure of the League, that the Government still preferred half a League to no League. The League in its present condition was not only dangerous but mischievous. It had deluded the Chinese and the Abyssinians into thinking that they had security against aggression, and we had been humiliated by having been identified with an effort to bring pressure upon the aggressor and finding we could not bring pressure to bear.

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## CONFLICT OF PRINCIPLES

LORD ALLEN, who was heard with difficulty in the Press gallery, was understood to say that the Covenant of the League made ample provision for making changes in a *status quo* by the machinery of the League. There was no impediment to collective action if the will to action was there. There had now come about something which should never have happened—a conflict between the principle of law and the principle of growth.

He had already, in a letter to *The Times*, pleaded that we should in no circumstances at this moment strike Article XVI out of the Covenant, and that for the purpose of common action between League and non-League Powers we should bring Article XI into the forefront of our activities—the article which enabled a more elastic procedure to be adopted. When he pleaded for appeasement, he did not mean making concessions to aggressors in the form of baits that might serve their ambition. It was not right or proper that we should be continually inviting aggressor nations to come into the League. This country had taken a lead in the visit of Viscount Halifax to Germany, which was of notable value, and it was necessary that the next step should come from another source—perhaps from the nation which Viscount Halifax visited.

The Austrian situation which had now occurred was a tragic disaster. To-day we were faced with another attempt to make a change, and to make it by forcible means. Could the Government tell the House anything of the kind of steps that were in contemplation towards reaching, not a bargain of weakness, but one of conciliation, peace, and strength? They could not solve the colonial problem by handing round colonies as if they were cards in a game of beggar-my-neighbour. There was only one way in which the colonial question could be dealt with at this stage, and that was

we apt to suggest that most people except those who agreed with him were in danger of betraying or being untrue to the ideals by which he would wish to see them inspired.

## REALIST AND IDEALIST

The wise man, however, was he who could combine qualities of both the realist and the idealist. Those two attitudes were not by any means incompatible, and it would be a great misfortune for human life if they were, because most of human life for most of them consisted in a reconciliation of New Year resolutions with New Year deeds. The whole of human life would stop unless it were possible for all, in their respective ways, to make some effective reconciliation between realities, often ugly, and ideals which, as had been said, were the foundation on which all progress depended.

It was quite possible with Lord Arnold to recognize disagreeable facts and yet to doubt whether he drew the right conclusions from them. Nobody felt more strongly than he (Lord Halifax) did how vulnerable to-day was the position of the League with the so-called coercive articles in the Covenant, and they were bound to realize how limited was the power of the League to enforce them. Lord Allen had said, "Look how successful was the Nyon Conference, where the principles of the League were in operation," and he said that the will to act was there.

Exactly; that was the whole point. It was just when there was a situation in which the will to act was there that the League principles of collective security would work. It was because the will to act was not always there with all nations that it would not always work.

No one was more sensible than the Government of the complications caused by the non-universality of the League, and he personally would make great sacrifices to redeem the League from that truncated state. But were they sure that there was no ground for the fear expressed by Lord Cecil that if, moved by those considerations, they were to follow the course of expunging Article XVI, they would not find themselves unwittingly weakening if not destroying for years to come the whole conception of international order that those articles were designed to express and promote? It was quite certain they would not get agreement on such a course, and the Advisory Committee of the League was wise, having regard to the widely differing views held in the committee on the advisability or otherwise of amending the Covenant, when it decided to adjourn and give further opportunity for consideration.

## BRITISH OBLIGATIONS

### FREEDOM TO ACT

A statement made by Lord Arnold, in arguing the case for isolation, was sufficiently important to deserve specific reference. He said: "In isolation there is a very good chance of keeping out of the next war, whereas under League policy there was no such chance at all. Under League policy, whenever war comes, wherever it is or whatever it is about, Great Britain is bound to be in it, and not only in the next European war but in all European wars."

He really cannot believe (Viscount Halifax continued) that that statement in these simple terms is true, and I am sure that on reflection he would agree that in these simple terms it is apt, to one less informed than himself, to be dangerously misleading.

It is important, I think, for me to remind your lordships how the Foreign Secretary some 15 months ago defined quite clearly the military obligations of this country in a speech at Leamington. He there defined them in specific terms. I make this assertion with complete precision that there are no other military commitments for this country and that in every other case his Majesty's Government would be wholly free to act as they might in all the circumstances of the time think right.

I do not think that it is either possible, or even always desirable, for any country to state precisely when it would or would not feel it right to enter upon armed resistance. I am quite certain it is not possible. Unless you are prepared to say, "I will always fight when the Government is attacked anywhere or that I will never fight unless I myself am directly attacked," there is always bound to

## FRIENDSHIP WITH ITA

I hope it is unnecessary for any spokesman of his Majesty's Government to say that effort to reach such understandings not further from the thought of that Government than an attempt to impair the smooth w of the Berlin-Rome axis, any more than conversations that we might have or th be held elsewhere we should ascr Germany or to Italy any Machiavellian of trying to interrupt close relations existing to-day between ourselves and I As to Germany, the suggestion of Lord and Lord Noel-Buxton that this count been responsible for failure to reach standing will not, I venture to assert, verdict of history. (Hear, hear.) I thi leaves too much out.

The Prime Minister made it plain statement after the visit of the French Mi a few weeks ago that we were energe pursuing the examination of questions when I had the opportunity recently of n the German Chancellor. I am not in a p to-day to add to that statement beyond the assurance that it remains as true to it was three weeks ago when the Prime M made it.

As regards Italy, I do not believe that good will on both sides it should be diffi re-establish the relations which for so years prevailed between our two countri which, I believe, the peoples of both co wish to see restored. Whatever may hav our judgment on recent events, it is n way of the British people to maintain ences when the circumstances from whic arose no longer remain unchanged.

## "TIME ON THE SIDE O PEACE"

The broad purpose of foreign policy Government of this country must be to r that which was the greatest of all Briti terests—namely, peace, and if at any tim per cent. success in that pursuit is impos and that is not a matter that lies wholly hands of the British Government—it will remain the object of the British Govern protect as much as possible the cause of j We believe that the future of the world de on its willingness to prefer the way of r and of law in international affairs to the i force.

But inasmuch as the world never stand we have to be on our guard to see th assertion of those principles is not dist into an attempt to obstruct all change, wh one of the primary laws of all human Nothing the Marquess of Lothian said greater force than his observations on thought. I agree with him that not the of the problems confronting us to-day make provision for the security of peace must not exclude peaceful revision and cl where such may rightly be required.

I do not believe, and I have never bel in the imminence of war, and in more c tions than one I believe time to be on the of peace. Greater progress would in my ment be made if we could rid our minds catastrophic conception of Europe on the l of the abyss—which I think is itself la responsible for maintaining the backgr which makes the whole picture look so dar

As I see it, the truth is that Europe i so much dangerous as confused. For since the War Europe sought, in appeara least, to build its policy upon the League, it is naturally disturbing when that basis i object of direct and open challenge as to-day. None of these considerations is al from the mind of his Majesty's Govern I hope I have said enough to show that w particularly sensible to the force of all arguments that may be urged from all the ferent angles of this highly complicated c tion of problems with which the world to is faced.

I can only say that, in face of confli advice that is tendered to his Maje Government from many quarters of House, representing as it does sharp di ences of opinion outside, they will relax efforts that they are able to make, by what machinery that seems to them appropriat remove misunderstanding, that endan peace, and support those things that reinforce it. (Cheers.)

The motion was, by leave, withdrawn. \* Their lordships rose at 14 minutes 7 o'clock.

The Times, Friday 18 February 1938

Neilsen did