

# FOCUS

*A Footnote to the History of the Thirties*

by

EUGEN SPIER

With an introduction by

LADY VIOLET BONHAM CARTER, D.B.E.

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TO my loving  
And beloved wife  
Henny

“...the great theories of government which the British race devised and which the English-speaking people have adopted are closely associated with the system of religious ethics, and are the foundation upon which civilisation stands, and without which it will fall.”

From an address by Sir Winston Churchill to the “Focus for the Defence of Freedom and Peace”.



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## INTRODUCTION

THE *Footnote to the History of the Thirties* here recorded by Mr. Eugen Spier lives in my memory as a ray of light on one of history's darkest pages. I welcome the opportunity of writing these few introductory words, if only because it enables me to pay my grateful tribute to its author and to the vital part he played both in the inception of Sir Winston Churchill's "Focus in Defence of Freedom and Peace" and in all its subsequent struggles and activities. It was due to his generosity and single-minded devotion to our cause that we were able to go into immediate and effective action.

We had at the outset no material and little moral backing. We were a small group of like-minded individuals swimming against the tide—not only of government policy but of the prevailing public attitude and mood. Our national leaders, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Baldwin, reflected and expressed the general desire for a quiet life—at home and (if possible) abroad.

Tranquillity, Safety First, Appeasement—these were the watchwords behind which the British people marched, or rather crawled, throughout the Thirties. Translated into practice, Tranquillity meant the passive acceptance of great social evils such as mass unemployment in our midst; Safety First was the policy which led us so blindly and so unprepared into the Second World War; Appeasement was the pursuit of peace at any price which other people could be made to pay.

Sir Winston Churchill was in the shadows, at odds with his own party and with all the powers that be. It is revealing, that a bare three months before the outbreak of war, *The Times* refused to publish a letter in which I made a plea for his inclusion in the government unless I consented to excise the sentence which contained it. Under the banner headline *Is Winston worth it?* *Truth* commented on "the factitious, interested and altogether contemptible campaign over his inclusion in the

Cabinet": and added, "Why not make a job of it and have Vic Oliver in too?"

Such were the Thirties. They have been described as "the years that the locusts have eaten", "the years when England slept". No one who did not live through them can imagine the agonising vigil of those few who were awake and resolved to waken others. We recognised in Winston Churchill the spearhead of our salvation, the voice which could arouse the sleeping conscience of our people both to their honour and their peril. It was our aim to make that voice heard far and wide, to set his light upon a candlestick, to open the eyes of the blind and make the deaf hear, to bring home to our government of (so-called) realists the stark realities which stared us in the face. This may seem to have been an ambitious goal for sixteen individuals gathered round a table at the Victoria Hotel, without funds, organisation or any visible means of support either from press or public. We were armed only with a burning sense of urgency and an absolute faith both in our cause and in our leader.

We naturally incurred much criticism and contumely. We were denounced as "war-mongers" and also, paradoxically, as "Geneva gas-bags"; "blood-thirsty pacifists" conveniently combined the two. We were rebuked by Elder Statesmen as impractical idealists who wished to involve our country in "a quarrel about ideologies". "But," replied Winston Churchill, "surely we must have an opinion between Right and Wrong?... There must be a moral basis for British foreign policy.... It is this conflict of moral and spiritual ideas which gives the free countries a great part of their strength...." And, in a speech to the House of Commons, "There is no high explosive so powerful as the soul of a free people". It was this "high explosive" that we were trying to ignite. At a great Focus meeting in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester he thus declared our aims: "Arm and stand by the Covenant. In this alone lies the assurance of safety, the defence of freedom and the hope of peace."

One of our most serious handicaps was the refusal of the press, with a few honourable exceptions, to report our meetings. Mr. Wickham Steed has given a clue to the reasons for this boycott in his book *The Press*: "Certain large advertising agents had warned journals for which they provided much revenue, that advertisements would be withheld from them should they 'play

up' the international crisis and cause an alarm which was bad for trade." This muting and muffling of the facts of international life prevailed not only in commercial but in social circles, where to mention disagreeable subjects like Hitler, concentration camps or the persecution of the Jews, was considered rank bad form. Perverse optimism or deliberate escapism was the order of those days. It was as though a fireproof curtain had been dropped between our people and reality. We strove against desperate odds to make a breakthrough.

It may be said, and with some justice, that we strove in vain. Although I believe we helped to turn the tide of public feeling, it turned too late to keep pace with events or to arrest their course. We realised that we had lost the race with time as, one by one, we passed the milestones to catastrophe. Air parity gone—the Anglo-German Naval Treaty signed—Italy's invasion of Abyssinia—the false dawn of sham sanctions and their abandonment, which spelt the League of Nations' doom—the occupation and remilitarisation of the Rhineland in breach of the Treaties of Locarno and Versailles—Mr. Chamberlain's refusal of President Roosevelt's offer to convene a conference, described by Winston Churchill as "the rejection of the last frail chance to save the world from tyranny otherwise than by war."

The tempo quickens—Austria is subjugated, Czechoslovakia is threatened, Litvinov pledges Soviet Russia to defend her if France is loyal to her obligations, Maisky visits Winston Churchill and suggests a Three Power Declaration by France, Russia and Great Britain—the chance to forge the Triple Alliance, dreaded by Hitler, is rejected—Chamberlain's three ill-starred flights to plead with Hitler—the agony of Czechoslovakia—the final betrayal of Munich.

Two scenes are seared upon my memory. One is the meeting of the Focus at seven o'clock on Munich night at the Savoy Hotel. We had already lunched together, and during the afternoon a telegram had been drafted, addressed to the Prime Minister at Munich, adjuring him in the strongest terms not to betray the Czechs. Winston Churchill suggested that it should be signed by himself, Mr. Eden, Lord Lloyd, Lord Cecil, Mr. Attlee and Sir Archibald Sinclair. Cecil, Lloyd and Sinclair were eager to sign, but Anthony Eden refused on the ground that it would be interpreted as an act of hostility to Chamberlain. Attlee, with

whom Noel-Baker pleaded urgently, refused to sign without the approval of his party, who were meeting at some watering-place a fortnight hence. (A fortnight hence—whilst every minute the sands were running out, and a free people's fate and our pledged word hung in the balance!) Leaden despair descended on us as we realised our helplessness; and when we parted there were tears in Winston Churchill's eyes.

Another unforgettable experience was Jan Masaryk's visit to me early the next morning when the terms were known. He told me that our Minister in Prague had presented them to Benes, and demanded an acceptance within two hours. Benes and his government were resigning. I can still see the anguish in Jan's eyes and feel my own burning shame at our dishonour and defeat.

From this last "awful milestone" onward, the Focus gathered ever-increasing strength, and new allies and supporters joined our ranks. Fierce passions raged throughout the country, dividing parties, families and life-long friends. Yet when the final hour struck, our people rose to meet its challenge, calm, resolute, united. That hour at long last enabled Winston Churchill's fellow-countrymen to see him plain. For some of us the last years had been darkened by a fear even greater than the fear of war, the fear of another "Peace with Honour", which to some had brought no Honour and for none had purchased Peace, the fear that we might not stand. To these it came as a relief to know that the retreat was over, and that our country, which throughout its history had held the line of freedom, was true to its traditions and itself.

It must here be recorded, to our shame, that on the outbreak of war, when Mr. Spier hastened to offer to our government any service he could give, he was arrested without charge or warrant, and thrown into an Internment Camp where he found himself surrounded by prominent Nazis. (One of the first to greet him was Hitler's play-boy Dr. Putzi Hanfstaengl.) In this company he spent the next two years in five different Internment Camps, was deported to Canada, and finally returned to England and released in 1941. Such was the reward he received from a free country for his selfless service to the cause of freedom.

*Noel Bonham Carter*

## FOREWORD

IMMEDIATELY after the Second World War I began to collect material that I could use in writing the history of the Focus. It had accomplished a great task, and I did not wish it, nor those who had contributed so much to its success, to be forgotten. Eventually I consulted some of my Focus colleagues about publishing my manuscript. They all agreed, indeed urged me to publish it as an important footnote to history. But Mr. Churchill was an exception. He did not favour the idea and, because of my great respect for him, I bowed to his wishes.

But my former colleagues went on pressing me to publish. They could not understand Mr. Churchill's reluctance, and the only explanation that occurred to them was the one given to me by Lady Violet Bonham Carter, namely that at the time I approached him he was still in office. After he had given up the premiership I wrote to him again but neither this nor subsequent requests could make him change his mind. Finally he wrote to me that he would prefer publication after his death, but would not insist.

After long deliberation I felt that I ought not to wait, and that it was important that this story should be recounted now when similar issues face us.

The work of the Focus has never been publicly recognised. That is partly due to the fact that it never was a highly organised body. It had a membership but no officers, save a secretary—and no subscription. Members defrayed expenses as they saw fit. The second reason is that being a loose association of like-minded people working for a common purpose, we made no publicity for the Focus as such. Later on it was easy to forget the part it played in creating a platform for Winston Churchill at a time when he was in the political wilderness. To create such a platform in the face of much opposition was a task of extreme difficulty, but events justified us. In the first volume of his

war memoirs *The Gathering Storm* (pp. 195-6) Churchill wrote :

"... the culmination of the campaign was to be a meeting in the Albert Hall. Here on December 3rd *we*<sup>1</sup> gathered many of the leading men from all parties, strong Tories of the Right Wing earnestly convinced of the national peril, the leaders of the League of Nations Peace Ballot, the representatives of the many great trade unions, including, in the chair, my old opponent Sir Walter Citrine, and of the Liberal Party and its leader Sir Archibald Sinclair. *We*<sup>1</sup> had the feeling that *we*<sup>1</sup> were upon the threshold of not only gaining respect for our views but of making them dominant."

There are some minor errors here, probably slips of memory. The meeting was not the culmination, but the beginning of the campaign, and the *we* was the Focus, and only the Focus, which had with much difficulty assembled the distinguished audience to which Churchill refers. Prominent among the speakers and in no small way responsible for the meeting were Lady Violet Bonham Carter and A. M. Wall, secretary of the London Trades Council. Wickham Steed, Sir Robert Waley-Cohen and Sir Norman Angell also played an important part in bringing about this meeting, and their good work should not be forgotten. It is time that the credit for the work accomplished should be given to those to whom it is due, i.e. the Focus. Hence this book.

Eugen Spier

### POSTSCRIPT

In the years that have passed since the Focus undertook its work I have reflected much on the deeper causes of the crisis through which we passed and have come to the conclusion, which has become a passionate conviction, that the root cause of the crisis and of our failure to grapple with it in time, was the divorce between our ethico-religious standards and the practical conduct of our policies. Until that rift disappears and until civilised men conform in public life to those standards by which the best of them govern their private conduct, there can be no peace in the world, nor can freedom and our civilisation be preserved. The world is in a state of rapid and deep-reaching change. In many ways the situation today is akin to that which

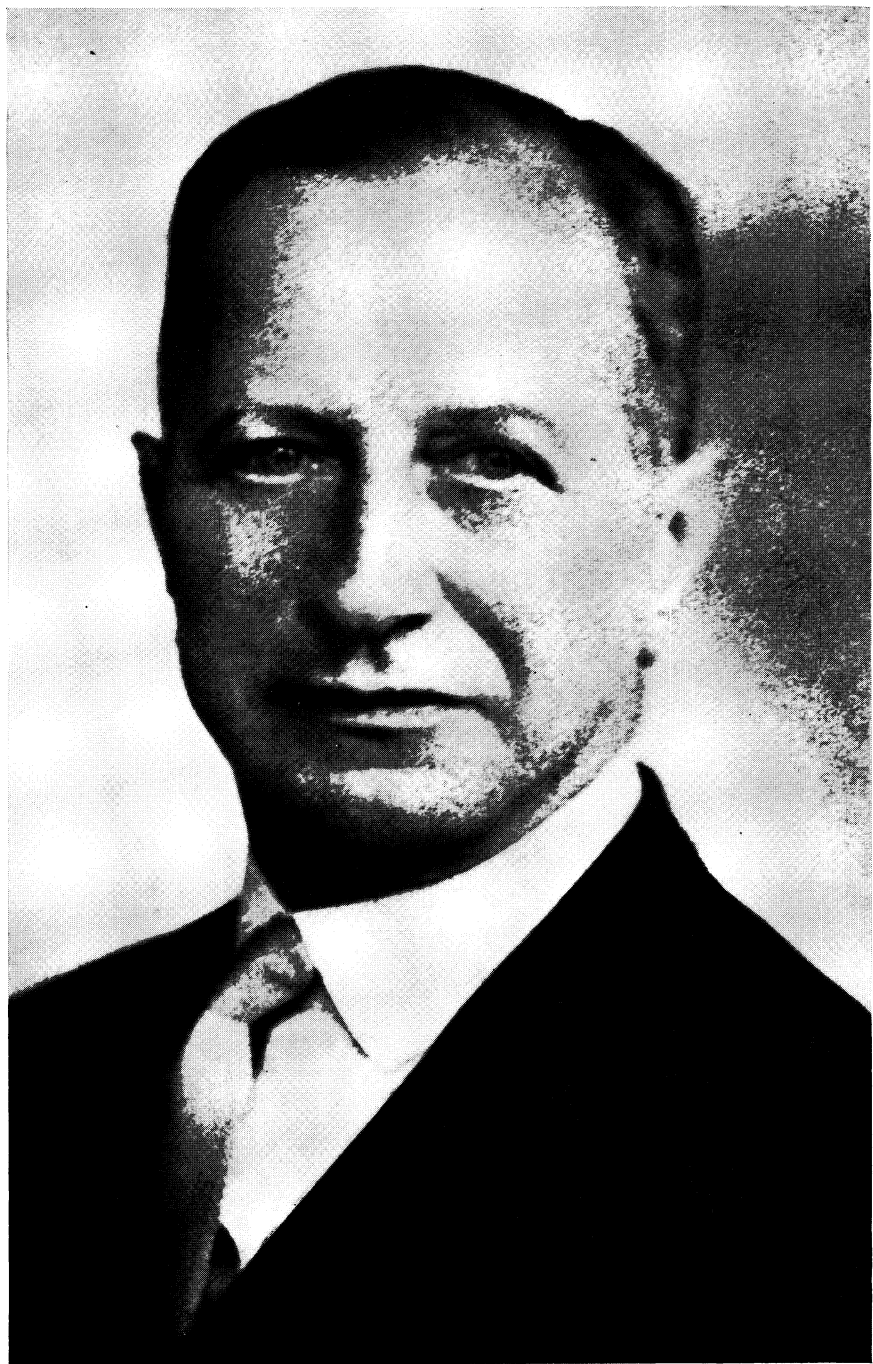
<sup>1</sup> My italics.



confronted us between 1933 and 1939; it requires the same effort of comprehension and enlightenment and also the same burning convictions as were required then. At that time it was my deepest feeling that material rearmament was of little avail unless there was also an intellectual and spiritual re-awakening. I feel that just as deeply today, and I am also convinced that no military disarmament should take place until we have achieved a high level of ethico-religious armament, thereby doubling our vigilance and defence against the enemies of true democratic freedom and peace.

E. S.





THE AUTHOR



## CHAPTER I

### FIRST CONTACTS

HAVING been resident in Britain for many years, yet maintaining personal and business ties with Germany, the country of which I was technically a subject, I could follow developments in the latter country with a critical eye. If its moral and material disintegration and the moral, political and economic burdens imposed on the German people began with the Versailles Treaty, the decline was intensified by the refusal of the Allied governments to give adequate support to that democratic nucleus in Germany which believed in the principles of freedom and justice. In these circumstances it was easy for Hitler, who promised salvation from crisis and the rehabilitation of Germany, to obtain a following. He managed to convince a very large number of Germans that all their sufferings were due to the actions of morally bankrupt enemies who posed as the champions of democracy. Relentless war was declared on democracy as such which was openly depicted as the arch-enemy.

Hitler never concealed his aim. For some three thousand years the Jews had been known to stand for religious freedom, freedom of conscience and democratic principles, and as such to be consistent opponents of dictatorship and tyranny; therefore they were singled out for extermination in the name of a purely Aryan Germany. That campaign had been waged long before Hitler used the democratic process to seize and then usurp power, but it was only when persecution was in full swing that it began to become obvious to people outside Germany. There were also many innocent people inside Germany who became caught up in and dared not resist the ruthless and deafening Nazi propaganda of lies and falsifications.

Naturally the first reaction came from the Jews who were faced with the problem of refugees abroad, while the communities inside Germany were exposed to vile brutalities. Jewish

sufferings roused the sympathy of clear-sighted liberals in all countries and much was done to help them.

But I felt that it was wrong to concentrate on the sufferings of the Jews, and that more was needed of the British people than mere sympathy and indignation. Hitler had other aims beyond the extermination of a hated race and their religion with its deep-rooted ethical teachings and laws. His propaganda, which for a time was very successful, represented what was happening in Germany as a necessary political purge of citizens who were fundamentally hostile to his godless state, and as a purely domestic affair. Therefore it was of no concern to the governments and people of other countries, despite the fact that the Nazi state did not recognise the accepted European conception of either law or justice.

It seemed to me that what had to be brought home to those governments and individuals was not the suffering of individuals, but the doctrine that lay behind that persecution. Here, as often before, antisemitism was being used as a veil to cover an attack on all God-fearing people in general and upon democracy in particular. Here again the world at large failed to comprehend that antisemitism is not only a Jewish problem, but more a non-Jewish problem, a problem for all those who believe in a law-abiding society. Hitler was planning a greater Germany which would ultimately embrace all Europe and possibly beyond, an empire to be achieved if necessary by war and to be governed by men who were hostile to everything that Western Europe held sacred, religion, humanity, culture, the churches, the universities, and every democratic institution. And it should be maintained as an atheist totalitarian state by methods of sheer brutality. The worship of God and the rule of law were to cease, and freedom would go down into bloody darkness in which free men would not be allowed to live.

I was grateful for the kindly help given to the refugees in this country, but felt ever more strongly that only the emotions were being stirred. The British government, under Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin, was entirely ignorant of the real issues at stake. It either did not know, or preferred to ignore, the menace to Britain and the Commonwealth of an absolute state resolved on conquest and freed from opposition at home. The government either did not intend or was unable to create a sense

of alarm in the public; no real effort was made to open their eyes to the dangers, moral, political and material, that threatened their very existence as a free and democratic people. On the other hand Nazi propaganda flooded the country, and the unchallenged lie appeared to be the truth. It was high time for the average British citizen to realise what was at stake, not just the existence of a persecuted minority but his own safety, and maybe his own survival.

About this time groups embracing members of every religious and political body were being organised up and down the country to bring help to victims of Nazi brutality. From 1933 onwards I was being continuously approached to assist in fighting antisemitism. Among those who came to see me was a Mr. A. H. Richards who sought my co-operation both in combating Hitler's propaganda and in helping his victims. Many prominent people had already promised to help. I told him that I would certainly support any such effort, but in my view it should not be devoted exclusively to the Jewish cause. The real issue affected every one of us, Jew or Gentile, every one, that is, who believed in a law-abiding society that acknowledged God as the supreme authority and the divine origin of the laws governing our moral conduct in every sphere of life. This was the fundamental concept of our way of life, and that way of life was now being threatened by the atheist Nazis. The threat was not to the Jews alone, but to every democrat and to every democratic institution. They hoped to eradicate democracy completely, and what faced us was at once a religious-ethical and a military issue. We could not with impunity separate the one from the other. Together they imposed on us a duty and the fulfilment of that duty would be the strongest and best guarantee of the establishment and maintenance of a peace based on freedom and justice.

Richards was much excited by my views. They represented, he declared, just what he and his friends were thinking, but he had not felt it wise to make his first approach to me in such terms. He had been given to understand that I was deeply affected by the sufferings of my fellow-Jews and he had therefore raised antisemitism as the primary issue.

He then disclosed the names of some of the people with whom he was associated. To my joy they included Winston Churchill,

Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Wickham Steed, Commander Locker-Lampson, Sir Robert Mond, Sir Robert Waley-Cohen and Sir Archibald Sinclair. He could not give me further details as everything was in its initial stages; there was no real organisation as yet, no literature and no defined programme. But if I wanted to learn more about it, I should come to their next luncheon meeting, a confidential affair to be held in a private room at a West End hotel. I accepted gladly with a happy feeling that I was coming nearer my goal, but I did not think then that Richards and I would work together until his death some twenty years later.

A few weeks later the invitation arrived for the middle of June, 1935, together with a list of the other guests; Churchill was to be in the chair. I made a point of getting to the appointed place well before time, so that Richards could introduce me to the organising secretary and tell me about my fellow-guests. Richards warned me not to call the assembly a group, and when I asked if it was not a group what was it, he shrugged his shoulders and said that so far they had not been able to agree on a name. He promised to discuss this and other difficulties with me later.

Richards made a special point of introducing me to Sir Robert Mond, the brother of the first Lord Melchett, who was giving the lunch. Then I was introduced to Lady Violet, to Churchill and to Wickham Steed. In all we were some sixteen. Churchill was at the head of the table with Lady Violet beside him at his special request. I was seated between Mond and Richards. The atmosphere was pleasant and the conversation stimulating, although I felt that as an unknown quantity I was being carefully scrutinised. Churchill appeared to be enjoying a lively conversation with Lady Violet, but looked alternately grim and cheerful, cheerful about the gathering, grim about the political situation.

After lunch, armed with a cigar, he rose to address us. He began with some general references to the unsatisfactory state of our defences compared with the all-out effort being made by the Nazis. The government was just shutting its eyes to these disquieting facts. Virtually the whole population of Germany was being turned into a single gigantic war-machine, and the individual German was being denied every personal right and freedom, reduced to a mere cog in the wheel of destruction. For Great



Britain rearmament was now a matter of life or death. At this Sir Archibald Sinclair muttered his disapproval, but Churchill would not give way and emphasised his point with even greater vigour. I admired the way in which he convincingly brushed aside Sinclair's opposition and how in the end Sinclair smiled approval.

Looking around to make certain that no waiter or other outsider was listening, he said to us: "You will understand that this meeting is private; no notes are to be taken and no information whatsoever must be given to the press." Thereupon he gave us some figures about the shortcomings of our rearmament effort, particularly about the Royal Air Force, figures that were gravely disquieting when compared to what the Nazis were doing. "In this democratic country," he went on, "it is for the members of Parliament to bring their influence to bear on the Cabinet. And it is for us here to keep the public adequately and continuously informed so as to offset the damage done by German propaganda. At present the British public and press are very much the victims of the Nazi Ministry of Information and its lies; it has collared the press, the radio and every other instrument for spreading news. The task of this assembly is thus as difficult as it is indispensable and urgent. We must make an all-party effort, create a source from which unbiased and objective information will constantly flow to the government and to the whole country. We must spare no effort to enlist the support of men and women from every section of our community irrespective of party, creed and class. I fully realise that this is a task as difficult as it is worthy. I am also aware that this task is made more difficult on account of the most regrettable pro-Nazi attitude of a considerable section of the national press. I am therefore greatly pleased and much encouraged to see already here, in this modest but truly representative meeting, a very promising omen for our future. For this I am most grateful. But it is only a beginning. We must march forward with faith and determination in order to overcome all the many obstacles which stand in our path."

He then went on to say that, in order to get ourselves sufficiently organised, we should start by framing our policy in the form of a manifesto setting forth our aims, and on this basis enlist members and supporters from every section of the public. He

proceeded to outline that policy in general terms and the sort of manifesto we should issue. We must ourselves be determined to resist, and to join others in resisting, any aggression, armed or unarmed, which threatened our way of life in freedom, justice and peace, and to make it clear that Britain and the Commonwealth were prepared to stand for the defence of human rights and for the rule of law among nations. "British leadership and action may yet save Europe and our grand civilisation whose very existence is being threatened by the Nazis."

Churchill then suggested that the details of such a manifesto should be worked out by a special drafting committee, which was immediately established with Steed as chairman. Waley-Cohen and Lady Violet agreed to serve on the committee and promised their full assistance and co-operation. The secretary was instructed to take the necessary steps to meet the requirements of the committee, and to make arrangements for the next meeting at which the draft manifesto would be discussed.

The secretary agreed, but asked where the money to defray expenses was to come from. His bald request came like the explosion of a bomb. Expressions of embarrassment appeared on every side, and Churchill himself looked displeased, even angry. For a moment it looked as if the whole effort was about to come to grief. To avert catastrophe I took Richards aside and asked him to announce that all our requirements had been taken care of. The tension was immediately eased. Churchill seemed greatly relieved and the other guests were clearly delighted.

When they left I stayed behind to have a word with Mond to thank him for his hospitality. I asked him if the secretary who had dropped this brick was his nominee, as I had been informed. Sir Robert denied this; in fact he personally had no use for the gentleman in question. I suggested that we ought to have a full-time secretary and, provided that he and the others agreed, I would put forward Richards as very suitable for the post. Sir Robert thought this a very good idea and volunteered to recommend Richards to the others; he was sure that they would approve.

On the basis of this assurance I asked Richards to come to my office where I made such financial arrangements with him as would leave him free to devote himself entirely to the work. Then I hurried home, for my wife was very anxious to hear

about my first meeting with Churchill. I told her the whole story, about the guests and our future activities, adding that everything was extremely confidential and that we must not breathe a word to anyone. So as to avoid a leakage of information, if a casual remark were to be overheard, we vowed never to mention Churchill's name in this connection, and for added secrecy we agreed to refer to him in conversation as *Oscar*. *Oscar* means "the spear of God".

## CHAPTER II

### EXTENDING OUR RANGE

IN due course Richards was unanimously confirmed as full-time secretary, and we lost no time in organising our future work on the lines Churchill had indicated. First, we had to produce a draft of the manifesto defining our aims and principles. The credit for doing it was mainly due to Steed, Lady Violet, Norman Angell, Waley-Cohen and, not least, to Richards, who was never discouraged despite depressing setbacks. The draft was discussed and amended in the light of further suggestions and, once agreed upon, was sent to Churchill, who gave his approval without making any alterations of substance. We then proceeded to make contact with a number of prominent and representative individuals, and soon had a list of about a hundred names. Each had to be approached privately and in great confidence. Our first members were very helpful, and Churchill himself was always available for guidance and interviews. Not a day passed without some interview or conference; it was encouraging to see how readily nearly everyone responded to our aims and principles.

But when it came to getting public support we discovered to our distress that most of those who had expressed their agreement with us, drew a sharp distinction between their personal views and an official statement with which they would be prepared to be publicly associated. Such an association might lead people to believe that these were the views of the party or association to which they belonged. And this had to be avoided. But it was our whole object to come before the public on the broadest basis possible. So we were now compelled to accept the fact that we could not obtain a binding commitment to co-operate publicly even after a satisfactory initial meeting in private, and that the matter had always to be referred to the party or association. This meant new interviews, fresh modifications and the manifesto itself reviewed and redrafted to meet new requirements. Yet another difficulty appeared. Some individuals were

willing to be associated with us, but under no condition would they become subscribers to a new group until they had approved our articles of association. Finally we decided not to form a regular association with a membership, but simply to call ourselves a "focus" for defence of freedom and peace, and to have neither rules nor members. After much discussion this was agreed to. So the Focus originated, both as a name and as an acting body.

There was yet another difficulty. Our future associates wholeheartedly approved our aims, but were by no means prepared to appear with each other on a public platform. There was, for instance, great difficulty in getting Sir Walter Citrine to appear together with Churchill, mainly on account of their differences during the General Strike, and even to get them to meet informally to discuss the matter needed the utmost patience. In the end we did, however, succeed. I should make it clear that Churchill was never the cause of such delay or argument. He put the cause of democracy above party obligations and any personal grievances from the past.

Nor did Lady Violet ever make difficulties. On the contrary, she was most helpful in removing obstacles, for she was the very embodiment of freedom and peace, although she preferred to transpose the wording to "peace and freedom". Churchill rightly called her the brain of the Asquiths, but I felt that she was the body, soul and very incarnation of everything for which freedom and peace stood. Her courage, her love of freedom, her integrity, her eloquence and her wonderful personality would have qualified her for the highest office. She much admired Winston Churchill in those days, regarding him as a real genius. Once I told her how much I admired his extraordinary memory, which I thought was a pre-requisite of genius. Lady Violet disagreed; she thought a man could be a genius without having a good memory. That I contested, for we know only what we remember; what ones does not remember one does not know. Although we never reached agreement on this point, we did see eye-to-eye on the more important issues, those confronting the Focus and all of us.

We had collected enough evidence to make it clear that a majority of the British people was unwilling to support or accept the Nazi way of life, which to them was akin to lunacy. The

more they learned about it, the more they detested and resented it, and the more hateful the Nazis seemed. We could, therefore, with greater confidence work out a more detailed programme, of which the main feature was a great public meeting in the Albert Hall.

While we were busy on all this Hitler, in accordance with his programme, marched into the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland (March 7th, 1936) in defiance of the Locarno Treaty. France properly protested against this breach. Churchill told us that he had no doubts about the duties of the member states of the League of Nations, including Britain; they were unconditional and absolute. He wanted the League's authority to be upheld; the case was clear and the League was capable of action; indeed Britain alone or France could provide it with the necessary strength. Steed agreed with this view and Angell argued with great emphasis and conviction that the League had now its greatest opportunity to justify both collective security and its own existence. However, this was not the view of the government which more than ever spoke in terms of appeasement. It lightly dismissed the Rhineland incident as unimportant; nor did it share the view that Hitler's unopposed and arbitrary action was decisive for the consolidation of his power and prestige inside and outside Germany. The moderate elements in that country and liberals all over Europe were shocked and disheartened by the British government's attitude and the impotence of the League. The statements made in support of the government's policy were irresponsible, and a frivolous and flagrant betrayal of our commitment to uphold and defend the rule of law. Richards was asked to obtain the views of other Focus members, and in particular their reaction to Lothian's statement that after all Hitler was only going into his own back-garden, a remark which Austen Chamberlain regarded as most damaging.<sup>1</sup> My personal reply was as follows:

"I am not in a position to comment on the treaty implications so far as the purely territorial issues are concerned, which I think are of secondary importance. What, however, is of extreme importance is that the laws governing our international relations have been callously ignored and indeed ridiculed. To illustrate my point I would like to propound an imaginary situation.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, p. 153.

Imagine I had £5,000 standing to my credit in the bank; the assumption is, I repeat, hypothetical. I go at night, break into the bank and take away my £5,000. Could such an action be deemed legally right and not treated as a punishable offence? Or suppose I went to the bank during office hours, and presented a properly drawn cheque and, upon the cashier's refusal to let me have my money, jumped over the counter and took it, would such an action be considered law-abiding and not liable to punishment? Is it not agreed by all the standards of civilised countries that, on not obtaining the payment due to me, I have to take the matter to court and abide by a judge's decision. Otherwise we abandon accepted legal principles and return to the law of the jungle, by which the physically strongest can get away with anything, even murder. In my humble opinion, I feel confident that we can rectify the position without resorting to war or any other form of direct military conflict. We should warn Hitler unconditionally that if any other breach of treaty or pledged word occurs, we shall immediately and without further conference or meeting, withdraw our ambassador from Germany, ask all British citizens to leave Germany and require the German ambassador and all Nazi German subjects to leave this country at once. And, unless and until the breach of law has been completely rectified, there would be no change in that position. We should leave Hitler in no doubt that this time we intend to do exactly what we say, and that we have the whole nation behind us. We should act immediately, whether or not other members of the League act with us, for any conditioning of our action would mean delay—and delay is what we are determined to avoid."

We all took a very serious view of the Rhineland occupation and were not to be tricked by Nazi propaganda into believing that this was a purely local issue. On the contrary, we realised only too well that this was an issue of paramount and fundamental importance, a challenge to our moral conception of treaty obligations and honouring the pledged word. The belittling of this issue, as the Nazis attempted, was a severe blow to the prestige and existence of the League of Nations. The Focus saw in the Nazi challenge a supreme opportunity for testing and asserting the moral and physical strength of the League of Nations.

The views of the Focus were made known to the government in various ways. Sir Robert Vansittart, the permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, commented on Steed's view that,

unless effective measures were taken, such as the Focus advocated, the Nazi government, perfidious and totally indifferent to moral or any other law, would break any and every treaty and pledge given or to be given in the future. But the British government ignored its obligations towards the League, and this started a serious deterioration in the League's authority, which the Nazis succeeded in fatally undermining. A new treaty would only be a new trap for the gullible.

Daily events urged us on and enabled us to increase the number of associates who agreed to the terms of our proposed manifesto, as set out below :

"These systems, Communist, Fascist and Nazi, are equally founded upon the denial of freedom, and were established by civil warfare. Pitiless oppression by secret police and armed bands, omnipresent spying and compulsory tale-bearing, untruthful propaganda and one-sided education sustain them. All suppress that free public opinion which is the safeguard and instrument of democratic liberties. By destroying combination among wage earners and *by placing the lives and property of their citizens under unfettered state control* they impede the economic and political advance of workers by hand and brain. These systems preach and practice racial and religious intolerance and persecution and have built up a formidable war machine at tremendous cost to us free citizens of a self-governing democracy. Communist, Fascist and Nazi systems are equally distasteful. Such well-being as our people enjoy has been won in freedom. It must be steadily increased and extended by the free co-operation of all classes and parties under democratic institutions. We recognise no inequality of citizenship, no inferiority of race or creed, no curtailment of the ancient rights our fathers bought for us through centuries of struggle. These rights, this freedom, these safeguards of our social welfare and progress, we are resolved to uphold. Not less firmly do we uphold the safeguards of peace among the nations. The propaganda and actions of these 'totalitarian' systems, which cherish aggressive designs, must bring on war unless they are met by unflinching determination and readiness for joint defence on the part of peoples still free. We believe that this defence can best be organised within the framework of the League of Nations and the Kellogg Pact, and that it must be strengthened by the force of enlightened public opinion. In Parliament, on the platform, through the press and by every modern agency for spreading knowledge,



public opinion must be informed. The fate of free civilisation is at stake. Therefore we call . . .”

The armament plans of the German Nazis proceeded at high speed and they adopted a systematic programme of literally exterminating their opponents, actual as well as potential, as well as their institutions. Synagogues were burned to the ground; cemeteries were desecrated; humanitarian laws and customs were set aside, while every type of illegality, persecution, murder and arbitrary imprisonment, became the rule. Loyalty to parents was officially branded as archaic; love and charity were denounced as Jewish inventions, to be replaced by shameless treachery and the fantastic expression of hate as the most dynamic sources of strength and power.

In the early days of the Nazi régime people in democratic countries stilled their consciences by saying that revolutions are not carried out in kid gloves and that, once the Nazi revolution had been completed by the party assuming the role of government, normal civilised methods would gradually be re-established. Wishful thinking at best, this distorted view of things could not be maintained in face of the intensification of oppression and brutality. It daily became clearer that Hitler was passionately convinced that only ruthless ferocity and contempt for moral laws could enable him to hold and consolidate the power he had won by the same policy of infamy. In spite of all the evidence to the contrary, Hitler had the insolence to proclaim in the Reichstag on May 21st, 1936, that Germany had no intention of embarking on war, that she had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs in Austria, of concluding an *Anschluss* or of annexing that country. Following that declaration he signed an agreement to that effect with the Austrian government on July 11th, promising especially not to give active support to the Austrian Nazis.

Such perfidy and insolence was not at all surprising in Hitler. What was surprising was that the governments of the democratic countries accepted his declarations at their face value, and did not see how they were being tricked. Hitler despised the democracies, and all the reports from Germany which reached members of the Focus showed the derision with which Hitler greeted the gullibility of the press and politicians of this country. With

Britain gulled into a false sense of security, Hitler felt that he had all the democracies in the hollow of his bloodstained hands, and that he would succeed in dominating the world in the same way and by the same criminal methods as he had used in obtaining and maintaining his hold over the German people.

This was a fatal threat to the very existence of a free Europe and to the British Commonwealth. Fear of his physical strength would silence any opposition and make us surrender one after another to his Nazi world empire. It was, therefore, essential for the Focus to be strengthened immediately and its sphere of activities enlarged so that, when it became clear that Hitler was about to break his pledge on Austria, the British government and people should be ready and willing to act so as to terminate his policy of lawlessness and treachery. Each member was asked to recruit fresh supporters and to disseminate even more widely our knowledge of the realities of the situation and the dangers of Nazism. Our numbers began to grow rapidly.

At the same time those of us in the Focus were getting to know each other better. For my own part I wanted to know more about what my colleagues thought, how they thought, and through them to understand the people whom it was our aim to influence. I was able to meet some of them in relative privacy; these meetings I shall record as they occurred.

The first was with Wickham Steed. He was the Focus's most active member and, when he told Richards that he would like to have a long talk with me, I at once responded by inviting him on July 8th, 1936, to lunch with me and my wife. We both eagerly looked forward to this occasion. Steed was as well known on the Continent as at home; he had played a considerable part in the formation of the New Europe that emerged after the war; he was an expert on Central Europe and, as a convinced enemy of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, had helped to shape history at Versailles; he had been a very successful editor of *The Times*; he knew kings, statesmen, politicians and most of the prominent personalities in non-political spheres. His position, like his experience, was unique.

During luncheon Steed talked incessantly, telling us stories of his experiences abroad, of people whom he had met and how he had fared. He told us of his days at Marienbad when he rode with Edward VII in an open carriage, and many a tale of the

Versailles negotiations, and he made us laugh at his stories of the ignorance of the foreign missions on matters of good food and the cult of wine as practised in France. I was rather relieved that his reminiscences of pre-war days did not touch on politics, for I had never seen eye-to-eye with him on the treatment of the old Austria, and the breaking up of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy into small political units. Nor did I feel it advisable to discuss the Versailles Treaty. Steed, I knew, was a fervent anti-Nazi, but he also detested Germans in general; and the few exceptions he made only proved the rule. Also it was not the past that I wanted to discuss but the present and future.

My wife talked about our travels to Yugoslavia, saying how much she liked the country and the people with their wonderful hospitality. Two of our best friends, she added, were Jugoslavs, Dr. Posilovic and Dr. Mazuranic, the latter being Minister of Commerce when we first met him. Of course Steed knew a lot about him and was delighted to hear more; he was particularly amused by my wife's stories of Dr. Mazuranic's musical parties. I added that Mazuranic was greatly impressed by the Focus and intended to come to London to meet its members, Churchill in particular. He regarded Churchill as the great leader of the future, who would conduct not only this country but all Europe to safety and redeem the subjected peoples from the hell of Nazism.

Steed was satisfied that we had made a good start with the Focus; he was particularly pleased with Richards the secretary and gave me credit for his appointment. My wife mentioned that she had ordered his book *Vital Peace*, but had been told by the booksellers that she would have to wait a fortnight as the book would have to be obtained from the United States. Steed was considerably perturbed at this and said that there was more in it than met the eye. He was aware that certain big newsagents and booksellers tended to discriminate against books in which Nazism was denounced or even criticised. At least one of the chapters in *Vital Peace* could be held to do so. He went on to say that it was the government's weak policy which caused this sort of thing, and the attitude of the press. Still more could it be seen in the co-operation of the City with Nazi Germany. He was unrestrained in his criticism of the City, whose conduct he denounced as "a monstrous betrayal of all moral standards". I

ventured to suggest that the City was less blameworthy than the government, since the City had no policy of its own as opposed to that of the government. Admittedly the City was not made up of saints, but its moral standards were far above those of any other financial centre in the world.

Steed then passed on to discuss the United States. If American morals were as good as American money, he said, Nazism and Communism would disappear overnight, and we would really be on the way to the millennium. "That," I said, "would not be true of this country: our sterling is much too weak." Steed agreed and went on to condemn wholeheartedly the conception of "neutrality" towards the aggressor. He thought that a British declaration of non-neutrality on a moral basis would appeal to our people and to many of our friends elsewhere. "I could not agree with you more," I said, "and that comes from the bottom of my heart. The guiding principle in the work of the Focus should be the need to create such a moral basis and bring to an end the present moratorium in ethics and silence on moral issues." Steed asked me to go into more detail about what I thought should be the Focus's task and how that task should actually be carried out.

"In the first instance," I said, "we must inform the public and the government about what our Nazi enemies are doing and what they intend to do, but even more on what we in this country ought to do and why. The Focus can only be effective in protecting freedom and justice as the basis of peace if public opinion supports us. We have to create public opinion by appealing to the moral sense of our people, in contrast to the Nazis who appeal only to the basest instincts of the Germans. I think that this rallying of our spiritual forces will be decisive, but it must be accompanied by military rearmament."

Steed agreed and said that if the League of Nations had had any teeth, Hitler would not have managed to re-occupy the Rhineland. I could not accept this and replied that the League had all the teeth it needed to restrain Hitler, but lacked the will to bite. This will was lacking because of our spiritual apathy. In the whole constitution of the League of Nations the name of God was not mentioned once. I was convinced that this religious-ethical indifference in the sphere of politics would surely become the gravamen of the League, but not of religion. Arms by them-

selves could decide nothing unless they were used by the unquenchable power of the spirit for such a great cause as that of freedom, justice and peace.

I suggested that we should endeavour to create the moral will to organise and generate our spiritual forces. At the same time we should press the government by every means in our power to take immediate steps to create a Ministry of Supply in order to accelerate military rearmament and also a Ministry of Information with which to fight a moral war against gangsterism and its crimes. In the First World War our moral campaign had contributed more to the final victory than was generally known. Hitler, like Ludendorff of the German High Command, knew this better than anybody. He was well aware that an information service could perform exactly the same process as an artillery "softening up", namely preparing the ground for the coming physical combat. In Hitler's view our psychological preparations were even less advanced than our military preparedness, and even though there was a remote chance that we might catch up in armaments, there was no possibility of our doing so in the psychological sphere. He, or rather Goebbels, would see to that. The mere piling-up of arms was never enough; and I went on:

"It is the moral issue that must be stressed and passionately at that. We must stir up the religious conscience, for religion is the basis of all moral action. It is to the heart and soul of the people that we must appeal. We must organise public meetings in London and the provinces, arrange public debates and make use of publicity in every form, in the home and in the factory, in buses and in pubs, we must reach the employer and the employee, religious bodies and the three political parties. At the same time we must bring forward the name and personality of Winston Churchill as the man who has placed the greater cause of freedom and justice above party loyalties. Churchill is the one man who is capable of putting our case for strengthening our military and spiritual forces to our own government and public, and to the governments and public of other countries."

I told Steed that I had derived my greatest inspiration and guidance from Professor Bentwich's book, *The Religious Foundations of Internationalism*, which every statesman should study. "It also reflects the true character of Professor Bentwich," I

said, "who practises what he preaches irrespective of consequences." Steed agreed and said, "Bentwich is indeed a very good man; I should say a great man and outstanding for his toleration".

Steed was interested in knowing which countries I had especially in mind, and I told him that in my view we should maintain the closest contacts with the United States and with Yugoslavia. I suggested that Churchill and he should visit both those countries.

"America has a great attraction for me," said Steed, "and does, I think, offer great possibilities, but I could not see my way to visit Yugoslavia. A visit from me might cause demonstrations which would embarrass the present government in Belgrade and cause it great difficulties which I am anxious to avoid."

"On the military issue," I resumed, "I would suggest that we immediately establish bases and airfields on the continent without worrying about what effect this might have on Hitler. If we succeed in quickening the pace of our spiritual and military rearmament we shall be strong enough to face Hitler's fury and oppose his next aggression, which will be Austria; he is already at work, organising disturbances and working on the people to clamour for their 'return' to the Reich."

"What do you suggest we do when Hitler marches into Austria?"

"As I explained some time ago the government should at once recall our ambassadors from Berlin and Vienna and request British subjects to leave both Austria and Germany. At the same time the German ambassador should be handed his passport and Nazi nationals ordered to leave Britain."

"That might mean war."

"Never. On the contrary, the moderate elements, i.e. democrats in and outside Germany, would take new heart, while Hitler's nearest associates would not be unhappy to see that for once he had made a mistake and not had things all his own way. Hitler has not yet got the support of the majority; otherwise why the host of Gestapo agents, the muzzling of the press, the control of every utterance, every movement of the citizens? Besides, we have no alternative unless we are prepared to embark on a policy of appeasement towards the Nazis; if we do that we will eventually lose all our friends and leave ourselves and the Com-

monwealth at Hitler's mercy. If on the other hand we succeed, Britain will regain the leadership of Europe, and a growing multitude will follow her."

Steed said that he agreed with many of my suggestions. He wanted to think about the idea of continental military bases and would write to me later.

As we were about to leave the hotel, Steed turned to my wife and said: "You must realise, Mrs. Spier, that we have an uphill task ahead of us, and a great deal of persuasion will be needed to get party politicians to sign the same declaration and appear on the same platform."

"If it comes to persuasion," replied my wife, "you need have no worries. My husband possesses a frightening power of persuasion."

Feeling that I would be interested to know what impression I had made on Steed, Richards sent me Steed's summing-up of our conversation; he also sent copies to other members including Churchill. Here it is as I got it:

"Mr. Spier made a good impression . . . he is very shrewd . . . he does not yet think in English dimensions . . . just as he preserves a foreign mind in thinking . . . very able man . . . in talking he needs an interpreter to other English people . . . structure of his mind is German . . . he sees a thing in a definite, systematic, hardheaded way . . . the approach in England has to be different for our people are afraid of systematic, hardheaded thinking . . . may be very useful in the work to be done and to the government . . . must be shepherded and interpreted . . . work can be done when he has personally seen certain people and judged for himself and gone thoroughly into things . . . if he can help to organise the intellectual sources of information which we have here it might be the beginning of something extremely useful."

In his full report, which he prepared later on, Steed said that much of what I had said ought to be impressed on every minister and member of Parliament. He had no criticism to offer on any of the major points, but took issue with me on the military proposals:

"The suggestion that we should at once make arrangements for defence on the continent needs very careful consideration. The measures required could not be carried through in secrecy, and

the fact that they were being taken might be urged as a pretext by Nazi Germany for a devastating attack before we were ready. I do not know what is actually being done in France and Belgium, or exactly how far the conversations between the general staffs went last summer. I imagine, however, that they contemplated, if they did not actually provide for, the use of our aircraft on any French or Belgian aerodrome in case of need.

"Then there is the very pertinent question how far our people would go in giving way to Germany so as to avoid the risk of war. My own fear is that they will go a long way, fatally far in fact, and that they may find themselves at a hopeless disadvantage when the critical emergency actually arises.

"We must remember that, before Germany decides to strike, this country will be swamped with German propaganda in the City, the press and in society. Whatever demands Germany may decide to make in earnest would be described as matters of minor importance to us, as not worth fighting about if German friendship could be secured by granting them. And the people of this country are unlikely to be unanimous upon any concrete issue unless that issue is seen to involve a principle that appeals to their moral emotions.

"That is why I have always sought to place the question on a moral basis, and to insist that we must be prepared to stand up for our own freedom and for the freedom of other peace-loving nations in the same way that we, as citizens, are required to stand up for law and not to be neutral towards law-breakers. A reasoned and well-founded British declaration of non-neutrality would counteract Nazi propaganda and upset German calculations without giving adversaries a handle against us by claiming that our precautions were provocative.

"I am fully convinced that a policy of concessions to Germany would be what the Germans call *eine endlose Schraube*, an Archimedean screw. The only way to resist is to offer impene-  
trable resistance to the first turn of the screw.

"This also applies to German requests for a loan. We must consolidate and strengthen our position, as Mr. Spier says, before making offers and stretching out our hand; and we must strengthen our position not only militarily but in open co-operation with other peoples for peace.

"I look upon the financial collusion of the City with Germany as little better than treason. I agree also that steady and carefully considered propaganda is indispensable both in order that our own people may know the truth, and that Germans in



Germany may gradually be brought to understand that we do know it.

"As having some bearing on this point, I enclose a suggestion which has reached me from one of the leading German authorities in this country on international armaments, and should be glad to have Mr. Spier's opinion of it.

"The weakest points in any arrangements for the enlightenment of our people would be reached when we outlined the offer we might make to Germany on condition that there would be disarmament and that Germany abandon the system that has been built up so swiftly during the past few years. This system is not only a Nazi system. It embodies and develops the whole of the old pan-German scheme. If only for reason of this it will be hard to overcome, since it has the open or secret support of German industry, finance and foreign policy. We should have to be very careful not to be bamboozled or to give up something for nothing.

"That is why I think that the organisation of an international front against the war-method of dealing with international problems is the first requisite, and that this front can be formed only on a basis of non-neutrality, coupled with the understanding that the principle of non-neutrality does not involve any obligation to intervene actively wherever a conflict may arise. There must be regional limitations of obligations to intervene actively, but no limitation of the obligation not to aid or abet any aggressor indirectly by claiming neutral rights that could only operate in the aggressor's favour."

On the point on which Steed had said that "he should be glad to have Mr. Spier's opinion", I told Richards that I had no special sources of information beyond what were available to the government or indeed to any individual. I read and studied a number of German papers, mainly from the provinces, reports and circulars from German Chambers of Commerce, and the balance-sheets and reports of German banks, finance houses and industrial concerns. From these sources I had been able to conclude that Germany was spending more than £700,000,000 annually on rearmament, and that she was very greatly increasing her imports of strategic material, whose use was now forbidden to civilians. The lines of German propaganda with regard to this country were designed to inspire a feeling of fear on the one hand and a desire for friendship on the other, or both together, in the hope of weakening Britain's support of democratic coun-

tries and undermining its own resistance both militarily and in the field of public discussion. In this way, and in particular by instilling a fear of the Nazi forces, Hitler was determined to achieve his objective, namely world domination, without having to overcome the resistance of the weak democracies which in any case he considered incapable of taking action.

Another meeting I had was with Sir Norman Angell, the author of *The Great Illusion*, at a lunch in his flat. This time I did most of the listening, for my host already knew from Steed my views and the suggestions I was making. It was a wonderful experience to hear his clear and logical exposition of collective security and the abandonment of diplomatic secrecy. He made a special point of refuting those critics of collective security who said that by increasing our obligations we increased our liabilities. He argued at length to the contrary, comparing the position with that of a life insurance company which does not weaken itself by increasing the number of its clients. I thought the analogy misleading, and respectfully submitted that an insurance company discriminates severely between a healthy and not so healthy applicant, between an applicant with sober habits and one with habits somewhat more bibulous, and between an applicant who is known to be capable and willing to meet his obligations and one with a defaulter's record. On that basis I contended that neither the present Germany nor Italy—nor Russia—were eligible, for the simple reason that they did not recognise our established moral law as valid and binding in national and international affairs. Law was the foundation of the League of Nations; dictators were the death-watch beetles in the building which had been so patiently erected. With the dictators in it the League would simply become a platform for Communist and Fascist propaganda; their position would be strengthened and our efforts to avert the threat of war would be weakened. If we let the world know that we really meant business, if we stood firmly for the defence of our moral standards, we would go a long way towards realising the League's aims.

Angell was strongly opposed to any reduction or limitation of the League's membership for a number of reasons which I could not follow: so I kept silent. My silence incensed him and he said that I was too dictatorial and dogmatic, but I refused to argue

and did not press the matter. In spite of this I very much liked what he had said, and told him that I hoped to publish it one day in the cause of freedom and peace. I felt that my dynamic and passionate approach to the issues was not at all to his taste; it seemed to remind him of Prussian aggressiveness. He preferred his own methods of advocacy, believing in a logical and gradual development of his case. In that he was a past master and a real asset to the Focus. I am glad to think that we were in complete agreement on the important issues with which the Focus was concerned.

Richards and I went through all the suggestions that had been made and the information that we had collected from many sources so that we could make a report to the next meeting of the Focus. We agreed that a summary of the long memorandum written by Steed on the situation should be circulated to all our members. Here it is :

“The position of the country and of the whole Commonwealth is now so dangerous that prompt action is necessary. As things stand today war in Europe is inevitable unless (a) a firm British policy is framed to prevent it, or (b) the states and peoples menaced by Germany yield to German threats and acts with the passive assent of Britain. Acute and not unfounded alarm is felt in Czechoslovakia and in Denmark. One of these two is likely to be the next victim of Hitler’s aggressive designs. Poland under her present leadership has agreed, or is about to agree, to Nazi measures for the suppression of the anti-Nazi minority in Danzig. When all local resistance has been suppressed and the authority of the League of Nations successfully flouted, Poland’s access to the sea will depend entirely on Germany’s goodwill. Germany’s military and naval preparations against the mainland of Denmark and its southern islands are being pressed forward so as to secure complete control of the Danish straits and bottle up the Baltic.

“I have been informed from what ought to be a trustworthy German source that the subjugation of Czechoslovakia originally fixed for next spring is to be undertaken next September. This is not, or was not until recently, the view of Dr. Benes. A fortnight ago he was convinced that war was inevitable and that it would come either this autumn or in the course of 1937 unless something was done; that could only be a thorough understanding between Britain and France and the announcement of a joint anti-war policy. In the event of war Dr. Benes did not think the

first attack would be made on Czechoslovakia. He did not say in what direction he thought the attack would first be made."

"Within the past few weeks," Wickham Steed continues, "I have been informed from trustworthy sources that armaments are still being feverishly increased in Italy, and that submarine and aeroplane construction is especially being pushed forward by day and night. Prominent Italians in London have been warned to liquidate their holdings in British securities and to transfer the proceeds to the U.S. for safety. The managing director of the London branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana has acted, or is acting, on this advice. It is supposed—though this is at present only surmise—that behind Mussolini's assent to the recent Austro-German arrangement lies an understanding that Italy should go ahead in the Mediterranean while Germany does the same in north-east Europe and makes herself undisputed mistress of the Baltic and the Baltic States.

"If aggressive plans have matured up to this or any approximate point, the question arises: what should British policy be? In all conceivable policies the safety of this country is the foremost consideration. A secondary, though hardly less important one, is that any policy should be such as to command the assent and active support of the majority of the people. To this end the policy must be clear and intelligible as well as firm, and must involve what people feel to be a moral issue.

"A policy of isolation, even if it were feasible and likely to safeguard our national and imperial security, while Germany went ahead in the east with the aim of controlling the Baltic, encircling or suppressing Czechoslovakia, securing Rumania's oil wells and over-running the Ukraine, might appeal to some sections of the Conservative Party and to sundry City financiers who would see in it at once a safety valve for German expansionist ambitions and a safeguard against Russian Communism. On the other hand, it would not command the assent of far-sighted public men and it might arouse strong opposition in the Labour Party and the trade unions.

"I think the only sound policy would be for us to take our stand frankly, and this time sincerely, upon the League Covenant, to declare that, in our view, the only reform the Covenant needs is for member-states to pledge themselves not to be neutral towards, or otherwise to aid or abet, any aggressor. Seeing that, under the Kellogg Pact, the only lawful functions of armaments are self-defensive, the economic and fighting strength of war-renouncing states constitute elements of an international police

force. It should, therefore, be the duties of such of those states as are members of the League both to renounce their neutrality towards an aggressor, and to share in upholding the security of regions where their police action could be most swiftly effective. Regional pacts within the framework of the League Covenant, reinforced by declarations of non-neutrality, should be the aim of British foreign policy. The obligation of non-neutrality should be general; the obligation to join in active police work should be regional.

"In order to frame and announce this, or an equivalent policy, the present British administration would need either to be replaced by a stronger combination representative of all parties, or it would need a thoroughgoing reconstruction to make it truly national. In saying this I leave out of account the question of leadership. Today the greatest possible measure of unity and unanimity should be the aim. A reconstructed government would make a profound impression upon Europe and the world."

### CHAPTER III

## DISCUSSIONS AT THE SAVOY

PARLIAMENT was due to reassemble on October 29th and we arranged our next luncheon for that day. About thirty people were present with Churchill in the chair once again and Lady Violet by his side. He was obviously pleased and said that the presence of so many distinguished people, representing every section of British public life, encouraged him greatly in the political wilderness in which he found himself. He referred briefly to the horrible spectacle presented by the Civil War in Spain. He was sure that we should adopt a policy of strict neutrality and sincerely hoped that France would take the same line. Monstrous as this civil war was in itself, it was made even more monstrous and bloody because of the help which Communists on the one hand and Fascists and Nazis on the other were giving to the opposing sides. Naturally any chance to join in savage butchery was welcomed by the dictators. The British government was in close contact with the French, and our two countries had to be more alert than ever in our own defence. If we acted with determination now, we ought to be able to recover the ground lost when we let Hitler march unchallenged into the Rhineland.

Churchill said that he was far from satisfied with what the government was doing about rearmament and criticised its slackness in utilising the latest scientific discoveries. Things were, however, now moving with somewhat greater speed. The government was at least doing something, but it was not doing enough and moving far too slowly. Even less satisfactory was our diplomatic activity; the government was too weak and seemed to be tamely acquiescing in Hitler's most outrageous actions. In spite of Hitler's record of broken pledges and callous betrayal of his own friends, the government still accepted the Nazi reports at their face value, though we had provided unassailable evidence that such reports were entirely untrustworthy.

After reminding us that this meeting like all our meetings was

strictly private, Churchill then called on Richards to report on the progress made in completing the statement of the Focus's principles and objects, and on the arrangements for our first public meeting. Richards announced that most of the points in the statement had been agreed, but that there were three items which the meeting ought to consider. The first was Steed's view that the moral issue should be given greater emphasis, indeed should be given pride of place. Steed's views were well known to us all, but that afternoon they were somewhat lukewarmly supported, and remitted for further consideration. The second was my own suggestion for a Ministry of Supply and a Ministry of Information. That met a similar fate, although not dismissed altogether, and our manifesto was whittled down to a general expression of good intentions. Churchill, however, made it clear that he at least was in favour of my proposals and said that they should be brought up again after the Albert Hall meeting. He also wanted to hear more about organising the spiritual forces. I was comforted with the thought that it was a real achievement to have reached this stage successfully. It had always been my view that we should be bold from the outset; that, however, was not the view of the meeting. In their opinion we had to go cautiously at the moment and become bolder as we progressed.

The third point was my suggestion that Churchill's name should figure prominently in the manifesto as the leader of the Focus, and that he should be presented as the one man who could lead the nation, and indeed Europe, out of its present confusion. This was strongly supported by Lady Violet. Nobody directly opposed it, but at this stage very few favoured it.

Sir Robert Waley-Cohen said that he felt strongly that ways and means ought to be found to give the government first-hand information about what we were doing, the principles for which we stood, and the aims we sought to realise. Steed replied that he was constantly in personal contact with Vansittart and kept him fully informed on those very points which Waley-Cohen had raised. Finally Richards suggested, at my instigation, that while Steed's contact with Vansittart was most valuable, the Focus should send a representative deputation headed by Churchill to the Prime Minister and directly inform him of our activities. The deputation would give him all the important data we had collected on Nazi rearmament and propaganda, information

that was causing great anxiety not just to members of Focus, but to the electorate at large. Churchill strongly supported this, as did Steed, Austen Chamberlain, James de Rothschild, Waley-Cohen, Locker-Lampson and Mond. Lady Violet thought any such move was premature since we had not yet achieved an importance that would impress the Cabinet. We would have a much greater chance of success if we waited until we had held our public meeting. Personally I saw no point in waiting. The Prime Minister and the Cabinet were obviously in great need of more information and of correct interpretation of what they already had. The Focus was just the body to provide such additional information and to interpret it. After all we had evidence that many of the electorate recognised the accuracy of the interpretation of events provided by the Focus. Wall of the London Trades Council asked me if I could explain why the government was much less anxious about the situation than the public. I answered that it seemed obvious to me that the common sense of the British public exceeded the wisdom of the government, a remark which amused the meeting generally and Locker-Lampson in particular. Churchill was heard to remark, "very refreshing, very refreshing".

This was made possible thanks to the untiring support given by John Eppstein, Lord Cecil's Secretary, who was the spearhead of the League of Nations Union.

Richards then gave a detailed report about the arrangements for the proposed meeting in the Albert Hall. It would be held on December 3rd, 1936, at 7.45 p.m. under the auspices of the League of Nations Union; Sir Walter Citrine had agreed to preside. Four prominent speakers had consented to appear on the platform, but confirmation from some of them was still awaited. About seventy-five other people, representing all sections of the public, had also agreed to be present on the platform. Large-scale distribution of pamphlets was well in hand and could be proceeded with as soon as approval was given. Satisfactory arrangements had been made for the sale of tickets and we were certain to have a full house. The press, including American newspapers, would be well represented. Richards suggested that we should hold a final meeting on November 5th and this was agreed.



Churchill closed the meeting with a few words of encouragement and the guests began to leave. But Steed, Richards, Guedalla, Waley-Cohen and myself stayed on for a chat over a cup of coffee. Steed began by attacking the City, saying that it was only because of its helping hand that the Germans could rearm at their present rate. He accused it of putting profit before patriotism, certainly before the safety of this country. I saw no particular point in defending the City, but thought the government deserved the greater share of the blame. It was true that by collaborating with Schacht, the City had enabled the Nazis to meet their financial obligations, but it was the government's action, or failure to act, that had given the Nazis a sort of ethical moratorium in which moral obligations went unfulfilled. Here lay the root of our trouble, and until the situation was changed, we should make no progress.

Guedalla said that no progress was possible unless we made progress in tolerance; the Nazis for lack of tolerance had put back the clock. Mond agreed with Guedalla. Tolerance seemed to be out of favour: spiritual tyranny in one quarter, political tyranny in another. How shabby we looked today after the tolerance of the past. He told us a beautiful story of a Chinese emperor in the days when the first Christians came to China. They had no place of worship and the emperor ordered a Christian church to be built at the state's expense, for: "truth does not come to all of us in the same form. Nor is the inspiration of heaven always recognisable in the guise in which it comes to us. Religion varies and all religions look to the salvation of mankind." That, said Sir Robert, was tolerance on a very high level. But what had we come to today?

Waley-Cohen agreed with Mond that progress in the true sense could best be measured by the advance we made in tolerance. He thought that the story of the emperor's action should be sent to Hitler, but I answered that Hitler would neither believe nor understand it and would belittle it as another Jewish forgery.

Guedalla asked me whether I could suggest an explanation of the extraordinary fact that leading men in Germany, such as the Kaiser and now Hitler, fostered extravagant designs in the arrangement of the hair on the upper lip. I quoted the saying of the poet Heinrich Heine, that the pigtail which used to hang at

the back of their heads had moved to a place below their noses. *Der Zopf der ehemals hinten hing, der haengt jetzt unter der Nase.* I thought it was a manifestation of a kind of inferiority complex.

Steed, whom I asked for his impressions of the meeting, said he had not been very satisfied, but added: "I did not think that you did too badly. Certainly you carried all your points as far as Churchill was concerned." The rest nodded assent, and I was immensely pleased when Richards gave me a message from Churchill saying that he very much appreciated what I was doing and would like to discuss with me later and in private the points I had raised, as well as others; he would ask Richards to arrange a mutually convenient date.

Steed and the others left, leaving Waley-Cohen and myself. We were standing by the large window from which one gets a magnificent view of the Thames and the Embankment. Sir Robert remarked that it was amazing how peaceful everything looked and how the terrible things which were happening in Germany could be talked about in so detached an atmosphere. I thought it was good that such an atmosphere did exist, since it might enable us to find the strength to mitigate suffering and save lives.

"You are a very religious man," said Sir Robert.

"I try to be, but, alas, I often fail to live up to the standard to which I aspire."

"That should not trouble you over much, very few of us do live up to our own standards. But how do you reconcile the Nazi success and the afflictions of our brethren-in-faith with God's love and mercy?"

"I think I would be foolish to imagine that my ignorance could be used as a yardstick with which to measure the actions of the Almighty."

"Have you still any relations in Germany?"

"Three sisters and my brother and his family are still there; another sister is in Czechoslovakia, but I hope to get them out very soon."

"You do realise, of course, that your activities with the Focus will soon give your name publicity. Nazi agents here will watch the Albert Hall meeting and all subsequent ones very closely. It

is more than possible that your relatives, you too perhaps, will be in grave danger."

"We are all in the hands of God," I answered. "I have thought it all out and made my choice. To fight Nazism without thought of the sacrifices that may have to be made, is now the very meaning of my faith and life."

He was silent for a moment, and then said: "I think, and so do the others, that you are doing most excellent work for the Focus. But you should realise that, once Churchill is back in the government in whatever capacity, he will forget all about you and us, and give no credit for the work now being done to mobilise support for him."

"I am not working for Churchill," I replied. "I am working with and through him for the cause of freedom, justice and peace."

"Well, as long as you realise the position, it is all right. I just wanted to warn you lest you fool yourself."

"In this case," I said, "Churchill would be no exception. For instance, I often find that politicians are prompted by a desire for self-glorification and self-justification when writing books, rather than an urge to maintain strict accuracy in their records." Sir Robert replied that I should not confuse a politician with a true historian. The one deals with an immediate, very personal experience and with impressions, whereas the other has to deal impersonally with facts that gradually become available to him after many years of search and sifting of material.

Sir Robert then came back to Steed's attack on the City. "Steed's got his teeth well into it," he said. "I was glad you challenged him."

"Steed, like many others, exaggerates the shortcomings of some people in the City, and tends to generalise by talking of "the City", just as people tend to talk about "the Jews" when one Jew does something unpleasant. It is universally recognised that the moral standards of the City, and here we can rightly generalise, are well above those of any other financial centre in the world. Such offences as there are, are often greatly exaggerated and given far too much prominence. They should not be taken too seriously. What should be taken much more seriously are the moral offences in international affairs, where every moral standard is abandoned with impunity. Look at the

statements made to the public in order to catch votes so as to secure the continuance of this government. They are tantamount to fraud, for they take advantage of the ignorance of the public to inflict damage upon it. Such action should surely be punishable at law."

"That is just day-dreaming. You seem to be asking the culprits to start proceedings against themselves."

"On the contrary, it means no more than that we should insist on the strictest observance and application of moral principles, not only in our own personal lives, but even more in the conduct of our national and international affairs. It should be part of the Focus's policy to foster this, and all our efforts should be energetically directed to that end."

"I'll certainly support you wholeheartedly, though I doubt very much if it will get us anywhere."

"If only we could bring to an end this bargaining by our statesmen, who are wandering hopelessly and helplessly in a spiritual vacuum! The primary task of the proposed Ministry of Information would be to give an effective spiritual direction to the nation, so as to make its citizens more "cause-conscious". Organising our spiritual forces would mean the beginning of a moral war or, if you like, a moral blockade, especially against Nazism."

"These are pretty bold conclusions. What are the premises on which you base them?"

"Hitler, as you know, has repeated over and over again that it is far less easy to fight against faith than against material forces."

"That may be, but I can't for a moment imagine that you'll get any results, logical and well-intentioned as those proposals of yours may be. Certainly not for years to come!"

"I don't agree. It seems to me to be of supreme importance that it should be done now. It is rather late to start when war comes, if it ever does come. Think of the encouragement it would give the British people and those of the other democracies!"

"You're a real optimist and persuasive too."

"Of course I'm an optimist. I believe in the need for a renaissance of religious ideals in our home life, as well as in our national and international affairs."

"I admit the necessity, and what you're aiming at is very desirable. I'll certainly support you in the Focus."

In our endeavours to make available to the British government, and in particular to the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, all the information which came to the notice of the Focus, I sought the co-operation of Commander Locker-Lampson, who was closely associated both socially and politically with the Prime Minister and other prominent members of the Cabinet.

We met over lunch and discussed the hopeless and indeed dangerous attitude of the British government towards the Nazi gangsters and law-breakers. Locker-Lampson, who had on repeated occasions fearlessly attacked the Nazis in the House of Commons, told me that so far these attacks had produced no positive results, except to make him unpopular with the government and discredit him with his party. Nevertheless, he was determined to continue his fight by every possible means. He emphasised that Baldwin was at heart a very pious man, of which he had given practical and generous evidence on many occasions. He was determined that there must be no war, and no large-scale armament or armament race. Baldwin had repeatedly expressed this policy in public and he was not going to deviate from it. I argued that if such a policy was unconditional, as it seemed to be, it was openly playing into the hands of any aggressor. Locker-Lampson insisted that Baldwin could not be moved to take any action against the Nazis. This I refused to believe. I suggested that if the case were put before Baldwin in its true perspective, he could not honestly reconcile his religious views with a policy of appeasement towards the Nazi atheist dictators, who rejected and ridiculed every moral conception and legal obligation. Baldwin should not compromise his religious principles for mere party considerations. Locker-Lampson said that I should not draw a comparison between Baldwin and Churchill; the latter was an exception. I quite agreed. Churchill had thrown off the party cloak and taken upon himself the cause of democracy which was identical with the safety of this country; this showed the greatness of his genius as never before. In his independent position he needed great moral courage to face not only the violence and abuse of the Nazi anti-Churchill propaganda, but also the bitterness with which he was being

continuously assailed by his old friends in the press and Conservative party. In my mind there was no doubt whatsoever that Churchill's interpretation of the situation was the right one. He had stated convincingly that we were confronted with a moral issue of superlative seriousness and vital importance to the very existence of our civilisation. I repeated my previous suggestion that this should be brought home to the Prime Minister personally. At the same time he should be given documentary evidence about the many Nazi supporters in this country who were undermining our democratic foundations, as well as paralysing all the efforts of the moderate elements within Germany.

Commander Locker-Lampson then suggested that efforts should be made for me personally to have an interview with the Prime Minister in order to put the case before him. He was confident that Baldwin would give me a sympathetic hearing in view of my religious attitude, and especially because I saw our problem as a challenge to our spiritual values and the moral foundations of democracy. I did not like this suggestion at all, but advocated instead that a deputation of prominent members of the Focus should approach the Prime Minister. Locker-Lampson thought that this would hardly appeal to Baldwin, and might antagonise his colleagues in the Cabinet, whilst a personal approach by myself, with the backing of the Focus, was a fundamentally different proposition. Finally, I suggested that Baldwin should be pressed to include Churchill in the Cabinet. Locker-Lampson scoffed at this and said that Baldwin would never agree since he had a kind of inferiority complex towards Churchill. He quoted Baldwin as having said when rejecting Churchill as a member of the Cabinet: "But where would I then stand when Churchill comes along with his hundred horsepower brain?" To this I replied that Baldwin should be much more worried about where he and the people of this country would stand when the Nazis came over Britain with a few hundred thousand-horse-power bombers. Locker-Lampson was quite definite that, as far as Churchill was concerned, there was no hope of moving Baldwin. He was, however, hopeful that his friend Sir Austen Chamberlain, who was also a member of the Focus, might be of some assistance. He promised to put the matter before him and that we should soon meet again for further discussions.

Not long after this meeting I received an invitation from Locker-Lampson for my wife and myself to join a party he was taking to the première of the film *Romeo and Juliet* at the Haymarket Theatre. When we arrived in the foyer, photographers were focusing their cameras on my host and his friends, amongst whom I recognised Sir Austen and Lady Chamberlain. I realised that this was Locker-Lampson's way of keeping his promise, particularly when he told me that after the film we were all going on to supper at the Savoy, where I should have an opportunity of the talk I wanted.

At the Savoy I was seated next to Lady Chamberlain, who said that she and Sir Austen knew all about my work for the Focus. She asked me about Rumania and its Foreign Minister Titulescu—he had been driven from office in July—whom she greatly admired. She feared, and I fully shared her fear, that Rumania would go Nazi and be lost to the democracies. Could arrangements be made for Titulescu, when he came to London, to be the guest of honour at a Focus luncheon? I was sure that we would all welcome the idea, and promised to do my best to carry out her wishes.

At that moment Locker-Lampson came up and said that he himself wanted to sit next to Lady Chamberlain, while I should take his place beside Sir Austen. I was at once put at my ease by the appreciative remarks Chamberlain made about the Focus and my part in it. He had found all the reports, especially Steed's and my own, extremely interesting and in parts remarkable. He asked me to what extent I thought the German people were actively behind Hitler. I answered that, according to our information, only some thirty per cent of them were satisfied with the prevailing conditions. I hoped to obtain more details and figures shortly. Details apart, however, it was clear that there was an important internal opposition to the régime. If there was no such opposition, why the sternness of the measures and the ferocity with which the police and the courts proceeded against the slightest sign of disaffection or even criticism?

"Do you think the present opposition can seriously endanger the régime?"

"The danger to Hitler," I answered, "is real, but it becomes less dangerous every time the British government shows friendliness towards him. It was a great shock to those who had

supported Streseman over the Locarno Pact that Britain did nothing at all when Hitler tore it to pieces. If the government's attitude changed, the opposition would be greatly heartened and be more active and more dangerous."

Sir Austen said that he fully agreed with Churchill's view that our obligations under the Locarno Pact were absolute, and he was prepared to back him fully. Like me he thought that, if the British government had conceded to the democratic Streseman what they had conceded to Hitler's blackmail, there would never have been a Hitler government.

"How can Baldwin", I asked, "associate himself with someone like Hitler, who only recognises the law of force? His régime is not just a political, but a moral challenge. Never before had Baldwin so great an opportunity to rally the conscience of Britain for freedom, justice and peace."

"What more could the Focus do?" asked Sir Austen.

"I can only repeat what I have always said—put the emphasis on spiritual values. The Prime Minister has now got an opportunity to rise, as Churchill has done, above narrow party self-interest and bring to an end the present separation between ethical standards and political conduct. Who is better qualified to do this than Baldwin who is a deeply religious man, or who better show a sense of purpose that would cause our present weakness to disappear, a weakness which Hitler rightly interprets as fear?"

"That is all very fine, but how do you think it can be given practical expression?"

"May I repeat myself? On the next provocation, and especially if it involves the breach of a pledge, we should at once withdraw the British ambassador from Berlin."

"I remember your saying that before. But would it not be tantamount to a declaration of war?"

"On the contrary, it would be a very practical step towards peace. Remember, Hitler can do nothing without the German army; the latter is still not ready for war and unlikely to back Hitler if he lost Britain's friendly attitude."

I went on to say that no political organisation could be relied upon for any length of time unless spiritual forces played a decisive part in it. Baldwin, I knew, earnestly desired peace, freedom and justice, but unless he changed his present attitude, he



would bring upon us the very ills that he was so anxious to avoid. "I believe that if it is put before him as fundamentally a moral problem, he would himself support the Focus in its endeavours to strengthen the authority of moral forces in international relations."

Sir Austen asked me to tell him frankly about my personal intentions and what part I wanted to play. I assured him that I was only concerned to serve the cause of freedom and peace. I had no personal interests. As a German subject I could hardly be suspected of aspiring to office, to Parliament, or indeed to public recognition of any kind.

"That will make it easier to bring about a meeting between you and the Prime Minister; he is always very suspicious that people who want to see him have their own personal interests at heart."

Sir Austen then promised to approach Baldwin, for he felt that my way of thinking might well appeal to him. But he would only take the matter up after the Focus had had a public success at the Albert Hall.

On parting I apologised for having almost monopolised the conversation, and for having prevented him from relaxing in the pleasant atmosphere of Locker-Lampson's party. He replied that he had found our talk very inspiring, and as for relaxation: "I never relax when I meet people. I can only detach myself mentally and throw off my pre-occupations when I get out of my clothes and into a hot bath where I can read a detective story. That is complete relaxation."

As arranged our next luncheon was held on November 5th. We began by taking stock. Thanks to our secretary we now had a substantial list of active members; it may be of interest to give here the most prominent names:

Lord Cecil of Chelwood  
 Lord Davies  
 Sir Arthur Salter, M.P.  
 Ronald Cartland, M.P.  
 Seymour Cocks, M.P.  
 Philip Noel-Baker, M.P.  
 Lt.-Com. Reginald Fletcher,  
 M.P.

Commander O. S. Locker-  
 Lampson, M.P.  
 Philip Guedalla  
 H. Wickham Steed  
 J. J. Mallon (of Toynbee  
 Hall  
 Wilson Harris (of the *Specta-*  
*tor*)

A. M. Wall (London Trades Council)  
 Mrs. Winston Churchill  
 Lady Violet Bonham Carter  
 Sir Archibald Sinclair, M.P.  
 Sir Malcolm Robertson  
 James de Rothschild, M.P.  
 Duncan Sandys, M.P.  
 Sir Robert Waley-Cohen  
 Emrys Evans, M.P.  
 Dingle Foot, M.P.  
 Sir Walter Layton  
 Arthur Henderson, M.P.  
 Eugen Spier

John Eppstein, Lord Cecil's Secretary  
 Kingsley Martin (of the *New Statesman*)  
 Winston Churchill, M.P.  
 The Duchess of Atholl, M.P.  
 Lady Chamberlain  
 J. Arthur Rank  
 R. Brooman White  
 Prof. Gilbert Murray  
 Miss Eleanor Rathbone, M.P.  
 J. McEwan, M.P.  
 Harcourt Johnstone

Rev. Benjamin Gregory (Wesleyan Methodist Connection)  
 Rev. M. Johns (Assistant Secretary, Congregational Union)  
 Rev. S. M. Berry (Secretary, National Free Church Council)

It was obvious that we really had vital interests in common. Before we sat down I discussed with a number of our guests the prospects of the Focus and how they could be achieved. Perhaps I can best give the tenor of these talks by dividing the views expressed into two categories, the negative, which were fairly definite, and the positive, which contained a good many reservations.

The negative view broadly was that in a democracy you cannot change policy in a hurry. Rushing things achieves nothing. You cannot as a practical proposition force the electorate into dictating their wishes to the government; a plebiscite would fail. Everything must move along the lines of the established democratic process; even if we suffered a little by so doing, we should suffer much less than if we tried to dictate.

On the other hand, the positive view was that by using modern methods of publicity, you can easily pass information on the existing situation not only to the electorate but also to members of Parliament and the government. You can be free in your criticism of anybody; you can even press for the dismissal of certain ministers or the inclusion of new blood in the Cabinet. By publicising Churchill and other members of the Focus, and by publicising the policy which the Focus advocates, we might

without much loss of time get our recommendations approved by the government, and even get some of our members into office. Alternatively, by making the public fully aware through our information service of the meaning and dangers of Nazism, we might force the government into active opposition to Hitler's régime and his aggressive tactics. Even if we failed and war did come, we should at least have prepared and fortified the British people both spiritually and intellectually to meet that ordeal. That would be no mean achievement.

At lunch I was seated next to Locker-Lampson with whom I always got on extremely well. He asked me what I thought of Hitler's boast that his Reich would last a thousand years. I repeated to him the saying current in Germany, that one morning Adolf would wake up and find that the thousand years had passed. Locker-Lampson laughed delightedly and loudly, to the evident displeasure of Churchill who was just about to address us. He gave the culprit a very stern look.

Churchill first had a few words to say on Spain, mentioning the unsatisfactory working of non-intervention, and the need to do all that was possible to bring the slaughter to an end. Then he turned to the ever-growing menace of Hitler's high speed rearmament, as revealed in his four-year plan. He asked that any information we obtained should be made available to him and to other speakers for the Focus. Steed told him that he had much detailed information from reliable sources and that I also had collected a lot of material; he suggested that we should compare notes.

Churchill then went on to the arrangements for the Albert Hall meeting. The secretary told him that everything was ready, that the speakers would be Lady Violet, A. M. Wall, himself and the Earl of Lytton in that order, with Sir Walter Citrine in the chair. The aims to be announced at the meeting were :

To unite British citizens irrespective of politics or creed in defence of freedom as secured by democratic government and private law; in resistance to all efforts to diminish or destroy that freedom by violence at home or attacks from abroad, and in support of our international duty to join with others in preserving peace and withstanding armed aggression.

Then we discussed the principles of our movement as formu-

lated, and it was agreed to review them again at our next meeting. I reproduce them here as they were presented at that luncheon :

1. The cause of ordered freedom is in danger. Peace, too, is threatened. The adversaries of freedom and peace are vocal, organised and strong. The Focus "for the defence of freedom and peace" offers common ground to all who hold that without peace freedom cannot be safe, and that without freedom there can be no true peace.
2. The mass of temperate, tolerant humanity is apt to be feeble in action and leadership. Democratic governments need, therefore, to know that they are upheld by the resolute will of citizens who are prepared to stand for human rights and for justice among the nations.
3. The ideals enshrined in the League Covenant and the Kellogg Pact grew out of mankind's bitter need after uncounted sacrifices. These ideals alone stand between us and nameless woe. Great Britain and the British Commonwealth must be strong to bear their part worthily in banning war from the international scene, so that peace well-guarded may lighten the burden of the toiling millions and offer just redress for proven wrong.
4. British leadership and action may yet save Europe and civilisation. The aim of the Focus is to prosper this work.

Richards went on to tell us that the platform at our meeting would be fully representative of every section of the public, political, ecclesiastical, financial and commercial, and all the professions. Churchill expressed his high appreciation of Richards's feat in having got together such an impressive and representative gathering in so short a time. He took it as a very promising omen for our future work, and bade us go forward with courage and godspeed in face of all the obstacles that confronted us. We were all pleased at the progress made, and looked forward expectantly to December 3rd.

After lunch Churchill, Locker-Lampson, Steed, Waley-Cohen and myself sat on drinking coffee. Having lit the inevitable cigar, Churchill demanded the cause of Locker-Lampson's untimely merriment, and after the story had been repeated to him, laughed most heartily himself, and said he only hoped that the awakening would be early tomorrow. Steed told us that he was very worried about how the press would react to the Albert Hall

meeting. He feared that there might be a sort of conspiracy of silence, particularly from the financial papers. We should, if he could trust the assurances given to him, get a good press in the United States. Locker-Lampson promised to do his best with the papers. Surely, he said, it is important to show that in these critical hours the British people are so united that we cannot just be ignored. And, striking a Napoleonic attitude, he exclaimed: "The eyes of the world are upon us." I took the proffered opportunity. "I don't know about that," I said, "but I do know that the eyes of God are upon us and we should act accordingly." "Very true," said Churchill, nodding agreement, "very good!"

Waley-Cohen tried to impress on Churchill one particular point which should never be lost sight of in our public meetings and discussions. Appeal should always be made for friendship with the German people, as distinct from the Nazis, and we should make the distinction very clear. To him it seemed impossible that a majority of Germans should have abandoned the religious principles on which European civilisation is based, and substitute for them a poisonous paganism. We were all impressed by Sir Robert's earnestness and Churchill promised to bear the point in mind.

Churchill told me that he was much interested in my demands for strengthening and organising our spiritual forces, and in my suggestion that a deputation from the Focus should see the Prime Minister. He would like to hear more. Thanking us all again, he added: "Au revoir then, at the Albert Hall!"

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ALBERT HALL MEETING

At last the day arrived. Here I thought was our chance. Now the British public would be told by speakers too eminent to be ignored that the time had come for the British government to make a definite choice in order to ensure the safety of the country and to preserve freedom, democracy and peace. A striking example would be given of how party feelings and loyalties could be put aside in a true democracy, so as to let those who believed in freedom pull their weight together to defend it, and to resist the aggressors.

Because this was our first—for us our most important meeting, I have reported it much more fully than any other.

Long before the meeting began, I drove with my wife to the Albert Hall to watch the steady stream of hundreds and hundreds of people who wished to attend. I was so pleased and excited that we drove several times round the hall just to have the satisfaction of watching them. There were, of course, the usual demonstrations by the Communists and Fascists. I stepped from my car to collect some of their leaflets. There was nothing new or instructive in them. As ordered by their masters in Moscow, the Communists promised our people more freedom and more food, both of which were sadly lacking in Russia. The Fascist literature was only a poor imitation of Nazi propaganda, and proved nothing except that our Fascists were infected with the virus that had driven Hitler mad; it was comforting to feel that the British people were robust enough to be immune. Anyhow, Communists and Fascists alike had taken notice of us.

When we moved on to the platform the hall was already well filled, and it was clear that we were going to have a full house. The platform was filled to capacity, and I was happy to see so

many friends with us.<sup>1</sup> Some were absent but they had not failed to send inspiring messages of solidarity.

Citrine opened the meeting and expressed his great satisfaction at the size of the audience; a number of messages were then read. The following are extracted from the many we received :

*From the Archbishop of Canterbury*

I am in cordial sympathy with the general objects of the meeting in the Albert Hall in defence of freedom and peace, and I hope that the meeting may stimulate men and women of all parties to unite in the maintenance of these fundamental principles, which stand for the true purpose and destiny of this Realm and Empire.

(signed) COSMO CANTUAR  
2nd December, 1936.

*From the Archbishop of Westminster*

The cause of Freedom and Peace is the best of all causes. I trust the meeting will do much to promote that cause.

I regret to say, however, that my engagements are so numer-

<sup>1</sup> It may be of interest to the political historian to have the names of those who, speakers apart, appeared on the platform. They included twenty Members of Parliament; the names are in alphabetical order: Richard Acland, Lord Allen of Hurtwood, The Duchess of Atholl, P. J. Noel-Baker and Mrs. Baker, G. N. Barnes, Gerald Barry, Sir Comyns Berkely, Robert Bernays, Rev. S. M. Berry, Robert Boothby, L. J. Cadbury, Rev. J. C. Carlile, the Dean of Chichester (representing the Archbishop of Canterbury), Mrs. Churchill, Lady Citrine, Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, Lord Davies, Vice-Admiral S. R. Drury-Lowe, Maj. C. K. Entwistle, Emrys Evans, Sir Robert Evans, Dr. Maxwell Garnett, Milner Gray, Rev. Benjamin Gregory, the Right Rev. J. H. Greig, Kingsley Griffith, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Guedalla, Dr. Haden-Guest, Hon. Oscar Guest, Sir Percy Harris, Joseph Henderson, the Very Rev. Dr. J. H. Hertz, Sir Arthur Haworth, Rev. S. W. Hughes, Rev. John Hutton, Harcourt Johnstone, Commissioner David Lamb, Sir Walter and Lady Layton, Dame Adelaide Livingstone, Commander O. Locker-Lampson, the Countess of Lytton, W. Mabane, Miss MacDonald, Dr. J. J. Mallon, Rev. David Matthew (representing the Archbishop of Westminster), A. E. W. Mason, D. Mason, Lord and Lady Melchett, Lord Merthyr, Lt.-Col. Moore-Brabazon, H. Le Provost, Miss Eleanor Rathbone, Lt.-Col. Raynsford, A. H. Richards, J. A. de Rothschild, Rev. J. H. Rushbrooke, Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Sandys, Sir Archibald and Lady Sinclair, Mr. and Mrs. E. Spier, H. Wickham Steed, Lord Strabolgi, V. Tewson, J. C. Wedgwood, Mr. and Mrs. John Wilmot, Sir Richard Winfrey, Viscount Wolmer, and a representative of the Bishop of Willesden.

ous that I am unable to be present and to accept the honour of a place on the platform.

Yours very sincerely,

✠ ARTHUR

Archbishop of Westminster

27th November, 1936.

*From Sir Austen Chamberlain, M.P.*

I cannot attend the meeting in the Albert Hall on 3rd December, but I am in full sympathy with the purpose set forth in the statement of objects which you have sent me.

These are, as I understand, to unite in a common effort men and women of all parties in this country who cherish its traditions of ordered liberty and peace and desire to preserve them from the dangers which now threaten both.

Dictatorships are by their nature single-minded. Liberty implies diversity of expression and sometimes of view; but in defence of peace and freedom the country is of one mind and that mind should find common expression.

Yours sincerely,

AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN

*From Viscount Cecil (President of the League of Nations Union)*

I have received an invitation to be present at the meeting at the Albert Hall on December 3rd. But I very much regret that the pressure of my engagements prevents me from being able to accept it.

I earnestly hope that the meeting will be a great success and will give a much-needed encouragement to those who are working for peace through the League of Nations in this country. With all good wishes,

Yours very sincerely

CECIL

28th November, 1936.

*From Mr. J. R. Clynes, M.P.*

I can only thank you for your letter of November 21st, and say that I quite agree with what you are doing.

I cannot, however, attend the meeting on December 3rd, because of a number of other meetings that week.

Yours sincerely,

J. R. CLYNES

26th November, 1936.



*From Sir Herbert Samuel*

Sir Herbert Samuel would have been glad to be present at the Royal Albert Hall to support the objects of the meeting, with which he is, of course, in the fullest agreement.

Yours sincerely,  
DORA SEIMONS  
Private Secretary  
23rd November, 1936.

*From Lord Rutherford*

I am in general sympathy with the objects and principles of the "Defence of Freedom and Peace", and wish you every success at your meeting.

Yours faithfully,  
RUTHERFORD  
23rd November, 1936.

*From the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University*

I am in entire sympathy with the objects of your Group, and would gladly have come to your meeting on December 3rd.

Yours very truly,  
A. D. LINDSAY  
24th November, 1936.

*From the Bishop of Lichfield*

The cause of peace is one on which all parties must be agreed, and I hope with all my heart that your meeting will do much good.

Yours sincerely,  
J. A. LICHFIELD  
27th November, 1936.

*From Sir Michael Sadler*

With the printed paper of Object and Principle, I am in wholehearted agreement and rejoice that Lord Davies, Mr. Winston Churchill, Lord Lytton, Sir Walter Citrine, Mr. Wall and Lady Violet Bonham Carter are taking the lead in this expression of one strong stream of National feeling and conviction.

Yours sincerely,  
MICHAEL E. SADLER  
27th November, 1936.

Messages expressing full approval of the objects of the meeting were also received from Lord Dickinson, Lord Howard of Penrith, Sir Hugh Seely, Bt., M.P., Vyvyan Adams, M.P., and J. R. H. Cartland, M.P.

Then Citrine said :

“I suppose it is inevitable that a meeting addressed by people of such different political views as those who are to speak from this platform should arouse some speculation about our purposes. We have been described as a group who have come together for the purpose of forming a popular front or a centre party, or some new political combination. There is not a vestige of truth in any of these statements. None of us would be associated with any such manoeuvre.

“Nor are we here as the representatives of groups, parties or organisations. Every one who speaks from this platform does so in his or her own personal capacity. All of us in our separate ways have come to the conclusion that our people must be brought to a clear recognition of the grave danger to peace and freedom through which the world is passing.

“Let it not be supposed for one moment that the cause of peace and freedom can represent two separate problems that can be consigned to two watertight compartments. The dictatorship mentality which conceives of a nation of servile subjects, unfit to govern themselves and requiring to be coerced by a government monopoly of the press, the radio, the cinema and all media of propaganda, assisted by such contrivances as a secret police, concentration camps, imprisonment, physical and mental torture, the suppression of freedom of speech and press, is the same mentality which would fix the eyes of its subjects on war as the glorious consummation of their national destiny.

“I am far from assuming that the German people have no just cause for resentment at their treatment by the Allied powers; I realise very fully the need of meeting the legitimate grievances of any power suffering under a sense of injustice. But I do not believe that the democratic powers can indefinitely continue to yield to threats and acts of aggression. A time must come when the limit will be reached, and it is our duty to see that, while doing everything we can to remove the causes of conflict, we are ready to defend our democratic institutions and the precious heritage of our liberty against threats from any quarter.

“Those who stand at the bar of international justice and claim fair and equitable treatment at the hands of other nations should

put their own houses in order. It ill becomes those who have destroyed every vestige of liberty and the opportunity of self-expression within their own frontiers, and who have carried on a war of extermination against the Jews, to plead that other nations have treated them unfairly. To what depths have the Nazis descended when people are scorned and buffeted, are driven from public office and the professions, are held up to public derision and contumely merely because they happen to belong to the Jewish race? The persecution of the Jews in Germany which has been endured with a heroic fortitude, is without parallel in modern history. One has to go back to the savagery of the Middle Ages to find its equivalent. Sooner or later the present rulers of Germany will discover that, in their repressing of the Jews, they have deprived the German nation of one of its greatest assets not only in the cultural sphere, but also in the realm of trade and industry. That their campaign of antisemitism will fail is undoubted, but at what cost of human suffering and misery!

"The Nazis pride themselves on their nationalism and deride international co-operation. Yet they lose no opportunity to propagate their creed abroad by subtle and insidious means. In state after state the creation of Fascist groups is evidence of this activity. We see them parading here in Great Britain, smashing up the meetings of their opponents and bullying and blustering from their platforms, until Parliament itself has been compelled to take measures to safeguard the right of public meeting. Now antisemitism has become an inherent part of the creed of the Fascists in this country. They never lose an opportunity of arousing racial hatred and, as we have witnessed in the East End of London, they have created a state of something dangerously like terrorism.

"Who but the blindest among us cannot see the dangers in this aggressive policy? I have no use for dictators, whatever their colour or creed may be. The trade union movement to which I belong has been built often in the face of opposition and its freedom of action has been won only after centuries of struggle and sacrifice. I have no wish to see it ground under the heel of Fascism—its institutions dissolved; its funds and property confiscated, in order that its members shall be taught to value the freedom they have lost. I know too much of the unhappy fate that has overtaken my fellow trade unionists within the Fascist borders to want to see any experiments made here.

"It is vitally important to preserve the democratic institutions of our country, however imperfect they may seem.

"The price of liberty still remains eternal vigilance.

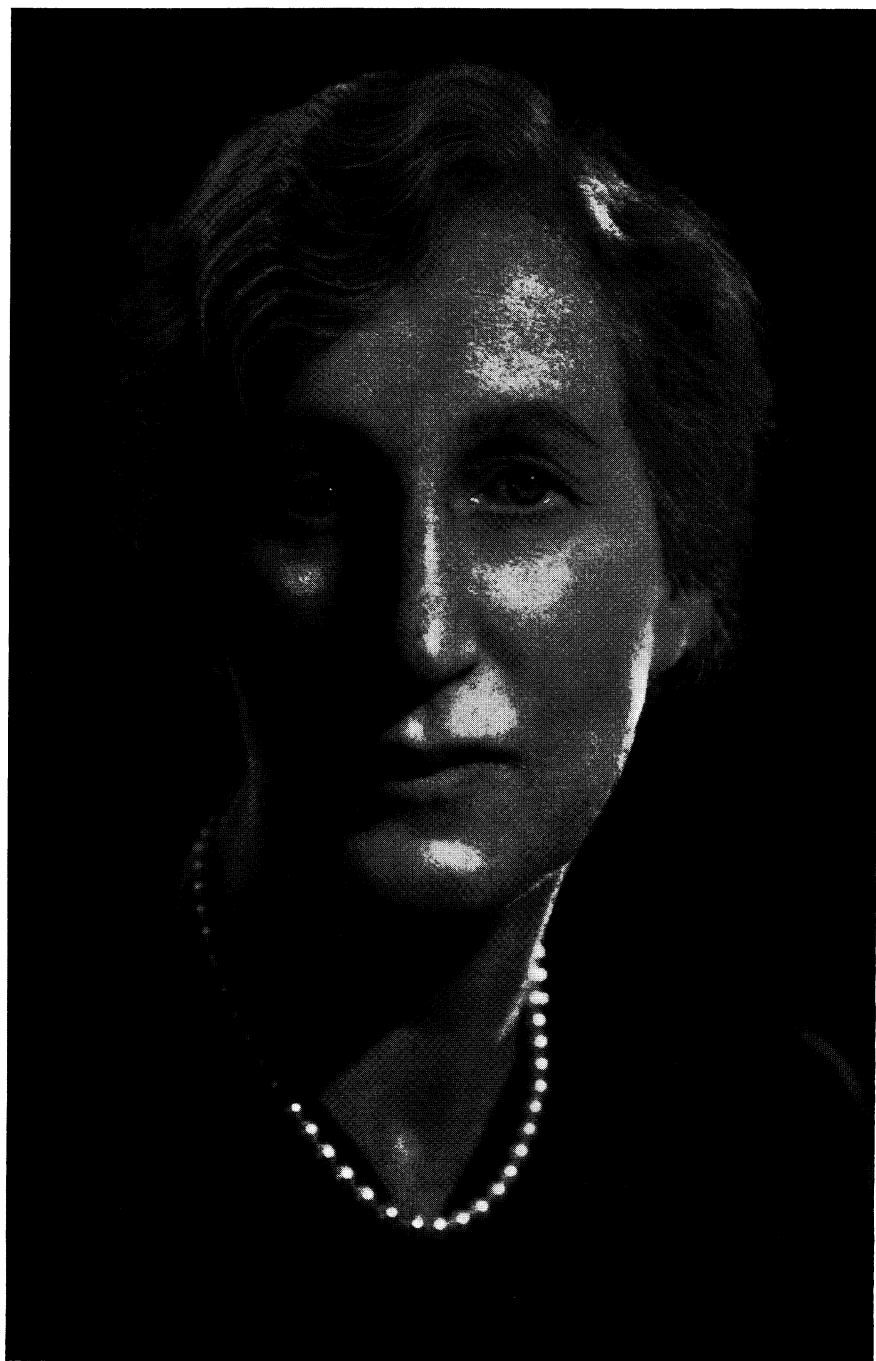
"So it is that we on this platform are combined in the defence of freedom, secured by democratic government and public law.

"We are equally determined to resist all efforts to diminish our freedom and to preserve peace by withstanding armed aggression.

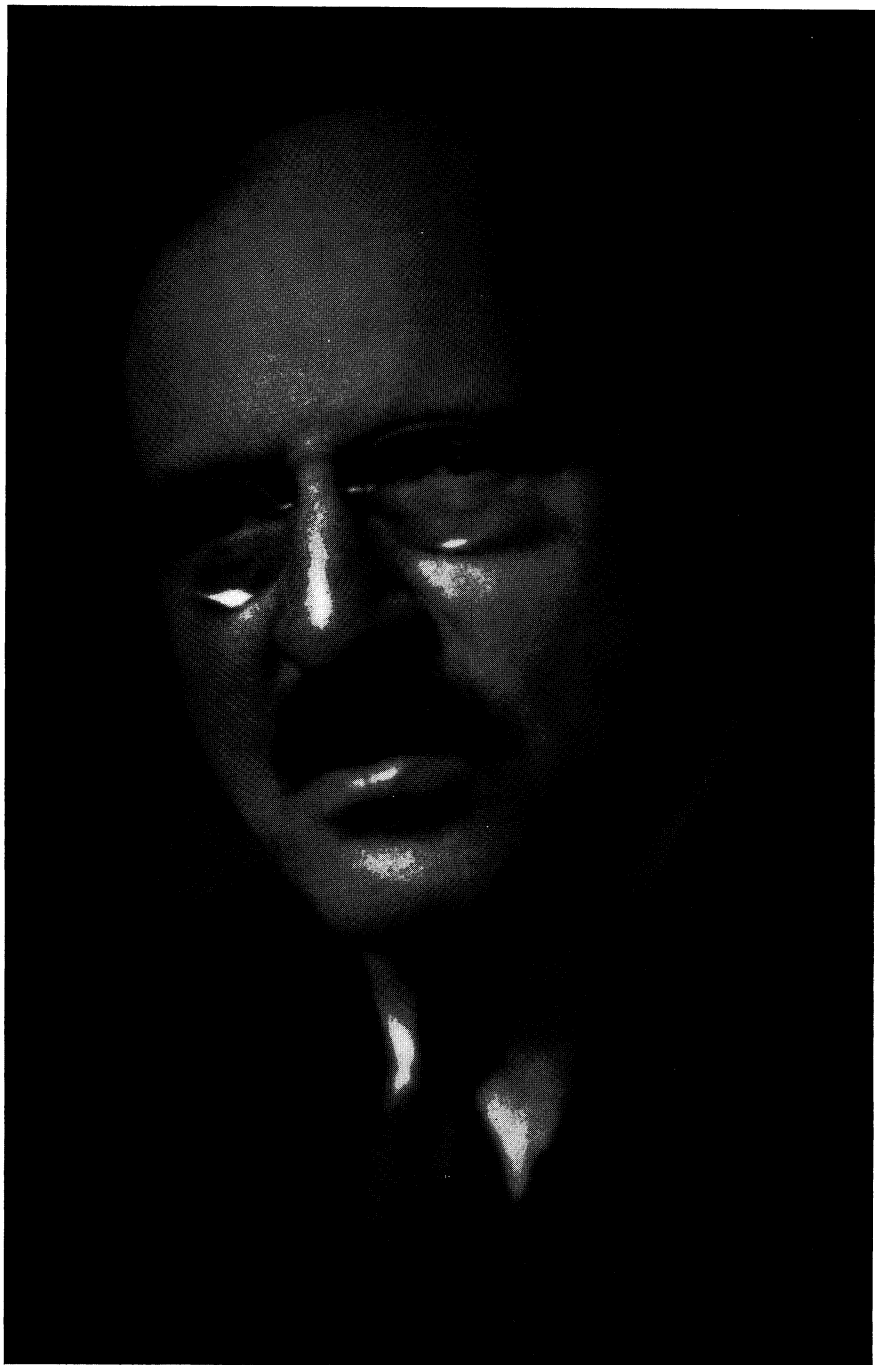
"How are we to achieve this end? How can peace be preserved? Surely an essential preliminary is a frank and courageous recognition of the realities of the present world situation. It is no use deluding ourselves that moral forces are all-powerful in a world deafened by the diatribes of dictators, the whirring of the wheels of rearmament and the commotion of civil war. It is no use deceiving ourselves into believing that a Hitler or a Mussolini will be restrained by pious sentiments, unaccompanied by effective demonstration of the will and the power to sustain them. It is no use disguising from ourselves that insecurity and fear stalk everywhere throughout Europe. Nor is it any use overlooking the fact that the edifice of the League of Nations has been shaken to its foundations by the shocks of the last few years.

"We shall perform no service to the cause of peace by ignoring these realities. We must recognise that the task of making the League an impregnable bulwark against war may be long and arduous. Such weaknesses as have been revealed must be remedied by collective action, on the part of all who care for peace. The democratic communities everywhere are crying out for such a courageous and constructive policy. There are no warlike people, but there are several bellicose governments. At some stage the League must be endowed with the direct control over such forces as may be necessary to enforce the rule of law. We must recognise, however, that it is a long-range policy, and that for some time to come the principal responsibility will devolve on those governments who are ready and willing, and above all adequately prepared, to assume the major obligation in maintaining peace and order. No nation, however wealthy and however great, can stand by itself. Peace in this sense is indivisible.

"I have insisted that it is not sufficient to have the will to peace—we must have the means to preserve it. This is not only the responsibility of the government, but a concern of the whole people. Among many people there is an assumption that the danger to peace does not come from the dictatorships alone. They feel that they cannot trust any capitalist government with the control of extensive armaments. They feel that these might be used for imperialist aggression, or for some national end,



LADY VIOLET BONHAM CARTER, D.B.E.



SIR ROBERT WALEY-COHEN

rather than for the maintenance of collective security. This feeling is genuine and deep; its existence must be frankly faced.

"It seems to me that the matter resolves itself into one where we must count the relativity of the risk involved. On the other hand we have the Fascist dictators, able to rearm rapidly, extensively, and with a secrecy which succeeded in deluding on occasions even the best informed British officials.

"One never hears of a debate in the Reichstag which brings into full light of publicity the intentions and actions of the German government. One never hears of pacifist or other organisations raising their voice to restrain that government in its headlong and mad rush towards the precipice of war. There is no organised public opinion. There is no means by which those sections of the German people who long for peace as earnestly as we do, can make their influence felt.

"This difference between the dictatorship states and the democracies is a terribly dangerous factor in the present world situation. Their leaders wield a dreadful power, immeasurably greater than the statesmen of democratic countries. Their populations are disciplined and regimented. They can act decisively and with the speed of lightning. Furthermore, let us never forget that the very absence of public restraint begets an irresponsibility of mind, a sort of megalomania. In the democratic states, the power of the government is restrained by the will of the people. No democratic government dare embark upon war with large sections of its own people organised in opposition to it. It is inconceivable that the freedom-loving people of Britain would respond to any narrow nationalist appeal. Dimly but with growing clearness the people are recognising that the old conception of patriotism is inadequate in the present world situation. It is no longer felt to be a fulfilment of the duties of citizenship for people to side with their government whether that government be right or wrong. It is being perceived that something broader is necessary. A loyalty to a world citizenship. A loyalty to and a readiness to defend such ideals as animated the founders of the League of Nations.

"It seems to me now that we have to choose between the relative risks. If I have to choose between trusting a Hitler or a Mussolini, heavily armed, aggressive in intention, and scornful of all moral considerations, with a people powerless to restrain his will; or a British Prime Minister, pledged up to the hilt in support of the system of collective security, with a Parliament and a people vigilantly watching, common sense impels me to

prefer the government over which I, as a citizen, can exercise some control. I am neither an imperialist nor a warmonger. A common citizenship and a sense of common danger impels those of us who speak here to consider what contribution we can make to a solution of this great problem. It was from this platform that the nation spoke with such unanimity and emphasis in the peace ballot. Now we trust that it will be an equally effective sounding-board from which the determination of the people to preserve peace and freedom will reverberate throughout the land."

Citrine's speech was well received and followed with intense attention, which was only interrupted by bursts of applause, particularly at his references to the persecution of the Jews and to the dangers that threatened freedom. Thunders of applause and cheers greeted his statement that there were no warlike people but only bellicose governments. One member of the audience shouted out that there was no antisemitism either; antisemitism was directed from above by men who had a personal vested interest in it.

The next speaker was the always popular and brilliant Lady Violet Bonham Carter. It was impossible not to feel that what she said went right to the hearts and minds of her audience :

"It needed great cause to bring together on one platform the men you see before you here today, Conservatives, Liberals, representatives of the great trade unions, and, last but not least, Mr. Winston Churchill, that brilliant political phenomenon who eludes all categories and defies classification, a dynamic force which cannot be labelled.

"What has brought them here together? Not a great cause alone, but what we feel to be a vital emergency. Whatever our differences may be, we feel the common need to declare a common faith, to defend that which is the common heritage of us all, the freedom we have won, and mean to keep, in the teeth of every challenge from within and from without, and peace which alone makes such freedom possible.

"There are two kinds of peace, and there are two ways of getting them. You can get peace of a kind and for a time by surrender to violence. That is the peace which is sincerely advocated by non-resisters at home—and as sincerely by dictators abroad. Or you can get peace by the resolute enforcement of law based on justice. That is the peace for which we stand tonight.



"You have heard why at this time we feel these things to be imperilled. Today we see a world which has put back the clock, a world which is reeling backwards away from law—away from freedom—back to the blind anarchy of force. Wherever we look we see nations turning into armies before our eyes. The tragedy of Spain which we watch from hour to hour with helpless horror, is in itself a defeat for civilisation.

"In this last year alone we have seen treaties torn up wholesale, solemn pledges dishonoured by great nations, Locarno violated, the League Covenant flouted and set at naught. We have seen the triumph of the Italian aggressor and the agony of his victim. In that struggle the public opinion of the whole civilised world was ranged against the aggressor. What was the use? Public opinion proved powerless against poison gas.

"I think the lessons we have learned from these defeats of law is that it is no good passing judgement unless you are ready to enforce it. It is no good giving a great moral lead if it is to be followed by a rapid physical scuttle. Justice cannot rule the world armed with the scales alone. In her other hand she must hold a sword. Unless we, the free democracies of the world who are still loyal members of the League, are prepared to stand together and to take the same risks for justice, freedom and peace as others are prepared to take for the fruits of aggression, then our cause is lost and the gangsters will inherit the earth.

"But that day is not yet. We have not come here today to bewail the past. What can we do? First, we must be strong, but strength alone is not enough. To arm in isolation would be lunacy, if it were not fortunately impossible. We cannot isolate ourselves. Even if we wished to leave the world alone, the world will not leave us alone. British rearmament must not be a mere blind throw of the die of force, it must be our contribution to the great collective front against tyranny and aggression, a free man's front which all who will may join, which none may dare to challenge.

"Next we must make clear to the world without delay, and before immediate peril arises, that on this front we stand. Except in regard to France and Belgium nobody knows where we stand today, or indeed whether we stand anywhere at all, because we do not seem to know ourselves.

"I believe that the greatest single step towards peace in Europe we can take today, is to make it crystal clear that we stand together with the other free and peace-loving nations of the world against aggression, one for all and all for one. Wasn't

that how the great trade union movement in this country won battle after battle for justice for the workers? What is a trade union but collective security in action? Let us apply it with the same loyalty and courage in the international field.

"Let us remember that in this issue British leadership can do more perhaps than that of any other nation in the world. With the exception of France we are the only great democracy left in Europe, the only great and powerful nation which has preserved intact its priceless heritage of freedom. In this country we take our freedom as much for granted as the air we breathe. We can vote as we like. We can think and believe what we like. We can say what we like in Parliament, at the Albert Hall or, if you prefer it, at the top of our voices in Hyde Park every Sunday afternoon. And it is on this diversity of thought, and its free expression, out of the best that every race and class and creed can give, that we have built up the greatest empire, the strongest and most stable constitution that exists in the world today.

"Can we imagine living in a land in which free thought and speech are treachery to the state, where the human mind is sent to prison, clapped into a strait-jacket like a lunatic, in which one may not criticise a work of art, where books are read to order, written to order, burnt to order, in which to hate to order is a patriotic duty, and race may be a crime even in a helpless Jewish child, a crime to be expiated in daily suffering, humiliation and degradation?

"That is the European culture and civilisation that we are told must be protected against the dangers of Communism. What is the difference between them? Both are a denial of human rights. To both alike we say: "You shall not pass here." Racial persecution, class hatred, the slavery of the mind, these hideous portents, have no place among us, no place in the life and liberties of this country. And that life, those liberties we shall defend and hold, not for ourselves alone but as a trust for civilisation. Let us prove, as prove we can, that democracy, that great army that needs no uniform, is not played out, that those who love peace above all things, do not lack the will and the courage to defend it. Let us remember that the great *enduring* victories of all times have not been won by mercenaries or slaves, but by free men who could draw the sword of the spirit, free men united as one soul in a great cause. The cause is here. For some of us it is the one cause still left worth dying for. For all it is worth living for and winning today."

Lady Violet sat down to such vociferous applause that it was

some time before the next speaker could be called upon. He was A. M. Wall, the secretary of the London Trades Council. We knew of him as an able and forceful speaker, but the manner as well as the content of his speech was a pleasant surprise to most of us. He handled the hecklers admirably. A number of them were Communists who jeered at him for being on the same platform as Tories and Liberals. They became so rowdy that Citrine felt it necessary to intervene so as to get the speaker a hearing. Wall thanked him but said that he would deal with the Communist demonstrators himself. When he had obtained quiet for a minute he went on with his speech and suddenly said slowly and very clearly: "I like the Nazis very much." Instantly yells of derision and shouts of abuse filled the building; but Wall was unmoved. He waited for an opportunity and added rather more quickly: "I like the Nazis very much to be here to see this manifestation of freedom of speech in practice. We belong to different parties, but we all speak freely and without fear. We will not have our consciences dictated to by anybody, not even by the bosses of our own party."

For a second there was silence, and then a great shout of approval. After that Wall had no trouble; the whole audience listened intently. He was repeatedly cheered when he referred to Stanley Baldwin as a great politician and a true English gentleman. But then he went on to say: Baldwin is getting too old for his job, and the very heavy burden of office he has shouldered for so long has weakened his understanding of his own people." Then, turning towards Churchill, he cried: "Baldwin should now make room for stronger leadership." The audience caught the implication and showed it by their applause.

Wall's was a comparatively short speech, but it would be difficult to forget its culmination. He accused Baldwin of having withheld the truth from the nation at the Fulham by-election. That, he shouted, was no way to treat the people; it must be told the truth at once, for there was no other way whereby

"this country in common with other nations can free the men and women and children who suffer unspeakable tortures, imprisonment and death from the hands of the tyrants. Only thereby may we preserve a peace of freedom and justice which alone can give man the rights that God Almighty intended him to have. This is the campaign in which the Focus for the Defence

of Freedom and Peace is engaged; with the help of God and your active co-operation I hope and know there will be in the end victory."

The aims of the Focus could hardly have been better stated.

The audience was now excited and in high spirits, and there was loud and continuous cheering when Churchill was called upon to speak. He made, as might be expected, a very good case for our cause, but some of us felt that he was not at his best. This, it must be remembered, was the time when the future Prime Minister was plagued with the internal conflict which arose from his personal affection for Edward VIII and his fears over the constitutional issue which the king's marriage plans had raised. He began by saying that we were gathered together on that platform with one object. He wanted to stop this war, of which we had heard so much talk. We would like to stop it while time still remained, for we had had enough of the last war not to want another. The seriousness and urgency of the danger was exemplified by the divergency of political opinion represented on the platform. We had reached a fateful milestone in human history.

Churchill then said that apostles of various kinds of error presented themselves. There were those like Sir Oswald Mosley who were fascinated by the spectacle of brutal power. They would like to use it themselves. They grovelled to Nazi dictatorship in order that they could make people in their turn grovel to them. They offered to Nazi domination colonies, which Britain held under mandate from the League of Nations, irrespective of the will of the natives. At the other end of the political scale there were Trotskyite Communists, furious fanatics whose sole aim was to throw the world into one supreme convulsion. Then there was Sir Stafford Cripps, who was in a class by himself. He wished Britain to be conquered by the Nazis in order to urge them into becoming Bolsheviks. It seemed a long way round. And not much enlightenment when they got to the end of their journey.

Lastly there were the absolute non-resisters, like Canon Sheppard and George Lansbury. They were pious men, but they would lead the country to ruin even more surely than all the others.

Unhappily it could be seen only too well how this most dangerous division was opening up all over the world. The agree-

ment between Germany and Japan was only one of those unmistakable manifestations. It was one of the rifts which existed in the world. But there was another cleavage in the world today. It was the war between the Nazis and the Communists; the war of the non-God religions waged with the weapons of the twentieth century. The most striking fact about the new religions was their similarity. They substituted the devil for God and hatred for love. They were at each other's throats wherever they existed all over the world, and had even appeared in the East End of London.

If present dangers were to be averted there must be loyal aid from the whole masses of the people; there must be voluntary and splendid comradeship; and there must even be a measure of self-imposed discipline. But we must not blind our eyes to the power which these new religions exercised in the modern world. They were equipped with powerful agencies of destruction, and they did not lack their champions, their devotees and even their martyrs.

It was not the duty of Britain to interfere in those countries. We had our own world. Let us look after that. But was it not time that the free nations, great or small, here or across the Atlantic Ocean, should take the measures necessary to place themselves in a state of security and adequate defence, not only for their own safety but also that they might hold aloft the beacon-lights of freedom, which would carry their rays of encouragement to the thinker and toiler in every land?

There were two great groups of nations which profoundly desired peace: in the west, Great Britain, France and Belgium, with which ought to be effectively associated "the very anxious" states of Holland and Switzerland; and in the east, Poland, the Baltic States and the populous armed states of Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Jugoslavia. There were good reasons for believing that the government and the people of Russia wanted to live in peace... a combination of Russia and all the eastern European powers would be most weighty and substantial.

In Spain a fratricidal war was being waged. What were the great nations of Europe doing? He wished the liberal free nations of the world had the power and the strength to separate the combatants and procure a parley. Unhappily they were too weak and cast down, and it was largely their own fault. They had not

kept their lamps burning for the cause and were behind with their preparations. But other calls might come. It would take all their efforts night and day to prevent the kind of abominations which had broken out in Spain from reappearing perhaps at no great distant time over Europe.

He believed that the League of Nations was never so necessary for the peace of the world as then, and that it never had so fine a chance of such solid backing as it then had. We must not be disheartened by the failure or humiliation that had befallen the previous efforts of the League in circumstances unsuitable for the realisation of its power. He believed its great days were still to come and that it would be madness in the present years of peril if they discarded the potential for salvation which it could offer to the soldiers and servants of peace and freedom.

“If we wish to stop this coming war—if coming it is—we must in the year that lies before us—nay, in the next six months—gather together the great nations, all as well-armed as possible and united under the Covenant of the League in accordance with the principles of the League, and in this way we must reach a position to join this organisation of world security. We must invite them to take their place freely in the circle of nations to preserve peace, where we shall be able to assure them that we seek no security for ourselves which we do not extend most freely to them.

“We should rally and invite under the League of Nations the greatest number of strongly armed nations that we can marshal. Let us invite Germany to take her part among us. Then we should be sincerely believed, having done not only our best but having succeeded in warding off from the world calamities and horrors the end of which no man can foresee.”

The last speech came from Lord Lytton who said that he spoke for the League of Nations Union when he welcomed Churchill's presence and co-operation in our great cause.

“Mr. Churchill and I have been personal friends for over thirty years. We have not always been political allies. We have sometimes kept different company. But whether we have agreed or disagreed, I have only known him as a champion who knows how to strike effective blows for the cause in which he believes. He is a born fighter, and a tower of strength in time of danger. And this is such a time. There is real danger at this moment of a

new war, a war arising from a clash of opposing political ideas held so passionately as to amount to a religion, and that kind of conflict is almost impossible to submit to arbitration. There is only one remedy and that is for both sides to resist the temptation to carry their ideologies beyond their own territories, to agree to live and let others live, to think and let others think within the law. As law is the best guardian of liberty, and war its greatest enemy, we welcome Mr. Churchill as the champion of Law and Peace under Law. That is what this platform is advocating tonight—freedom and peace; nothing else, nothing more, nothing less.

“We stand all of us, equally and through the same means, for the establishment of a law among nations of the same kind as that which we have laboriously and successfully built up through the ages for ourselves in our state. We have achieved by that means internal freedom and internal peace. We seek the co-operation of other countries to achieve the same objects in the world at large. We ask nothing for our own country that we are not prepared to concede to other countries, whatever political system they may adopt, whatever forms their governments may take. We seek no interference in the internal affairs of other states, as we will tolerate no interference in our own. We have no preference for shirts of any distinctive colour, and we care not what colours others may prefer, but if, because Jews are hated and persecuted elsewhere, any group of people think they are justified in persecuting them here, we support the government in using any power to prevent such an offence against personal liberty.

“Outside our own country we stand, in Mr. Churchill’s words, for strong collective defence against any aggressor. The collective system which we advocate requires first, that each unit must be strong enough to make the combined strength overwhelming; second, that if collective force is to be an instrument of peace there must be certainty that it will be used for the maintenance of the Covenant of the League of Nations and for the restraint of an aggressor; and third, and equally essential, there must also be a certainty that it will never be used for anything else.

“I have sometimes heard this collective system compared to an issue of capital which has been underwritten. I have heard Mr. Churchill himself use this simile and speak of collective security underwritten by a sufficient number of states to ensure its success. If I may develop this analogy a little further, I would remind you that no firm would consent to underwrite an issue unless it were accompanied by a prospectus which defined the purposes to

which the money was to be applied and ensured that it would not be applied to any other purpose. Our prospectus is the Covenant of the League of Nations. The purpose for which we contribute our strength, and let it be the strongest contribution of which we are capable, is the maintenance of that Covenant, the defence of that law by which the freedom of all states and the preservation of peace is assured."

At the end of the meeting the National Anthem was sung with such enthusiasm that the Communists were given no chance even to start up the *Red Flag*.

I felt that we had made an excellent start and that we could now expect solid public backing. I warmly congratulated Wall on his speech and asked him to speak for us again, perhaps at Manchester where Joe Toole, a staunch supporter of the Focus and a great friend of Wall, had just been elected Lord Mayor. I asked Richards to act at once and arrange a Manchester meeting. I then managed to have a few words with Churchill who appeared to be highly gratified. He made special reference to the enthusiastic singing of the National Anthem, which he interpreted as an approval of his attitude on the Royal marriage issue. I did not want either to hurt or embarrass him, so I did not tell him that some of the enthusiasm had been ably pre-arranged by Richards.

Locker-Lampson, who thought the meeting had lasted too long, finally dragged me and my wife away to his party. It was very pleasant but the conversation was almost entirely confined to the constitutional crisis. I did not take much part for my mind was already speculating on what the papers would say next morning.

Alas, the reports were scanty in the extreme; we fared much better in the American press, just as Steed had surmised. The following report from the *Christian Science Monitor* was typical of the response we had from the United States. Nothing comparable appeared in any British paper.

BRITISH PEACE FORCES PLEDGE FULL SUPPORT FOR  
DEMOCRACY; MOVEMENT CROSSES PARTY LINES

*Gathering in Albert Hall Called to Show Government  
That Forceful Policy for Peace and Freedom  
Within League Will Get Strong Backing*



That the peace-effort in Britain is taking on a concrete form is evidenced by a number of movements and political speeches. Most significant of the peace meetings so far is the "Defence of Freedom and Peace" gathering in the Albert Hall, London, tonight, which unites leaders of all political creeds in a determined effort to find some practical way out of the present threatening state of Europe. This movement, like several others, emanates from the people themselves rather than from high political circles.

One of its most distinguished advocates is Mr. Winston Churchill, former British First Lord of the Admiralty, whose recent speech pointing to an alignment of democratic countries across the Atlantic against war has aroused considerable comment.

*By Wickham Steed*

LONDON, Dec. 3—The great meeting called in the London Albert Hall in "Defence of Freedom and Peace" tonight, has a curious background. Last March an organisation known as "The Anti-Nazi Council" held its annual luncheon. Sir Walter Citrine, chairman of the Trades Union Congress, presided. Sir Norman Angell, the well-known British peace leader and Nobel Prize winner, and I, were among the speakers.

The concordance of the views expressed suggested that they might be shared by a still wider circle. So a private luncheon was presently arranged at which Sir Walter Citrine again presided, with Mr. Winston Churchill, Lady Violet Bonham Carter (daughter of the late Lord Asquith), and several other members of the Conservative, Liberal and Labour Parties, as well as prominent businessmen, to support him.

#### ABOVE PARTY LINES

At this luncheon Mr. Winston Churchill said that a situation which could bring so many political opponents together round one table, to talk across party and above party, must be a grave situation indeed. Nothing less than the freedom and the peace of democratic Europe were at stake.

From the discussion several main ideas emerged. These ideas were written down and carefully examined by a drafting sub-committee. In the course of the summer they were again revised at another meeting of the group; and, finally, in September and October they were boiled down to the following statement of the objects and principles of the Defence of Freedom and Peace.

## OBJECTS

*To unite British citizens, irrespective of politics or creed,  
In defence of freedom, secured by democratic government and  
public law;*

*In resistance to all efforts to diminish or destroy this freedom  
by violence at home or attack from abroad; and*

*In support of our international duty to join with others in  
preserving peace and withstanding armed aggression.*

## PRINCIPLES

*The cause of ordered freedom is in danger. Peace itself is in jeopardy. The foes of both are vocal, organised and strong. "Defence of Freedom and Peace" offers common ground to all who hold that without peace, freedom cannot be sure; and that without freedom there can be no true peace.*

*The central mass of temperate, tolerant humanity must not be found feeble in action and leadership. Parliamentary governments of self-ruling peoples need, therefore, to know they are upheld by the resolute will of citizens who are ready to stand for the rights of man and for justice among the nations.*

*The ideals enshrined in the League Covenant and the Kellogg Pact grew out of man's bitter need after uncountable sacrifice. Those ideals alone stand between the world and nameless woe. Great Britain must be strong to bear her part in banning war from the life of nations, so that well-guarded peace may lighten the burden of the peoples and offer to states great and small just redress for proved wrong.*

*British leadership and action may yet save peace and civilisation. The aim of "Defence of Freedom and Peace" is to prosper this work.*

## STRONG SUPPORT WON

By this time a number of prominent men, who had not shared originally in the discussions, took an interest in what was being done. They included Sir Austen Chamberlain, Sir Archibald Sinclair (the Opposition Liberal leader), Dr. J. J. Mallon, the well-known social reformer and warden of Toynbee Hall, and other sympathisers. It was decided to begin public manifestations with a mass meeting at the Albert Hall of which the seating capacity approaches 10,000. This is the origin of tonight's meeting.

Naturally, the ideas of the group could not remain entirely

hidden. Mr. Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, seems to have got wind of them and to have said that if anything like this were afoot, the government could feel sure of public support for a firmer policy in defence of peace within the framework of the League of Nations.

#### FIRM POLICY ASSURED

At all events his speech in the House of Commons on Nov. 6 was far more downright than his earlier statements of policy had been; and Mr. Winston Churchill backed him up impressively.

If British Ministers will go ahead on the lines laid down in its "Objects" and "Principles", the body of public opinion which "Defence of Freedom and Peace" represents will back the government up. But if the government continues to waver and to wobble, and to plead that it does not know what public opinion wants, "Defence of Freedom and Peace" will not rest until there is a government which leads public opinion in the right way.

Steed rang me up early that morning to express his indignation.

If the press reports were meagre, we got a shoal of messages of congratulation and support from every quarter, many applications for membership of the Focus, and requests from various parts of the country for us to organise similar meetings. Lord Cecil, we were glad to note, was now in almost complete agreement with Churchill's plea for the marshalling of force behind international law. On the other hand we did get criticism from a number of people because of our association with Churchill, but the criticism had nothing to do with the Focus and was entirely concerned with Churchill's attitude to the royal crisis.

## CHAPTER V

### FROM THE ALBERT HALL TO MANCHESTER

THE meeting had at least got us considerable publicity, even if the British press had failed us, and now our members and the secretary began to get a stream of letters from all over Great Britain as well as from foreign countries, particularly Germany; for obvious reasons these last were all unsigned. They came from every part of Germany and were unanimous in condemning the British government and the newspapers for their benevolent attitude towards Hitler and his régime. There were millions of Germans, so the letters assured us, who were far from supporting Nazism; on the contrary, they were ashamed of it, and condemned it in outspoken and often unprintable terms. Many of them said that the inclusion of Churchill in the Cabinet would do more to weaken the Nazi régime than any show of planes, guns and tanks. Rather surprisingly many of our German correspondents recalled with gratitude Churchill's action on the first day of the Armistice in 1918 in arranging for six large merchant ships to carry food to the starving Germans.

Continuous requests for information about the Focus came from the provinces, and for supplies of our publications. Proposals for public meetings, irrespective of party, came from Manchester, Plymouth, Hull, Kettering, Sheffield and many other towns. All we were asked to do was to send a speaker; all other arrangements would be made locally. This interest appeared to us as a clear sign that the British public, or at least a large section of it, was disturbed and even humiliated by the vagueness of the government's policy and the attitude of the press. We felt that we were on the right road; we also felt that it was the government which was seriously out of touch with public feeling. That meant that we must intensify our work so as to advocate our principles at public meetings or through our publications. We would have to issue a clear statement about the meaning and

dangers of Nazism, about the necessity for Britain to rearm and the object of such rearmament.

With this evidence of public support, we felt justified in approaching the government through some of our members, Churchill, Austen Chamberlain, Locker-Lampson, Wickham Steed and others. The abdication crisis had left Churchill somewhat under a cloud and doubts had been cast upon his constitutional and democratic integrity, but we were steadfast in our faith in him.

We re-stated our programme as follows :

1. To make direct approaches to the government to convince it of its mis-reading of the situation.

2. To contact the public by more meetings and by large scale distribution of pamphlets; to supply the clergy of all denominations with short notes on the dangers of totalitarian atheist dictatorships, explaining the Nazi challenge to democracy and telling what was happening in Germany to religion and the churches. We would cite the statements made by religious leaders, beginning with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope. The clergy would be asked to discuss these grave matters from the pulpit. We intended to ask Canon H. R. Barry to write an article and Dr. Cyril Norwood to preach a sermon giving a true interpretation of Nazism.

3. To arrange for the publication of eleven pamphlets as under :

- i. *The Truth about Hitler* by Winston Churchill.
- ii. *Cross or Swastika*.
- iii. *The German Janus*.
- iv. *The Ethics of Persecution* by Sidney Dark.
- v. *The Air and You*.
- vi. *Keeping the Peace* by H. G. Wells.
- vii. *What are Dictators?* by Phyllis Bottome.
- viii. *England no longer Safe* by Brig.-Gen. P. R. C. Groves.
- ix. *Trustees for Freedom* by Wickham Steed.
- x. *Why Palestine matters to You*.
- xi. *Hitler's Claims for Colonies* by L. S. Amery.

Locker-Lampson considered his foremost allegiance to be towards the electorate of his constituency and to act in accordance with the pledges given at his election. As these pledges now

clashed with the government's policy, he felt unable to give the government unconditional or rather automatic support. He did everything he could in the House to reveal to the government what Nazism really meant to humanity at large, and to the safety of this country in particular.

Locker-Lampson had agreed to take charge of our publications, which were to be distributed on the widest possible scale.

4. To redraft our principles and objects.

5. To continue to publicise at home and abroad Churchill's activities in defence of freedom and peace.

6. To press for the establishment of a Ministry of Supply in order to strengthen our military position.

7. To insist on the creation of a Ministry of Information so that the public could be told officially about the true nature of Nazism and supplied with accurate figures about the daily increases in Nazi military strength. The Ministry should emphasise the moral principles on which this country had built its institutions; should demonstrate how the Nazis intended to destroy these; should seek to bring about an organisation of our spiritual forces; and, finally, should prove to the totalitarian states that Britain was united against their gospels.

Such a Ministry would in fact be a declaration of a moral blockade.

We hoped that as a result the government would be confident that it had the whole nation behind it, if the necessity arose for an immediate breaking-off of relations with a wrongdoer. Even the Nazis would realise that the British people felt that it was faced with both a military and an ideological challenge, and that we were materially and spiritually ready to take it up. The Focus, on the other hand, would provide the government and the public with evidence that it was still possible to counter both threats, provided the government gave assurances that it would take a firm stand.

Pressing requests had been made for information on the extent and progress of German rearmament. It will be remembered that Churchill had asked me for figures, and Steed had given me a lot of information which substantially confirmed the results of my own researches. I did not think my data contained anything important which was not already known to the government, but there was much that required interpretation to avoid

serious wrong deductions. I was concerned that Churchill, and through him the government, should give earnest consideration to a statement which I wrote for the Focus.

"Nazi Germany," I wrote, "has definitely abandoned any intention of observing old established practices in its economic and financial activities. The Nazis have embarked on a policy of deliberate financial default, of ignoring agreed terms of contract, of confiscating property, and of wasting wealth and resources. It is a ruthless policy with the sole object of concentrating on a comprehensive armament programme of terrifying dimensions.

"Every opposition to this suicidal policy from industry, military experts, financial institutions like the Dresdner Bank, is brutally brushed aside and branded as an act of treacherous sabotage to be punished as such. The responsibility for carrying out this rearmament policy, called the second four-year plan, has been put entirely into Goering's hands, with dictatorial powers to carry it out. Goering has exercised these powers brutally and ruthlessly. All available resources are now being tapped by every means, and every device is being used to feed this mammoth armament production. Confiscations of private property already exceed £500,000,000; the nation's wealth has been reduced to an alarming degree; every kind of illegal transaction is allowed so long as it brings foreign exchange or strategic material into Goering's hands. Foreign currency, copper, rubber, oil and foodstuffs are severely rationed—except for the armament industries. There has been an inevitable fall in living standards, particularly for the working class, to whom no consideration is shown. To meet any resistance, and to prevent such social unrest as would handicap the progress of rearmament, industries concerned in the plan have been put under military supervision and are watched by S.S. detachments. The administration of the civil law, as far as it still exists at all in Germany, is completely abolished in the armament industries, and martial law has replaced it.

"This colossal arms production, this conversion of every German asset and credit to war material, is accompanied by a continuous increase in German indebtedness which has already reached astronomical figures. In the end Germany will be in possession of only one asset, i.e. an accumulation of war material, against which it can show nothing but an accumulation of debts. It was once hoped that some of these debts could be paid for by the export of arms. But the policy of production at any price

and by any device has so inflated costs that export is now hardly a practical proposition. German arms are being produced at a cost fifty, and in some cases one hundred per cent higher than costs here : e.g. a German infantry rifle costs 110 per cent more than it would cost in Britain.

"The Nazi government is aware that this uneconomic process cannot go on indefinitely, and every effort is being made to shorten the four years to three or even less, which would mean that by the end of 1939 or, at the latest, the first half of 1940, the plan will be completed. In 1939-40, therefore, Germany will have exhausted her resources, and will find herself unable to keep the vast armaments industry going. She will be forced to declare herself bankrupt as a result of the collapse of her artificial inflation of credit. There will be a monetary inflation far exceeding that in the post-war years, and an army of some 7,000,000 impoverished and desperate unemployed. The only other course she could take would be to make use of that one and only asset to wage a war of conquest, and by looting and confiscating enough to remove the economic threat and replenish her resources. Hitler and his associates have irrevocably decided upon war, once the super-armament programme is fulfilled. Every action of the régime is evidence of this. I shall only mention two, the removal of the most important armament industries from the Rhineland and the Silesian border to places like Magdeburg and Leipzig, and the building of underground shelters in the Wildpark in Potsdam and elsewhere to accommodate administrative bodies.

"Given such facts it would seem reasonable not to give Hitler time to complete his plan, but to abandon delaying tactics and force him to come to a decision before it is complete. He and the General Staff would thus be put upon the defensive. Hitler's position would thereby be most seriously weakened and his prestige would be impaired. At the same time our position, and the position of the millions of Germans who want Hitler's defeat, would be greatly strengthened.

"I should like here to tell my fellow-members of an incident that occurred not long ago. I was visited by a German businessman from Magdeburg who came with an introduction from the Chamber of Commerce. He offered me a barter transaction, whereby the purchase of wool in South Africa would be offset against the delivery of coal to Ireland. The parties to the transaction could expect a twenty per cent profit, whilst Germany would get wool at fifty per cent above world market price; she



could not buy it in the usual way because of her lack of foreign exchange. I told him that I was not interested in this or any other transaction with Nazi Germany, and tried to explain to him that this sort of thing must lead to unemployment, inflation and war. After I had refuted the usual Nazi propaganda arguments, he asked me for my opinion as to the best solution. I replied: 'Sell all your armaments—and I mean all—for cash to the League of Nations, which needs arms and has the cash to pay for them. To that sort of transaction I would gladly become party, and we could both earn a very handsome commission.' The latter possibility clearly impressed him, but he argued that such a transaction would mean the fall of the Nazi régime. I agreed; it would mean the end of Nazi Germany, but also the beginning of prosperity for the true Germany.

"Next day he returned to my office and asked me to give him the names of City firms who might be interested. I gave him a list, but told him frankly that I very much doubted whether any of them would enter into such a transaction. Shortly after he had left I found a briefcase lying by my desk. It had no name on the outside and, when I opened it to see if I could trace the owner, I found no address or indication to whom it belonged. What I did find, however, was a detailed report of the meeting of the previous day. It was fairly accurate, and the suggestion about the League of Nations was given considerable emphasis. The report suggested that somebody should come to London and discuss the matter further with me. The writer ended the report by mentioning with some satisfaction the help I had given him, but qualified his praise with the words *Leider Jude*, i.e. Pity he's a Jew. Later my visitor re-appeared to ask if he had left his briefcase in my office, and then told me he had completed his barter transaction on a very large scale, thus helping Germany to buy strategic materials she could not otherwise have obtained.

"Here I would like to draw the attention of my fellow members to a statement made by the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, in the House of Commons on January 19th: 'Economic collaboration and political appeasement go hand in hand. If economic and financial accommodations merely result in more armaments and more political disturbances, the cause of peace will be hindered rather than helped'."

The daily reports sent out by the Nazi information service made it clear to us that a major war had been decided upon and that the preparations for it were going ahead. No effort at appeasement could hinder the carrying out of this decision.

Hitler had made it clear that he would not tolerate delay or frustration of his plans by efforts at mediation. His secret negotiations with Russia, France and this country had no other aim than to find a fellow-conspirator in looting Europe, another method of promoting the Nazi creed that might is right. How he would deal subsequently with such an associate could be gauged by his treatment of many of those who had been foremost in conspiring with him to get control of power in Germany. He pursued his policy by every kind of deception and subtlety, for he had adopted Machiavelli's maxim that "the interest of the state takes precedence over all ethical considerations". In his case the state was Hitler himself.

The Focus continued to fight against this Nazi danger and to enlighten the public both at home and overseas, and the British government; it was not our object to unseat the government but to convince it. We proceeded to organise our next big meeting. Shortly after the Albert Hall success I had heard from Wall that Toole, the Lord Mayor of Manchester, had agreed to speak with him in support of the defence of freedom and peace, and had suggested that Steed should join them on the platform. This was easily arranged for Toole was in full agreement with our non-party attitude. "I care nothing for party when my country is concerned," he said. It was always heartening to hear from and about him. On one occasion when he addressed a gathering of Jewish children, he said: "It is not because Jews are Jews that I defend them, it is because I defend anybody who is wrongly attacked."

We now turned our attention to making the Manchester meeting a success, although we were somewhat hampered by the abdication crisis, and then by the advent of the Christmas holidays. Eventually we managed to fix the meeting for February 14th, 1937, in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester.

The subject for discussion at the meeting was to be *Need there be War?*, with Toole in the chair and Steed, Norman Angell<sup>1</sup> and Sir Arthur Haworth as the speakers. We all worked hard and I was relieved to get a letter from the secretary, who was then in Manchester, on the 11th saying that arranging the

<sup>1</sup> There was a last minute change. Angell fell ill while crossing from Switzerland specially to attend the meeting and could not leave London. Wall took his place.

meeting had been uphill work but that everything had now been settled. A press conference had been "really marvellous, and the Lord Mayor is delighted".

We had provided the speakers with a certain amount of useful information, and we had prepared a manifesto for distribution to the audience; and we had printed plenty of copies so that any one who wanted to, could have extra copies to give to friends at home or abroad. This is the text of the manifesto :

### MANCHESTER MANIFESTO TO THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE

(This manifesto is entirely opposed to the policy of  
Dick Sheppard's Peace Ballot)

"Europe draws near the brink of ruin. In friendship and goodwill we call her peoples to save themselves and her.

"Civil strife, envenomed from without, still rages in Spain. Throughout Europe, weapons of war are being forced apace, industry and handicraft turned from constructive to destructive purpose. Europe thus squanders her heritage, damning herself to self-made penury.

"Other peoples see her peril. From the New World come warnings—and an example. Respectful of present boundaries, and abjuring war, the nations of the Two Americas have pledged themselves to take counsel together in time of need. The President of the United States has bidden them all ponder how they can 'help the Old World to avert the catastrophe which impends.'

"Shall disaster indeed befall us? Shall Europe, mother of American nations, lag behind her children?

"The peoples of Europe yearn for peace even while they drift towards war. They lack leadership in united purpose. In union for freedom, peace and justice they could open an era bright with hope and fruitful in achievement.

"Scientific triumphs over natural obstacles, the progressive conquest of distance, space and time, have brought European peoples closer together than ever before. With their new nearness has come new power to hurt and destroy each other.

"Fearing for their safety within their borders, the nations of Europe mount guard against attack. Frontiers are bristling barriers between them. Yet by no change of frontier can Europe be made more spacious, the hungry be fed, the poor enriched, and welfare fostered. Over all her frontiers, good or bad, a Europe

set free from fear could build bridges of understanding and helpfulness.

"Every proved wrong could be righted, every just claim met in an equal comradeship of peaceful peoples. Science, industry, machines could ensure the livelihood of all workers, abolish poverty by fairer distribution of wealth, and create a nobler civilisation.

"Let us, peoples of Europe, cease to labour for our own undoing. Heeding the example of the Americas, let us take counsel together. Let us firmly stand for peace and for freedom. Let us make it known that we stand ready to defend them, strong in union and unafraid, conceding naught to threats of war, pledging all to works of peace. So we may save ourselves and help to save the world.

"We call the peoples to join hands above divisions of race or class or creed. With its whole strength the British people is ready to foster peace in fellowship with all. Who will answer its appeal?"

In opening the meeting the Lord Mayor said that its object was to give the plain people of all parties, and of none, a chance to hear the plain truth about the international situation, and to offer them an opportunity to do something about it. It was an earnest endeavour to send out from Manchester a message that would bring home to the peoples of Europe a sense of their common danger and show them a way of escape.

"The Manchester Manifesto," he continued, "is not a vain flight of fancy. It has been drawn up with full knowledge of the feelings of the plain people everywhere. It is an attempt to stir those feelings to action for the benefit of all of us.

"The armaments of peace-loving nations, including Britain's armaments, may check the drift to war, may give us a sense of safety for a time, but by themselves they will not avert war or save our freedom and our peace. . . . Those who would create peace must be strong. They must be stern against wrongdoing, be ready and able to withstand it, be vigilant against cunning and unflinching in resistance to threats. Human freedom is too precious and has been too hardly won not to be stoutly defended. . . .

"The call of Manchester will soon be a call of England, of Britain, of the whole Commonwealth, and later, I trust, of the whole world. Other nations will hear and echo it, as in bygone

years they did at the call of England, first for religious freedom and then for freedom of the mind."

Toole then proceeded to read a number of messages from prominent Manchester people who supported us, but were unable to be present and then went on to a conclusion that brought the whole audience to its feet :

"Every day you read that Mussolini now has eight million bayonets and that Hitler too has his quota. Armaments breed armaments. All over the world there is a drift to danger and this meeting is called to speak to the peoples everywhere over the heads of their statesmen. I ask every Lord Mayor in this country to call in his city a meeting of ordinary people, and I ask the people of Europe to respond to this appeal. . . .

"When I say I love this country, it does not make me hate any other country. I am fond of this country because it gives me the rights of free speech, free vote and free expression of opinion. But that great heritage is a trumpery and useless thing if, at a crisis like this, it is not used to speak your mind freely irrespective of your party, irrespective of your creed and your race, and to tell the peoples of other countries that this drift to war must cease. I want a response from London, from Birmingham, from Liverpool, from Hull, from Cardiff, from Nottingham, from Glasgow. I want the response from our opposites in every country, over the heads of the armaments makers, over the heads of the warmongers and the newspaper proprietors, I want the response from all over Europe. . . .

"We can build the greatest ships in the world. We can build Mersey tunnels; we can do everything for ourselves; we can conquer the world. The one thing we haven't yet conquered is fear. When we have conquered fear we will have done everything. Is it for nothing that God gave us breath and brain? Is it merely that all these things shall be used for butchering mankind? I do not believe it."

Our principal speaker was Wickham Steed who gave a brilliant and witty analysis of the situation. I reproduce some of the notable passages in his speech :

"I believe," he began, "in the right of Englishmen to speak their minds to each other, to meet together in moments of crisis, and to risk the consequences of frank speech, whatever these may be. We are in a crisis, and our government has not met with us and told us frankly where and how we stand. Does it think

we are afraid, or that we can be treated as children who should not be allowed to know what it seems that the government knows? Why are we not told what it knows?

"The other day the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an Armaments Loan of up to £400,000,000. It may be, probably is, necessary. I would not question his figures or his sincerity. In the autumn of 1934 the government told us there was no need to worry; we still had considerable superiority over Germany in the air. It repeated that statement in February, 1935, but by April Sir John Simon had been told by Hitler himself that Germany had in fact become superior, and the government began to admit that it might have been mistaken. But we have not up to this moment been told what the government does know of German military preparations or Germany's military strength. It has not been frank with us. . . .

"What is the issue? It is a *moral* one; and in the circumstances when, owing to action of the government, the League of Nations cannot place that sort of issue before us, we must do so ourselves, and on that issue make it clear that we will stand like a rock against any country which, for any reason whatever or under any pretext whatever, proposes to revert to mass butchery to attain its ends, when any fair and honourable end can be attained by peaceful negotiation. If we stand, and if we make it known in good time that we stand together with all other people of goodwill, the danger may pass. We may not have to fight; we may not be attacked and may help to redeem the world from this perennial scorch of reciprocal slaughter. . . .

"On Friday evening Mr. Duff Cooper said at Edinburgh: 'There is every sign of approaching catastrophe.' On November 12th, Mr. Baldwin said in the House of Commons: 'The situation is one of ever deteriorating international conditions.' This morning my Lord Rothermere informed us in a great headline that 'Britain is to cede land to Germany', mollifying Hitler for the sake of peace. Mollifying Hitler! Why have we to mollify him? . . . No! . . . It was from this country that the message of intellectual freedom went out after our truly bloodless revolution of 1688, when John Locke the author of the great *Essays on the Human Understanding* sent out a message to Europe which kindled the soul of Voltaire and carried the torch of freedom through the world. . . . What message has England for the world today? If I read the temper of our people right, it is not a message that we are going to keep out of everything and that the rest of the world can go to the devil, provided we can protect

ourselves. That way ruin for ourselves must lie. . . . Abyssinia placed her faith in the League of Nations, and the face of Britain was blackened throughout the world. . . . Now we can no longer trust that in case of supreme danger, the League of Nations will be able to place before us that moral issue which the people of this country need. . . . Therefore, it has become a matter of national and international urgency that the moral issue should be provided by the people of this country.

"Today we find a Europe divided, as some say, into two camps. Hitler said so the other day and Goebbels repeated it; for a part at least of the German people it must be true. But, as Mr. Eden has said, it is not true that there are only two camps, and no choice between Nazi Fascism and Communism, each equally denying liberty. There is still the system of representative democratic freedom. That is not a halfway house between two tyrannies, but lies in another street altogether. This system we have built up through the centuries.

"Tonight we are striving to lay the foundations of an international community, so that the world may know that we stand together against the crime of war. We demand from the government the fullest truth. If there be peril, we demand that we should know it. We are adult enough to think and to act and to support our government in facing it. There can be no questioning, no bargaining, no hivering, no wavering; the cry must ring through Europe: 'We are ready'. Let everybody know that, and not a single country with eight million or eighteen million bayonets will dare attempt war and Europe will be saved. There will be no war and the peoples, now tyrant-ridden, will rise again and call England blessed."

The audience loved Steed's rhetoric. They laughed at his sallies against the dictators and their friends; they applauded his criticisms of the government, and his peroration brought them to their feet, clapping and cheering. He was followed by A. M. Wall, who had the same success as he had had at the Albert Hall. Like Steed he complained bitterly of the government's lack of frankness and failure to give a lead:

"I want to be quite modest but at the same time inform you that it was my idea to call this meeting. . . . I can only hope that as a result of this great meeting the message of peace set forth in the Manchester Manifesto will get into the hands of my fellow working-class friends throughout Europe. . . . Why in the name of God cannot we live in peace in Europe, as we live in

peace in the British Isles?... It would be wrong of me to deceive you... and, mark my words, men of England, if you have no concern for the crushing of the liberty of people elsewhere you will lose your own liberty, as sure as I stand here. If we need collective security among the nations, we need the collective-security mind among our own people. I would not divide our people into Conservatives and Liberals and Communists and Labour in this issue. That is all right for such matters as governing our own country, but in the great crisis which faces us, there must be no division of our people. There must be a really united front of every lover of liberty everywhere. The message of this great meeting must and shall be pushed through the barriers of the censorship in Germany and Italy.

"I would say this to Mr. Baldwin : the British people demand to know what you know about the danger in Europe. You said in the House of Commons that democracy is always two years behind dictatorship. You must withdraw that. There is no reason whatsoever why democracy should ever be behind dictatorship. Democracy can be in front and, if you take into your confidence these men of Manchester, hard-boiled and hard-headed, they will appreciate the truth. They will know how to act. They know that, if Britain has no concern for the crushing of liberty in other lands, she will lose her own. Let this message go out from us tonight, that in unity above government and above politics we are resolved to free those who suffer under dictators today, and to preserve, by uniting all the peace-loving nations, that peace which God Almighty intended us to have."

The enthusiasm rivalled that in the Albert Hall. It did us all there a power of good, and the face of that blunt Lancashire man who was our chairman glowed with satisfaction : Manchester had spoken through its Lord Mayor.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE CAMPAIGN GOES ON

THE response to the Manchester meeting was most encouraging. We had masses of correspondence including much from Germany. Evidently we had broken through some of the totalitarian barriers. Incidentally the Manchester Manifesto was also sent to Hitler and to Mussolini. From Hitler we received the following reply on March 11th, 1937 :

Dear Sir,

Herewith I have the honour to acknowledge your letter with enclosures directed to the Fuehrer and Reichskanzler, which were duly forwarded to him and for which I am instructed to thank you. With the expression of my highest esteem I am yours faithfully, signed Wolmaner, Foreign Courier for the German Embassy in London.

Our activities were well known to the Nazis. A Nazi Black List was being compiled for the benefit of the German Gauleiter who was to be established in Great Britain after its conquest. Apart from the names of all Jews living in this country, it contained the names of members of the Focus, especially Sir Norman Angell, The Duchess of Atholl, Lady Violet Bonham Carter (who was referred to as Carter-Bonham and as the "encircling lady"), Winston Churchill, Sir Archibald Sinclair, Wickham Steed and Sir Austen Chamberlain.

The letters from Germany were unsigned, and most of them asked us to influence the British government not to continue their support for the Nazi leaders as this enhanced their prestige. Most of the writers said that they had been betrayed by Hitler, who had used their faith in him to assume power and now was breaking all his promises. In amplification of their plea for a change in our government's attitude, they said that the German army was neither ready for war nor wanted one, that there were still not sufficient U-boats, and that the thought of a war more than terrified the German people.

From home the letters were mostly requests for more copies of the Manifesto, for more information and for more meetings. Several of our members had been able to inform Baldwin and their colleagues in Parliament about these letters, and were also able to give them fresh details which we had gathered about the ever-growing tyranny of the Gestapo. The opposition to Hitler did not yet appear to be so organised as to constitute a genuine menace to the régime, but it could well become a real danger if the British government ceased to give the Nazis the support it was giving. The Nazi strength, which was terrifying our government and causing members of the League of Nations to fraternise socially and politically with a gangster régime, was dubious in the extreme.

Reports were also received from members of the Roman Catholic Church, who were at heart fierce opponents of the Nazis, but whose resistance was paralysed by the acquiescence of the Pope in the dissolution of the Centrum party and the conclusion of the Concordat with Hitler. There was, however, some outspoken opposition, of which Cardinal Faulhaber was the spearhead. There was also the Protestant leader, Pastor Niemöller, the former U-boat commander, who was risking imprisonment in a concentration camp rather than cease his opposition to the régime. These reports made nonsense of Hitler's assertion that the German nation, man, woman and child, was with him; and they offered the possibility, in the event of a moral blockade, of co-operation with which to secure his downfall.

As our information grew in volume, Churchill asked the secretary to arrange another meeting. We fixed a date (March 17th) and began to prepare reports. Steed revised his previous memorandum, of which the keynote was the necessity for framing a firm policy and securing the support of the nations for it. Churchill had seen the draft of this revised memorandum, but had not yet been consulted on the details. We had formulated the following as possible points in our policy :

"1. The defence of freedom is a fundamental and vital interest of all the self-governing nations of the Commonwealth, and indeed of all free peoples; it should, therefore, have the active support of public opinion in this country, in the Dominions, in

the United States, in France, Holland, Czechoslovakia and the Scandinavian countries.

"2. The League of Nations is still the best agency for the exercise of this policy. Though today it is rather under a cloud, because it pursues peace passively and not actively, its Covenant is the nearest approach yet to a common Law of Nations. Now that civilisation is threatened, it needs fresh inspiration and its methods require revision.

"3. Against a tendency merely to repudiate what have been called the conflicting ideologies of Communism and Nazi-Fascism we need a sound British policy based on the principle of individual freedom. Uncertainty about what Britain will, or will not, defend, and reliance on conciliation without having any notion of what would be done if conciliation fails, encourages violence and fosters war.

"4. The principle which both Churchill and Sinclair have laid down, namely the spirit of the League Covenant, and especially of Art. XVI, i.e. non-neutrality in case of aggression, should be accepted as the basic principle of British foreign policy.

Among the communications we received were six lengthy memoranda by an ex-German officer of considerable experience, with a personal knowledge of the German General Staff and of Nazi aims and methods. The points he made can be summarised thus :

"1. Political thought in Germany and action consequent on it are governed by a 'General Staff' mentality. German diplomacy, strategy and propaganda are a unit. It is a mistake to think that Nazi Germany wants *war*. Her method is to arouse a fear of war and defeat in other nations, and thereby achieve gains without having to go to war for them.

"2. Hitler will take any risk short of war. He will hesitate to act, if he is certain that he will meet with real opposition. This is the new German strategy.

"3. Parallel with politico-military strategy proper runs the strategy of propaganda, which works by creating confusion in the countries plotted against.

"4. Since the last war the military problems involving east, west, or both, have been thoroughly studied and there is now a 'third variant'. The old Schlieffen plan regarded the British army as negligible; the last war convinced many politicians and soldiers that the main enemy is Britain. One of the leading

exponents of this view is the ex-cavalry officer and ex-Chancellor, Franz von Papen.

"5. Blomberg, the Minister of War, does not intend to be caught as was Moltke in 1914 when he learned that Britain would not remain neutral. He fears that an Eastern or a Western concentration would be endangered if the British menace is not first removed.

"6. The development of the area between the Dutch frontier and the lower Elbe (Luneburg-Sachsenwald) into a gigantic air-field is just as likely to be the base for an attempt to remove that menace as it is for the protection of Germany's flank in case of British attacks on Danish territory, if Germany occupied that country.

"7. The conflict of ideas within the Nazi party on foreign policy turns on such points and gives rise to various 'foreign offices' and 'schools'. The Reich has no definite foreign policy. There is only Adolf Hitler and his gigantic war-machine.

"8. There is evidence that Hitler intends to seize Denmark, Austria, Memel, the Corridor, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and by threat of war obtain the surrender of Holland and Belgium.

"9. The belief is widespread that Germany is now stronger than she has ever been. Technically the belief is completely false, but in politics *belief* is as potent as fact. A firm stand against Hitler might weaken this belief, on which the Nazis are trading to gain objectives for which they are not yet prepared to fight."

Our meeting on March 17th was well attended. Churchill expressed his satisfaction with the progress the Focus had made. But he insisted that verbal energy was not enough; direct contact must be made with the electorate; members of Parliament should be sought out and more meetings held. He agreed with Steed's new draft, in which Sir Robert Waley-Cohen had co-operated, and which was praised by Lady Violet and supported by all those present. Churchill approved of the idea that the German officer's memoranda should, as Steed suggested, be communicated to the government through Vansittart.

Steed then reported on the negative, even hostile attitude of the national press, which ignored the Focus and the information we kept sending to the newspapers. Its attitude was in sharp contrast to the response we had obtained from the public generally. In his view, because of the vested interests involved, the two press lords, Rothermere and Beaverbrook, and the upper classes,

were out to mollify the Nazis who had brilliantly deluded them. The working classes were resisting the blandishments of the Communists and stood faithfully by the principles of democracy. He thought that the attitude of the press lords was a national calamity; they should not be taken lightly, for they were a power and ruthlessly pursued their own personal interests. Steed had long experience in journalism and no axe of his own to grind; his patriotism and devotion to freedom and peace was second to none.

Churchill appeared to think that Steed's statement that the press lords were prepared to usurp the prerogatives of the Prime Minister, and even of the Crown, was a little too strong. But Steed proceeded to quote the letter of Rothermere to Baldwin, through Patrick Hannon, demanding a personal statement on policy, and listing the names of the principal ministers whom Baldwin should put in his Cabinet.<sup>1</sup> Steed asked if this was not an attempt by Rothermere to name ministers; it was a demand both insolent and preposterous, and a gross violation of the decencies of public life.

Steed's revelations staggered many of us. I personally was appalled and still more so when Steed said that few people had any idea of the true situation. He went on to press us to put our case to the Prime Minister, and to ask for the creation of a Ministry of Information or, as he would prefer to have it called, a Ministry of Public Opinion. Churchill fully shared Steed's anxiety about the press which, as we all knew, was continuously attacking him. He thought that the approach to the Prime Minister could best be made through a deputation, which would include members of the Liberal and Labour parties. Unfortunately neither Sinclair nor any Labour leader was ready to join such a deputation; they feared that their presence on it might be interpreted as giving support to Baldwin, or that he had their confidence, which most certainly was not the case. Austen Chamberlain, incidentally, had reported to Churchill that, since the Albert Hall and Manchester meetings and the response of the general public had provided the proof of popular support that he needed, he was now ready to follow up my suggestion for a meeting with the Prime Minister.

Richards then reported that further public meetings were being

<sup>1</sup> cf. G. M. Young, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 151 *seq.*

arranged in Kettering, Plymouth, Hull and Sheffield. He would report further at our next meeting.

Before we dispersed it was suggested that an invitation should be tendered by the Focus to Titulescu, who was shortly coming here, and, I added, also to Dr. Mazuranic of Yugoslavia. We should try to extend our activities to that country. Churchill asked me for practical suggestions. I replied that I thought some members of the Focus should go there. I also thought that similar action should be taken about the United States. Churchill approved, but did not want anything done until the Foreign Office had been consulted. Steed agreed to discuss the matter with Vansittart. Churchill then asked if we had any plans about the French. The secretary replied that Mond, who to all intents and purposes was a resident in France, had told him that he would sound the position there and report in due course.

With so many matters pending Churchill thought we should meet again at an early date and with that the meeting ended.

These first months of 1937 saw a considerable increase in the work of the Focus as a result of the support and interest shown all over the country. The atmosphere was changing, and with it the fortunes of the Focus and some of its principal members, like Winston Churchill. Those who, like myself, had the good fortune to work with him and watch him, saw a change come over Winston Churchill, not in himself but in the attitude towards him of friends and enemies alike. To us he seemed to grow in stature until he rose above the level of party politicians and became a national leader. We all admired the dignity with which he accepted without resentment the fact that in these critical days he was kept out of office. The Nazi régime was unsparing in its attacks upon him, upon his record and his character. That was to be expected; what was less expected was the repetition of such attacks by former colleagues and members of his own party, even if they were careful to avoid repeating the really libellous statements. Against attacks, the more hurtful as they so often came from former friends, not merely on his policy but on his moral integrity, Churchill displayed tolerance and courage, as politically sound as it was morally admirable.

Another of our members whose activities on behalf of the Focus might well have been ruinous to him, was Locker-Lamp-



H.E. DR. Z. MAZURANIC



MRS. EUGEN SPIER  
*from the painting by Joseph Oppenheimer*



son who had charge of some of our publications. He was very outspoken and his whole-hearted support of Churchill, who more than ever was seen to be placing the cause of democracy above vested party interests, made him extremely unpopular with his own party. He was constantly in trouble with its managers and more than once it seemed that he would be driven from it. But he never wavered.

Churchill was again in the chair when we all met at luncheon in the Savoy on April 19th, 1937. For the moment things appeared to be quieter on the political front, but he warned us that in his opinion this was no more than the uneasy calm which so often precedes a storm. He had any amount of evidence that Hitler was about to open his preliminary propaganda bombardment on Austria; and he was convinced from the reports he himself had had, and from the information supplied to him by the Focus, that Hitler would not let his ambitions be hampered by pledges, promises, treaties or words of honour. The path of future aggression, said Churchill, was clearly marked out, Austria, Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, Memel, the Corridor and the Low Countries.

Nothing was more important to the Fuehrer, Churchill went on, than to ensure that his personal prestige steadily increased, and at the same time that the prestige of his opponents, the democracies, was weakened by ridiculing and blackmailing them, by showing the weakness of democracy in general, and the moral weakness of Britain in particular. We could expect to be subjected to Goebbels's hurricane propaganda of vilification and threats; and he thought it must be the foremost task of our movement to place the facts before the British public.

He concluded by urging us to intensify our campaign for the creation of a Ministry of Supply and a Ministry of Information. Naturally, we all approved enthusiastically, but in our own minds we added to that aim, his own inclusion in the government; that would be the simplest way to achieve the other aims and preserve us all from the Nazi terror.

The secretary then presented a series of reports. Austen Chamberlain had told him that he could not arrange a meeting with Baldwin. The Prime Minister was weary and exhausted, and was considering retiring from office and public life in the very near future. In these circumstances, Sir Austen had written, it

would be wise to leave the matter in abeyance and take it up later with Baldwin's successor.

Richards then went on to read us a letter he had had from Mond in Paris about the situation in France.

"The political situation here is very strained. The Communists under Thorez are attempting to get control of the government. A direct attempt, using Spain as a pretext, has failed largely owing to the fact that Hitler threatened to occupy Alsace and Lorraine if a Communist coup succeeded. Now they are trying to obtain power indirectly by organising strikes. . . . With the inertia of the government it is difficult to foresee the consequences. The immediate result is an increasing feeling of insecurity which is causing a fall in the franc and may bring about devaluation any day now. This will relieve the situation, but will inevitably bring about the fall of the government and a victory for the Right. . . . I consider the present time most unpropitious for us to organise here anything similar to our Focus. The C.G.T.—the equivalent of our T.U.C.—under Jouhaux is so mixed up with the Communists that we shall have to watch our step very carefully, or our movement might lose the sympathy of a majority of the French people. We had better leave them alone until happier times. In the meantime I shall try to gain the support of leading intellectuals; they do not play an active part in politics but their influence is very great. If, as I hope, I can achieve this by Christmas, we can always get the support of the others."

Churchill thought we should be more active in France, and promised to give Mond all the support he could.

Richards then went on to give reports from the regions, and of the response we were receiving after public meetings. At Kettering we had had to hold an overflow meeting. These reports were discussed and some definite conclusions emerged.

First, it was evident that the government was entirely out of touch with public feeling or, as Steed put it, their attitude was in inverse ratio to the state of that feeling; second, the public unanimously approved when we stressed the moral issue as all-important; third, a majority of the public approved of what we said in the Manchester Manifesto, that only a Europe set free from fear could build bridges of understanding and helpfulness; fourth, there was similar approval for our insistence that the government should take the public into its confidence and tell

us all quite frankly who were to be our allies, and what we were to be asked to defend.

In addition, we made the painful discovery that there was a growing rift between the upper classes, the City and the National press—all of them terribly misled by the Nazi successes and their brilliant propaganda, and the working classes, which had been able to withstand all the lies and blandishments of the Communists and those others who denied justice and freedom to their own peoples. We felt that the Nazi propaganda was effective because they had grasped the significance of this rift, and were using it in their propaganda as evidence of the disunity and, therefore, the impotence of this country. We were most concerned about the fact that the National press, including *The Times*, was giving people the idea that such disunity did exist, thus placing this country in a position both critical and equivocal. We had to prove to Britain and the world that for us there could be no peace with the Nazi régime.

During the discussions at which we reached these conclusions, Churchill intervened to explain that it would be contrary to the centuries-old foreign policy of this country to fight on the side of the Nazis, and so increase both their military strength and their prestige. Our policy had always been to oppose the most aggressive power on the Continent so as to prevent smaller countries falling into its net. He cited historical instances showing that we had preserved the liberties of Europe by adopting this policy. Nothing had happened, nothing was known, which would lead us to change it. Moreover, if we took this opportunity to reaffirm this old and well-tried policy, the public would know where it stood at an hour when the Nazi tyrant was out to dominate all Europe.

Richards passed me two essays, to be considered for publication as pamphlets at a suitable moment. One was by Sinclair and entitled: *Wanted: A Policy*. It was a long and closely argued exposition along the lines that Churchill had just explained. I quote from it:

"We are no longer strategically an island . . . and there is now the formidable fact of the emergence of this new technique of dictatorship, holding mastery over the whole life of a country, possessing all the means of moulding and expressing opinion, tolerating no opposition, working in secret, recognising no law

but its own interest and controlling forces of such destructive power as no dictator in history has ever dreamed of. . . . It was for these reasons that I and my friends voted for the armaments proposed last year. Now we are being asked to sanction a far greater outlay in the next five years. But we must be convinced that the government is vigorous in the pursuit of a peace policy such as would render unnecessary a substantial part at any rate of this great expenditure on armaments. . . . I demur to a suggestion made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that it is not in the public interest to theorise who our enemies are and who our allies may be. I say that it is vital that we have in our mind, and base our policy on, a perfectly definite knowledge of who our allies will be; they can only be those who are prepared to defend the reign of law against aggression. Let the government tell us what their policy is for securing peace and for removing the causes of war, what steps they are taking to give effect to it. Because the issues are fraught with immense peril, we have a right to know."

The other was by Norman Angell, dealing with collective security and vigorously defending it. I give its conclusions :

"More than one statesman concerned with the Great War has answered the question—could the war have been prevented, by replying that it would have been prevented if Germany had foreseen that she would have to meet the forces which she did meet. The vast power which in the end was arrayed against her was impotent to deter her, for the childishly simple reason that she did not know it would be used against her. Are we to repeat that tragedy?"

Others of our company added to the discussion and all that was said was noted by the secretary to provide ammunition for the speakers at the public meetings to be held in Sheffield, Plymouth and other places. The only other points of interest were that Steed told us that he had spoken to Vansittart about possible visits to the United States and Jugoslavia, and hoped to have news later. I told my colleagues of a meeting I had had with Dr. Sohn Rethel, who until recently had been the liaison officer between the Reichsbank and the Economic Department of the German Foreign Office. Steed had introduced him to me. I had been greatly impressed by his up-to-date knowledge of what was happening and of the plight of the citizens of Germany who, in addition to the Gestapo terror, had now to put

up with an acute shortage of food and raw materials. I promised to send my colleagues as soon as possible copies of a pamphlet I had commissioned Dr. Sohn Rethel to write. It would be entitled *How can Germany be saved?*, and Rethel had said that it would take him two or three months to complete.

I have mentioned that we had numerous requests for speakers, and such requests now came literally pouring in. We rarely failed to supply them and, in view of things that were said then, I should like to make it clear that those who spoke did so out of a sense of public duty and not for financial gain. In this connection a letter sent by the secretary to one of our colleagues who was at that time one of our most distinguished speakers, is most illuminating.

Dear Mr. Wickham Steed,

I have much pleasure in enclosing cheque for £1.0.0 being your expenses in connection with Kettering meeting on April 4th.

(signed) A. H. Richards

Our next big meeting was in Hull where we had a large and enthusiastic audience, who much appreciated the point made by one of our speakers when he said :

"The other day a lot of noble gentlemen and others wrote a letter to *The Times* saying that we should not stand against war but for what they called 'conciliation'. They did not say what was to happen if conciliation should break down. They seemed ready to take the mad risk that we might have to fight single-handed if we did not, or could not, comply with all the demands which strongly armed nations might make upon us. At the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee there was a young man who had come into a lot of money and spent it in gambling, heavy betting on the Turf and other such expensive ways of losing money. He was called the 'Jubilee Plunger'. I suggest that Lords Astor, Lothian, Rennell and Hardinge, and the others who signed the letter along with George Lansbury, should be called the 'Coronation Plungers'."

The audience was delighted, but we got no reaction at all from the newspapers, not even in the correspondence columns of *The Times*.

Richards, our secretary, considered that one of his most

important duties was to bring members into closer contact with one another. He therefore suggested about this time that I should meet the Lord Mayor of Manchester when next he came to London. Alderman Joe Toole was not only one of our staunchest, but one of our most active members. I knew of him, and of the esteem in which Manchester held him, and was therefore glad that we were able to lunch together.

Joe Toole was no respecter of persons but had a great respect for human dignity. He was extremely proud of his own humble origins and equally proud that his rise had not stopped him from enjoying what he confided that he most enjoyed, a giant bowl of pea soup taken straight off the stove. Frank about himself he was frank about everything else, and his likes and dislikes were well known to everyone with whom he had dealings.

Over lunch he told me how much he admired Steed, a full-fledged democrat with a true and warm heart for the men and women in the street. I doubt if that has been said either before or since of any editor of *The Times*. We also discussed Churchill. "I remember him saying in 1908," said Toole, "that the Tory party was the party of the rich against the poor. I was both delighted and surprised when he turned his back on his party and preferred to go into the political wilderness." That, he added, showed Churchill's genius at its very highest. I agreed, and quoted Lady Violet Bonham Carter's remark that you cannot label a genius; not even, I added, with a party label.

In the present crisis Toole's views coincided with those of Churchill. "In my own mind," said the Lord Mayor, "he is the only statesman we can rely on when the decisive moment comes. Neither of us cares anything for party politics when our country, the greatest country on God's earth, is in danger." He was inclined to be critical of Churchill's attitude in the abdication crisis, but he was all for him in the present one, for he was fully convinced that only through him and the Focus could the cause of peace and freedom be defended adequately. He fulminated in characteristic language against the City and *The Times*. On that he agreed with Steed, but I fancied that he was still more in agreement with Steed's eulogy of Manchester and the people of the North. It was there, he assured me, that the campaign initiated by the Focus could best be waged. "London's far too chaotic and too indifferent to anything but prize fights, test

matches and suchlike, but Manchester and the North could soon kick London and the South into line; it wouldn't take long."

I thoroughly enjoyed meeting him, and the vigour of his language, which was by no means parliamentary, pleased me as did his tenderness of heart. I was much moved by the sympathy he expressed for the sufferings of my fellow-Jews in Germany. To him the attack by Hitler on the Jews was equivalent to an all-out attack on civilisation itself.

We parted as good friends, I promising to send him all the literature he had asked for, he promising to get Lord Derby interested in the Focus. We both looked forward to a future meeting in Manchester where Churchill would speak.

## CHAPTER VII

### A LUNCH WITH WINSTON CHURCHILL

ON May 18th, 1937, George VI was crowned in Westminster Abbey; on May 28th Baldwin resigned and was succeeded by Neville Chamberlain. If anyone had expected there to be any change in British foreign policy, he was promptly disappointed. There was none. The only difference was that the same policy was now to be carried on more determinedly by a less adroit and more opinionated politician.

It was in an atmosphere of things growing worse rather than better that we held our next meeting on June 14th. Its specific purpose was to do honour to Titulescu, once Foreign Minister of Rumania, a great friend of Britain, and firm believer in democracy and collective security. Under pressure from Nazi sympathisers and agents who were swarming into the Balkan countries, he had had to abandon office and leave his country. He was now living in exile.

Churchill presided as usual and introduced our guest to the small but very representative gathering, paying tribute to the courage and energy with which Titulescu had faced difficult and trying years and maintained his policy of co-operation with the Western democracies.

In reply Titulescu gave a brief survey of the situation in south-eastern Europe. Nazi Germany, he said, was definitely bent on extending its influence over the whole Danube basin, and was doing so by the usual Nazi methods. Their present tactics consisted of organising an artificial demand by the indigenous population for political co-ordination with Germany. The end would be military occupation and Nazi government. The plans had been prepared to the last detail. There was no organised opposition, no counter-action by the West, and their success seemed assured. The dream of an eastern Locarno had been finally shattered when the western Locarno was broken a year before. The alliance of France with the Little Entente was now no longer of any



practical value. Rumania could not count on any assistance from France alone.

But, although the West had failed, and the Nazis were representing both the Western democracies and democracy itself as spent forces, Titulescu said that he did not believe it. It was still in the power of the Western allies to upset all the Nazi calculations. Besides there were at that very moment millions of Germans who would collaborate in breaking Hitler's power. The German army was not yet ready to fight the wars which Hitler had planned, and in south-eastern Europe there were still other millions of people who would gladly follow if only the West were to give a lead. But without aid they could not alone oppose the Nazis and their agents who at once flattered, bribed and terrified. Emissaries from Hitler had approached him with the most tempting offers to secure his co-operation, and simultaneously he was threatened by the murder gangs operating outside the frontiers of the Reich. He further stated that he had very reliable information that Hitler had already given instructions to the German General Staff to draft plans for the invasion of Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938. He wished our organisation every success, for through it and others like it the sad face of the earth could be changed.

It was a memorable lunch, but for me it was less memorable for the warning given by a distinguished statesman than for an invitation communicated to me there. It was from Churchill asking me to lunch with him at his flat some day that week. I told Richards to say that I would gladly accept for any day that Churchill selected. That evening I was called to the telephone by Churchill's secretary and a date was fixed.

I was a little perturbed both at what I should say and how I should say it. I resolved not to attempt to prepare myself but to let the conversation go as Churchill wished, to speak more slowly—I am always reproached for speaking too fast, to ask no questions and to answer frankly whatever he might ask. Fortified with the advice and good wishes of my wife and of our secretary I presented myself at No. 11, Morpeth Mansions.

It is not easy to give an adequate impression of a conversation in which my host took the leading part. It began before lunch, went on all through the meal and continued for a considerable time afterwards. Churchill began with the Focus and a kind

appreciation of my work, particularly of the reports I had made. Steed had been somewhat critical of my diction and delivery, but Churchill said he had always found that I expressed myself well, and admired the range of my vocabulary which he thought somewhat exceeded that of the average educated Englishman. That put me at my ease and I was able to say at once what I wanted to say, that I was still a German by nationality. I hoped that would show him that I was free from any suspicion of working for the Focus from any ulterior motive, since in such circumstances I could not possibly expect either reward or position from my endeavours. I just felt a great urge to serve the cause of freedom, justice and peace, things which were beyond and above national frontiers, and were the noblest things in the world.

I told him how much I had been encouraged and inspired by his leadership during this crisis. Thereupon he plunged into an analysis of the dangerous position in which this country found itself as a result of Germany's vast and secret rearmament. I agreed with the vastness, but disputed the secrecy. I had emphasised in my reports that there was no secrecy about it so far as the British government was concerned. The government was fully aware of the facts, but carefully kept them from the public; I instanced statements which Baldwin had made though they were at variance with his own personal knowledge. "How right you are," Churchill exclaimed, "Baldwin was wrong in putting the interest of his party before the safety of his country. Remember the statements he made at the time of the Fulham by-election.<sup>1</sup> He grossly, and to our peril, misled the nation then. Think, too, of the shameful naval treaty in which we disregarded our definite obligations to our friends under the League Covenant. That was most improper. I only wish Baldwin had heeded my father's advice: 'Trust the people. They always prefer to know the truth.' But Mr. Spier," he went on earnestly, "I want to assure you that Baldwin had no personal axe to grind. I believe he is a truly pious man, and he was simply trusting to God and leaving it at that." To which I replied that in my opinion he was not trusting but tempting God.

Churchill then asked me what I thought about the Versailles Treaty. I said that I had always considered it a grossly immoral

<sup>1</sup> cf. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, p. 169. D. C. Sommerwell, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 49.

act, a sad example of the way that religious and moral beliefs were divorced from the conduct of international affairs. "I quite agree," he replied, "acts of state must never be regarded separately from the moral law. The Treaty of Versailles was a most insane performance. I'm afraid our friend Wickham Steed doesn't agree with me and still today is defending the document in the drawing up of which he played a significant part."

"I feel the same," I answered, "and have sometimes myself experienced the effects of his dislike of Germans. I comfort myself with the saying of one of our Jewish sages: *If you want only friends without faults, you will have no friends at all.*

"Very wise," interrupted my host, "and very true."

"If you will let me I should like to say something further about the treaty. I have not forgotten Lloyd George's attitude. Christianity, he said, was a religion for Sundays only, thereby implying that in our practical political lives we could neglect ethical standards. It was in that spirit that he imposed on the German people the intolerable economic burden of reparations, though fully aware of the impossibility of payment. He is supposed to have said: 'This will make the Germans pay till the pips squeak.' I only hope that the squeaking will not come from Nazi bombers overhead."

"That insane treaty," said Churchill angrily, "has brought about the most hideous rule of the Nazis which is now darkening the world."

Churchill then spoke about the insanity of unilateral disarmament; to which I replied that all disarmament agreements concluded with governments that reject our religious philosophy based on our belief in God, are essentially unilateral. One cannot have faith in a government which has no Faith.

Churchill turned to his own position. "I become ever more convinced that the government is greatly under-rating the seriousness of the situation. I feel our country's safety is fatally imperilled both by its lack of arms and by the government's attitude towards the Nazi gangsters. It is fostering in them the dangerous belief that they need not fear interference by us whatever they do. That can only encourage those savages to acts of aggression and violence of every kind. I have, therefore, chosen to go my own way and to act independently in order to further the safety of our country and of the civilisation without which we cannot

survive as a nation. As you know, my action has exposed me to continual and not always very chivalrous attacks from many sides, including some of my old party friends. I find myself in what is generally termed the political wilderness. I am in a minority."

"But," I said, "one can be very strong in a minority. I belong to a minority that is some two thousand years old. That has brought us only suffering and deprivation. We could have joined the majority to our great material benefit, but we have chosen to remain a minority and render service to mankind."

"I know," said Churchill earnestly and quietly, "that you have done it all for a great moral cause."

"We have done it," I replied equally earnestly, "for the sanctification of His Name whose servants we are."

My host then went on: "In the sphere of politics one of the most important things is to have behind one the party machine, of which I am now deprived. You perhaps do not realise the power of the party machine."

"The power of your own will," I answered, "and your faith is greater than any party machine. It is one of the objects of the Focus to provide its members, and you most of all, with just those facilities which a party machine provides, publicity by public meetings, through the press and our publications. The Focus is steadily growing; its audiences daily become larger, its backing ever more forceful, with the support of some of the most important people in the country."

Suddenly changing the subject Churchill asked me when I came to this country.

I told him that I had come in 1922. "I love this country and its people. I find the majority of them kind, intrinsically religious, bluntly frank, tough but never aggressive."

"Would you be proud," he asked, "to be a British subject?" "I would be very happy to be one, and I am very proud to be breaking bread with you."

"Some bread," he replied, glancing at the chicken before him with a roguish twinkle in his eye.

I told him that the Home Office had been informed by Steed and Richards about my association with the Focus, and that no objection whatsoever had been raised in spite of my German nationality.

The conversation then turned to Titulescu's visit, and I expressed agreement with the Rumanian statesman's view that Britain could not possibly dissociate itself from the fate of those European countries that believed in free institutions. "You know, of course," said my host, "that in this country there are very powerful groups which advocate a policy of complete divorce from any European entanglement."

"But surely," I replied, "it is one thing to leave Europe alone, and quite another to leave it to the Nazis, Fascists or Communists. If the diseases from which they suffer spread, the infection will not stop at the Channel ports but will infect the whole of the British Isles."

"Never, never," thundered Churchill, "never could our people nursed as they have been in a climate of freedom, endure the Nazi system with its Gestapo, endure arrest and internment without trial, bullying by thugs and deprivation of all freedom."

I could not but agree wholeheartedly, though I wished the government could see things as Churchill did. I pointed out that the Focus at least was not disinteresting itself in Europe, and I suggested that it should extend its work of enlightening public opinion here and across the Channel, to Jugoslavia and even to the United States.

"An excellent idea," said Churchill, "we all realise that Jugoslavia holds a key position in south-eastern Europe and we also realise that there are scores of millions of men and women in the United States who openly reject Nazism, often much more outspokenly than here."

"Steed has agreed to go to America," I said, "and I very much hope you will agree to go to Jugoslavia. No one is better qualified than you to bring hope to the millions of anxious souls in those parts."

"I understand," said my host, "that Steed is sounding the Foreign Office about a visit from me, and in principle I am all for it. Indeed there is hardly anything I would not do to co-operate with the Focus and its work. I shall of course travel as a private individual and not in any way as a government spokesman, and I can only go with the consent of the government. I'll discuss the matter further once I have heard the results of Steed's tentative inquiries. Who, by the way, are the people with whom you would organise my visit?"

"Mainly with Dr. Zelimir Mazuranic, an old and very good friend of mine, an enthusiastic supporter of the League of Nations, and the originator of the treaty of friendship between Yugoslavia and France which he signed with Briand. I have kept him informed about the work of the Focus. He has written to me to say that he will be coming to Britain shortly and would like to meet members of the Focus, and especially to have the privilege of meeting you."

"Yes, I would very much like to meet him. I'll tell my secretary to contact Richards and make the necessary arrangements."

At this point we rose from the table and proceeded to coffee and the Churchill cigar. Churchill then began to talk about the forthcoming visit to this country of the German Foreign Minister, Baron von Neurath, a visit that he welcomed for a variety of reasons.

I said that it seemed to be a chance to clear up a rather nebulous situation, but that I was strongly of the opinion that Neurath should be told that no purely political arrangement could bring about a lasting peace with Germany, so long as she continued to suppress personal, cultural and religious freedom. That, he must be made to realise, was a *conditio sine qua non*, both from the moral and the financial point of view, since Germany was spending astronomical sums on its secret police, concentration camps, rearmament, war preparations and propaganda. That was the cause of Germany's alarming financial deficit, and it should be made clear to Neurath that the British tax-payer would not be asked to shoulder that burden, and that the British government would not support a policy of wiping out the deficit by foreign conquests or the acquisition of colonies. The actual financial crisis in Germany was one that the Nazis had provoked; and it made it impossible for Germany to keep the peace. Churchill was interested and asked me to write a memorandum for him on that and kindred matters.

"You know," he went on, "we are very considerably increasing our armaments, particularly our air force, but still not as much as is necessary. To accelerate progress we must go on pressing for a Ministry of Supply. Nothing else will make the Nazis change their policy."

"With the greatest respect," I said, "I submit that it is at least of equal importance that we also attend to our spiritual organisa-

tion. We must have the moral courage, quite independently of our material strength, to dissociate ourselves from the Nazi régime. It is common knowledge, based on some fifteen years' experience, that the Nazis will not go against the German army, which is not prepared to fight now, any more than it was at the time of the Rhineland occupation. I would say that before anything else happens, we should at an early date choose an opportunity to recall our ambassador from Berlin and advise British subjects to leave Germany; at the same time the German ambassador here should be handed his papers and all Nazi Germans living in Britain asked to leave the country."

"But do you not think that Hitler would in that case go to war at once?"

"No, sir, not a gun would be fired. Such a display of moral courage would deeply impress even Hitler, for it would smash all his military and psychological calculations. Both Hitler and Ribbentrop would have to climb down."

"Very refreshing, very refreshing," was his only comment.

I felt that I ought to take my leave and, as I thanked him, I could not help telling him that our meeting was one of the most thrilling experiences in my life, and that I left him both grateful and inspired. Churchill paid me some flattering compliments and said he very much hoped we could bring off the trip to Jugoslavia "only, of course, as a tourist to paint the beautiful Adriatic coast".

On my way home I tried to sort out our conversation. We had talked so long and discussed so many things besides politics, good food, books, wine and painting, that I was a little confused. Why, after all, should Churchill have chosen me of all people for such a long conversation? When I was recounting all that had happened to my wife, I tried to convey to her the impression that his talk had made on me, adding the gestures and emphasis that gave it meaning. I could find no comparison except to a still life by one of the Dutch masters, in which the objects appear so like the real thing that one can actually smell them. When Churchill pronounced the word *Nazi*, it sounded as if he were speaking of something with a nasty taste and smell.

When I had finished my wife reminded me of my resolve to let Churchill do the talking. It seemed to her that I had taken

the lion's share. "That," I answered, "was inevitable; it was he who did all the asking."

In my view Churchill clearly understood the nature of the Nazi menace, and was neither dazzled by what they had achieved nor scared by their threats. He realised that the Nazi poison could be fatal to us, and what we had to do was to find the proper antidote. His determination was inflexible. His personality raised him high above party politics, and no considerations of personal or party interest could influence him. I felt that destiny had marked him out to become the destroyer of Hitlerism.



## CHAPTER VIII

### JUGOSLAVIA AND THE WEST

My first task was obviously to write the memorandum which I promised to send to Churchill; it was in effect a more detailed analysis of the situation than I had made in our talk and an enlargement of the points I had raised. My next was to write to Mazuranic that Churchill had agreed to meet him, and that we would like to hear when he would be coming to London. But in the meantime we had to face two distressing pieces of news.

The first, from France, was that Leon Blum had been forced to resign as President of the Council. One of our members got in touch with him and asked him if he would accept an invitation to come and speak to us. He readily agreed, but when we approached our own government for its approval, the answer was in the negative. We were told that the government feared that such a visit would irritate Hitler and that was precisely what Chamberlain wanted to avoid. Blum understood the position only too well, and wrote us an encouraging letter in which he said he was convinced that the Focus was rendering signal service and applauded our endeavours to mould public opinion, so that the British people would be prepared to face with determination and knowledge whatever the hour of decision might bring. He added *ce n'est pas peu de chose*.

The second piece of news was that Ribbentrop had succeeded in torpedoing the Neurath visit.

A little later Mazuranic arrived in London and Churchill invited him, Steed, Richards and myself to tea in his flat. When we got there Churchill immediately started discussing the object of our meeting. He was exceptionally brilliant, completely master of his subject, and gave us a most able sketch of the history of the Yugoslav State, of the rise of the Succession States, and of the actual position of his visitor's country in the present critical times. Mazuranic was almost overwhelmed by his host's knowledge and

insight, and by the readiness with which all his questions were answered. If Churchill would visit Yugoslavia and speak to its people, as he had spoken now, Mazuranic felt sure he would win all the country for the cause of democracy and put an end to any further Nazi infiltration. But if the field were left open to the Nazis, he could see nothing ahead but a great disaster for his country. Churchill assured him that Britain would never again tolerate a breach by Hitler of a given pledge. If such did occur, every effort would be made to bring Hitler to his knees and to deal efficiently and swiftly with the situation. As they were parting, Churchill asked his guest what he thought would have happened if Britain and France had called Hitler's Rhineland bluff.

"The German Army," replied Mazuranic, "would have chased Hitler like a tramp across the frontier back to the Austrian doss-house from which he came." "What a chance we missed," commented Churchill.

Mazuranic dined with me that evening and we discussed the tea party. Mazuranic said that none of the statesmen he had met had made such an impression on him as Churchill. Even Briand, one of his favourites, could never rise to Churchill's level, for his constant regard for the votes which could keep him in or out of office crippled his genius. If Churchill would only go to Yugoslavia, he could undo in one day all that Hitler and Goebbels had done by lies, bribery and murder during the last few years.

We discussed the organisation of Churchill's visit. Mazuranic promised that he would consult the Prince Regent as soon as a decision had been reached, and at once communicate the results to us. At tea Mazuranic had asked Churchill what he felt about writing some articles about Yugoslavia. Steed at once took up the suggestion and asked Mazuranic to send him a memorandum on which such articles could be based, and which would give the Focus the up-to-date information that was needed for its work. Accordingly I got a long document almost at once from my Yugoslav friend, which I promptly sent on to Steed. A day or two later (July 16th) Steed wrote to me that he did not think Mazuranic's memorandum could serve as a basis for articles in the British press. Earlier I had suggested that he (Steed) should go to Yugoslavia, but he now said in the same letter that he

thought it inadvisable. He had a rather special position in regard to that country. If he went he certainly would be the object of considerable attention, which would not be to the liking of the present Yugoslav government under Stoyadinovic, of which, and especially of its pro-Nazi tendencies, he heartily disapproved.

A Churchill visit on the other hand was not open to such objections. Churchill would be going more or less as a private individual, seeking information and desirous of hearing all sides. Steed admitted that Churchill, wherever he went, would not be regarded by the public as a simple visitor but as the representative statesman that he was. Abroad, his visit to Yugoslavia would be interpreted as proof that we had definite political interests in Yugoslavia and in the problem of Central Europe. Steed thought it very important, therefore, to ensure that there were no great demonstrations in Churchill's honour.

Like myself Steed was very anxious to get the visit moving without further delay. On July 22nd he sent me some confidential information on the situation in Yugoslavia which would be useful for Churchill to see before he went. The essence of the information, which came to him from Croatian friends, was that the Serb Democrats under Davidovic and the Serb Agrarian Party under Joca Jovanovic, both of which were opposed to Stoyadinovic, had come to an agreement on a joint programme with Macek, the leader of the Croat Peasant party. For the first time in Serbian history the Serb parties had agreed that Croatia constituted a distinct unit in the body politic, a step which, in Steed's view, was of the highest importance. The three parties had also agreed on the abrogation of the present anti-democratic constitution, and that there should be free elections for a constituent assembly on the basis of equality between Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, who would combine to overthrow the present régime.

Steed's informants said that Stoyadinovic was now considered to be a paid German agent. He had declared that, in the event of European complications, Yugoslavia would not mobilise, but would hold aloof until the war was over. That, they said, was contrary to the feelings of the Yugoslav people, and was further evidence that Stoyadinovic was playing Germany and Italy's game. It was even suspected that there was a secret agreement with these two powers to keep Yugoslavia neutral, so

as to give Italy a free hand with Greece and Germany a free hand with Czechoslovakia.

"We are very much in favour of the idea," the informant added, "that a prominent British personality should pay a visit to Yugoslavia, but he must not come as a guest of the Yugoslav government but merely as a distinguished tourist. On no account must it appear that his visit implies any sort of British support for Stoyadinovic. He must hold aloof from domestic politics while he is in the country, but at the same time he should show interest in the people and in the unity of the three nations which compose it. Also he ought to be known as a champion of liberal democratic ideals and of the League of Nations, and be explicit in their support if he should speak in public.

Steed and I discussed the whole matter at length. I told him that Mazuranic was now waiting to hear what had been decided, and was prepared to do all in his power to back the ideas of the Focus and help in any way he could. Steed expected great results from a Churchill visit. He himself professed his readiness to go to America to explain the work of the Focus. We did not touch on those matters on which we differed, the Treaty of Versailles, the creation of the Succession States, or the failure to get real unity among the Yugoslav peoples. He still held me wrong, but did agree with me that something ought to be done to encourage the non-Nazi Germans to resist Hitler. Sohn Rethel and I, he thought, should work out an economic policy for the salvation of Germany in opposition to the Nazi solution of financing Germany by war. Sohn Rethel was actually working on this with me and we hoped that we would soon have material ready for publication.

On July 30th we at last received some light on the attitude of the Foreign Office to the Yugoslav and American visits. Vansittart told Steed that he welcomed both suggestions. Nothing, he thought, could be more opportune than a visit to Yugoslavia by Churchill. At the moment it was impossible for any British minister to go and tell Prince Paul and Stoyadinovic what we thought of their policy, but a statesman of front-bench rank unconnected with the government, could speak with greater effect. Stoyadinovic, said Sir Robert, was a very agile and thoroughly untrustworthy character who was playing his own hand, and was little better than a German agent. He was misleading

Prince Paul by scaring him with the spectre of Bolshevism and with the threat from Italy; he was encouraging him to ignore the very favourable situation that was developing in Yugoslavia as a result of the agreement of the three leading Serb parties and the powerful Croat Peasant Party. It was very important that Churchill should go as a private individual, Sir Robert agreed with Steed on this point, for he could then easily meet the leading politicians of all parties, including the opposition, and bring home to them and to the Yugoslav government the firmness of the British understanding with France, and the sincerity of the adherence of France and ourselves to democratic principles. In that way Churchill's visit might put an entirely new complexion upon the political situation in central and south-eastern Europe.

This was good news indeed, and I lost no time in communicating it to Churchill, who invited my wife and myself to Chartwell to discuss it further.

Steed and I then drafted a letter for Mazuranic to send to Churchill conveying an invitation to visit Yugoslavia. The draft, as submitted to Churchill for his approval and criticism, was as follows :

"You will remember that in the course of the conversation I was privileged to have with you in London through the kind offices of Mr. Spier, I explained to you how much good might be done to Anglo-Yugoslav relations if you could visit us in the coming autumn, and how keenly such a visit would be appreciated by all sections of my fellow-countrymen as a proof of British goodwill towards them. Now after consultation with several important Yugoslavs, I have the honour to extend to you an invitation to visit our country at your earliest convenience. I have reason to know that your visit would be welcome to H.R.H. Prince Paul no less than to the Prime Minister and members of our government. I can quite understand that so distinguished a foreign statesman as yourself would not wish to be hampered in any way by coming as the guest of our government, or by travelling through our country under official auspices. You would doubtless wish to avoid any possibility that your visit might be interpreted as designed to influence Yugoslav domestic politics. We would wish you to be entirely free to meet outstanding Yugoslavs of all three peoples, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. You would not be expected to make any public speeches. Only in this

way could you gather a well-founded and impartial impression of our country. . . .

"We know from your writings and speeches how convinced a supporter you are of the cause of freedom and peace. A visit from you might therefore be of inestimable value to the cause of peace in south-eastern Europe. You, too, would gain from your visit fuller knowledge of Yugoslavia and a feeling of certainty that our people are animated by ideals not very different from those of Britain and the British Commonwealth of Nations. I trust that you may give this invitation your favourable consideration and let our people have the honour and pleasure of receiving you as the bringer of a message of goodwill from Britain to Yugoslavia."

Churchill himself contacted Vansittart and Sir Ronald Campbell about the project, and both agreed on the desirability of such a visit. Richards and I then collected all the information Churchill wanted, and armed with it, he, I and my wife went down to Chartwell where we lunched with Churchill, Mrs. Churchill and their daughter Mary.

At lunch Churchill spoke appreciatively of Mazuranic and the work he had done. I told him that Mazuranic had told me of his grave concern that Hitler was contemplating an early aggression, and that the British government would acquiesce, and that frankly I shared his concern. That roused our host and, jumping up, he grabbed a fly-swatter and used it on a wasp which for some time had been disturbing the peace, exclaiming as he struck: "That is how we shall deal with Hitler."

After lunch the ladies left us to look at the garden, and Churchill at once told me of his conversation at the Foreign Office, waving cheerfully the letter in which the Foreign Office approved his intention to visit Yugoslavia. I showed him the draft letter to Mazuranic who, if I could assure him that the invitation would be accepted, would at once consult the Prince Regent and then send it. Churchill agreed and also to my suggestion that my wife and I, with Richards, should go to Yugoslavia before he did and arrange things discreetly. This was quite to Churchill's liking, but he made the proviso that he should have three clear days rest before there was anything in the nature of an official reception. He did not need to stay more than ten days in all, and during that time he wanted to meet Yugoslav states-

men, irrespective of their party allegiances or political views; he wanted to talk to them all. He was prepared to address two public meetings but no more. He then got down some huge maps of Yugoslavia and we discussed what places he should visit. An itinerary was soon arranged which would let him do a little painting and see something of peasant life; it would, of course, have to be approved by the Foreign Office. I handed Churchill a letter from Lasar Marcovic, former Minister of Justice, who was leading the Radicals opposed to Stoyadinovic. The question of writing articles, as Mazuranic had requested, was left for discussion after Churchill's return.

From that we proceeded to a general discussion on the Focus and its work. In the course of this Churchill returned to the possibility of a Nazi aggression in the near future and emphatically stated that if so, there would be no more conferences, clutter and paper protests, but immediate and determined action. "Surely," he said, "we can rely on the political strength of our people who at the bottom of their hearts are now condemning Hitler's murder and tyranny." I wholeheartedly agreed, saying that three-quarters of the civilised world and most of the German people, including the Army General Staff, utterly resented Hitler's self-deification. I added: "If you are now given an opportunity to join the Cabinet, there won't be a war, and if you have to wait to join a War Cabinet, you will rouse the spirit of this nation and that of many others to battle and the final defeat of the Nazis."

"Very refreshing, very refreshing," said Churchill slowly and with a pensive look at the flowers in front of him.

I left with the great hope that this visit to Yugoslavia might well change the face of Europe and bring about a period of freedom and peace. But alas, these hopes were doomed to disappointment. On September 2nd, while they were still high, Steed provided the Focus with a memorandum on the political situation in the Balkans. What he said in it came from an unimpeachable source and much of it was supported by information from the various governments. It showed the unchecked penetration of Nazi economic forces into the Balkan countries to which this country was giving passive consent. France was beginning to liquidate her investments, refusing to support any new demands.

Economic power was falling unchallenged into Nazi hands and was being used to further political infiltration and intimidation. It went on to suggest that the Focus should issue or rather support a series of publications in Vienna, Prague and Belgrade, exposing the true nature of Nazi "economic aid", and showing that the Nazi government could not possibly implement its promises, which had no other purpose than to lure the small countries into the Nazi net with the loss of economic and political independence. We felt, however, that we could not do this so long as the British government acquiesced in these Nazi activities. An economic information service would be of little value and would fritter away the much needed resources of the Focus. The memorandum was made available to the government.

A few days later Mazuranic's letter of invitation reached Churchill and then the blow fell. As in duty bound he put his plans before the government, and to our sorrow and indignation he was told that it did not approve the visit, as apparently Chamberlain was most anxious not to irritate Hitler. This was the most severe blow to the work of the Focus we had yet experienced. Churchill himself gave the disappointing news to Mazuranic in the following letter :

"I am most deeply indebted to you for the most kind and hospitable invitation which you have extended to me to visit Yugoslavia. I read with deep interest the illuminating memorandum which you enclosed. It has given me an insight into the situation which I had hitherto lacked. I very much regret that I do not feel able at the present time to make a plan for a foreign journey which would involve so many important personages. The situation in the Mediterranean is so uncertain that I might not care to leave the country when the time came, or again Parliament might be called together. In the circumstances I hope you will allow me to seek another opportunity of visiting your country towards which I cherish feelings of the warmest regard."

I wrote myself to Mazuranic explaining Churchill's refusal as best I could. Mazuranic replied that he was deeply hurt at the cancellation of the proposed visit. It would destroy the last hope of rousing eastern Europe to resist Nazi pressure. It was, he said, "a treacherous sabotage of peace and a death blow to the cause



of democracy in my part of the world". He once more dwelt on the superlative importance he attached to the visit, for Churchill was a man of stature beyond compare and would have come without offers of gold, guns or military and economic promises, but armed only with his passionate conviction and irresistible assurance that the democracies would at no price surrender their freedom and the laws on which they had been and were established. Britain could not have sent a better ambassador. The cancellation of Churchill's visit to Yugoslavia was a great triumph for Hitler; he was thus still in a position to keep the British public and Yugoslavia uninformed, thereby strengthening his own position at home and abroad.

## CHAPTER IX

### APPEASEMENT CONTINUES : EDEN AND THE FOCUS

THE impression of the peoples of Europe that the British government was pursuing a policy of appeasement was enhanced by its consent to be officially represented for the first time at the Nazi rally in Nuremberg by its ambassador. This increased Hitler's prestige far beyond his own expectations and shattered the hopes of all anti-Nazis outside and inside Germany. We made certain that the expressions of distress and disillusionment that we received from all quarters were brought to the government's notice. We had succeeded in keeping secret the whole Yugoslav affair, but somehow the Nazis got wind of it and started an ugly campaign in their press against Churchill as a war-monger, pointing out the horrible contrast between him and Hitler the promoter of peace and guardian of freedom.

Some time previously Churchill had promised the Focus to write an essay on the meaning and danger of Nazism and Communism to the civilised world. It was to be made available to the Focus's writers and speakers; actually they made good use of it. It ran to about four thousand words; here is the gist :

"The Nazi and Communist creeds seek to divide the world between them by hurling the democratic nations at one another in ferocious conflict. At home a secret police continually spies on and threatens the safety and life of every citizen, under its power to arrest anybody where, for merely venturing to criticise the government, he will be worked and tortured to death. Rather than submit to such oppression there is no length to which the people of Britain will not go. Communism and Nazism both worship 'One Man Power', the power which the parliamentary system in Britain and the constitution of the United States equally reject as a thing odious, pernicious and degrading to man. It is the first duty of the English-speaking democracies to guard against it. . . .

"In neither the Nazi nor the Communist state is there any

sense of abstract justice. Justice is entirely in the service of the one-party state. Men can be tried by courts composed of their political opponents for crimes never yet placed upon the pages of the statute book. Such arbitrary power can be kept in being only if backed by a great war-machine, the existence of which forces the rest of the world to produce arms on as large a scale in order to resist the threat of destruction. There is nothing new in this "One Man Power" worship; it can be seen in the history of every despot. The great theories of government which the British race devised and which the English-speaking peoples have adopted and made their systems are the foundation upon which civilisation rests and without which it will fall. We believe it is the duty of the state to guard the rights of the individual. We are opponents of totalitarian tyranny in all its forms. We believe in tolerance.

"We should value these treasures—glories I call them—as we do our lives; and there should be no sacrifice we would not make, and no length to which we would not go conformably with honour and justice so as to hand them over unblemished and unbesmirched to our children. In Britain the good cause will never lack hearts as resolute, swords as sharp, as have those who champion evil. But we must arm ourselves so that the good cause may not find itself at a hopeless disadvantage against the aggressor."

At the end of September Steed left for his American tour. He planned first to go to Ottawa and then to Boston and New York. He would return on October 16th, and hoped to be able to visit other cities as well. We were lucky to have so excellent a messenger of goodwill and advocate of the causes for which the Focus stood.

In October Churchill was invited to a dinner given by the Foreign Office to meet Stoyadinovic. He was thoroughly disgusted with the Yugoslav premier, describing him as "a Nazi agent and a traitor to his country". He brought back an interesting piece of news. Halifax had been invited by Goering on a hunting visit to his mansion where the stolen treasures for which Goering was already notorious would be on display. Chamberlain had at once agreed that Halifax should accept. To the Focus this was further evidence of the government's approval of Hitlerism. We felt that it was a fundamental betrayal of our religious and ethical standards. It was incredible, fantastic, that a man of

Halifax's standing and dignity, a man known to be deeply religious, should bow down in the halls of Nazi paganism, and sit "in the council of the wicked who frameth mischief by law". We were baffled, all of us; even Guedalla could only quote from Herbert Spencer: "Volumes could be written upon the un-piety of the pious." The more we discussed it, the more bewildered we became. Now Hitler could triumphantly repeat his old adage: "Religion is dead and democracy a hollow thing."

That feeling was widespread as letters from our members showed. We communicated them to the government, some of whose members disliked the idea of the visit, in the hope that it might not take place. Among those who were unhappy about this piece of appeasement was Anthony Eden. He agreed to come to a private luncheon and speak to us.

On October 28th Steed, who had arrived back from America, sent us a long report on his activities. He had gone as a representative of the Focus, carefully avoiding anything that might look like "British" propaganda. His first interview had been with the editor of *The Montreal Star*, who was strongly of the opinion that the world situation would be eased if the United States supported the Focus policies. He had talks in Ottawa with the Governor-General and Lady Tweedsmuir. The latter showed remarkable interest in the Focus and asked that its literature be sent to Government House so that Lord Tweedsmuir and his friends could study it. In Boston Steed secured the fullest support for the Focus from Roscoe Drummond, the foreign editor of *The Christian Science Monitor*. In New York he was able to expound our policy to the Council of Foreign Relations; Norman Davis, Roosevelt's ambassador-at-large being in the chair. Later he met Cordell Hull and Roosevelt, who told him that one of the objects of his (the President's) speech at Chicago a few days previously had been to impress upon the American people the incompatibility of neutrality with peace. Others he found ready to take the Focus line were Arthur Sulzberger, the proprietor of *The New York Times*, and John Finlay, its editor. He had addressed the Harvard Club at a dinner in his honour, and the River Club to which he had been invited by the newspaper proprietor Herbert Swope. The motive behind that last invitation had been to see whether an organisation like the Focus could not be started in the United States. Among the guests

were Bernard Baruch, the most influential Jew in America, ex-governor Al Smith, an ex-Presidential candidate and strong Roman Catholic, the philanthropist and financier Felix Warburg and some twenty other well-known men, including some very influential newspapermen. Steed concluded by saying that he felt that his efforts had certainly not been wasted and would bear fruit.

Steed's impressions were conveyed to the government and Chamberlain asked Steed to come to Downing Street and report to him personally. The Prime Minister remained overawed, however, by the material achievements and military strength of the Nazi régime, and persisted in ignoring the fact that military threats could be met by evidence of our whole-hearted readiness to uphold freedom.

Meantime Churchill continued his campaign. He would not be sidetracked by the cancellation of his proposed visit to Yugoslavia. *The Evening Standard* of October 28th carried an article by him on Yugoslavia which he called "The Key State in Europe", urging that a unification of the Yugoslav parties was essential for the safety of that country. It would, he held, be disastrous if Yugoslavia were needlessly ranged among the dictatorial states. It would be safer and wiser if she boldly threw in her lot with the forces of democracy and freedom. He pointed out that the Western powers desired nothing more than to see her strong, prosperous and independent. We sent this article all over south-eastern Europe where it made a deep impression. It was quoted by Mazuranic in a speech at Zagreb on November 2nd. The speech was, in effect, a eulogy of Churchill in whom he saw the coming leader of Britain. The British public felt, he said, that the Berlin-Rome-Tokio axis "is directed against the British Empire; and in the exceptionally critical situation which has arisen the British ask for the leadership of an extremely strong political personality. Today the British look to Churchill knowing him to be such. The demand for his return is, as it were, a silent plebiscite."

The Nazis protested violently both against the article and against Mazuranic's speech in which he had described Churchill as "the best hated man in Berlin and Moscow".

Here I would like to put on record the outstanding support which we received from one of our most active members, Sir

Archibald Sinclair. In the historic sitting of the House of Commons on October 3rd, Sir Archibald put the case of the Focus in a most forceful speech and statement. Unimpressed by the applause Chamberlain received from his followers, Sir Archibald said: "My foreboding is that we shall yet live to rue the day when H.M. Government sold the pass of freedom in central Europe and laid open to the march of Germany all the peoples and resources of eastern Europe.... We have not only given Sudetenland to Germany, but have restored Germany to Herr Hitler and Italy to Signor Mussolini.... to say that this is a victory for negotiations over force is flagrantly untrue." He reminded the House of what Hitler had said in March, 1936: "'We have no territorial demands to make in Europe.' Now we are asked to believe his new assurances given in almost the same terms."

Ignoring Hitler's repeated breaking of given pledges, Chamberlain said that he believed that "Hitler means what he says and that the foundation of peace has now been laid. Thus," he triumphantly declared, "war has been averted, a war which would have destroyed our civilisation." The Focus did not share this view. On the contrary we were all convinced that this appeasement policy would ultimately destroy more of our civilisation than any war. Chamberlain repeatedly stressed with great emphasis the valuable services which the Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden had rendered in the attainment of these results.

We all, including Churchill, were therefore more anxious than ever before to enlist the support of Eden in the work of the Focus in the same way as Vansittart had lent us his support. We were, therefore, greatly pleased when the Foreign Secretary promised to come to our private luncheon meeting on November 2nd.

Owing to the Brussels Conference Eden had to postpone his date with us until December 16th, but nevertheless we held our usual meeting on November 2nd. Here the main subject of discussion was a letter written by Sir Robert Waley-Cohen to Churchill pleading with him to draw a distinction in one of his speeches between Nazis and Germans and then to appeal for friendship with the German people.

This was a matter which greatly exercised Sir Robert. In the positive policies which the Focus pursued it seemed inevitable to him that the hostility we showed to the Nazis was in practice

hostility to Germany. Despite what was then being done in Germany, despite the Nazi atrocities, it seemed impossible to him that a people which had contributed so much to the advance of civilisation could now as a people wish to destroy it, or that the nation which had produced Luther really wanted to see the paganism of race-worship established in place of the religion and faith in humanity on which civilisation rests. If the Germans were to abandon the degenerate philosophy which had grown out of the mistakes of all the nations in the tragic twenty years from 1914 to 1934, we could pursue a policy of real friendship with the German people, a policy of mutual help instead of mutual enmity, and with their co-operation lay the foundations of a new and happier world. We should make that very clear.

Churchill warmly thanked Sir Robert for his letter and for the sentiments he had expressed, but did not think that any appeal by him at present, when he was out of office, would be effective. Sir Robert replied that he was fully convinced that not only a very large, but also a very important section of the German people was against the Nazi régime. He stressed the fact that there were good and bad Germans, as there were sane and insane Germans. They were, however, frustrated in their efforts to oppose Hitler more actively by the increasing support for the Nazis shown by the British government and by the intimate contact maintained between the representatives of the two countries. "Let us therefore address ourselves to the sane and decent Germans and help them to throw off the Nazi yoke," he declared.

Churchill agreed that there was a so-called resistance movement on which he had some information, but said that it had neither shown the will to act nor the courage to come into the open.

Locker-Lampson countered by saying that the resistance movement was of growing importance. It could now definitely count on Cardinal Faulhaber, Bishop Count von Galen of Münster, Pastor Gollwitzer of Dahlem, Pastor Niemöller, leading industrialists such as Bosch of Stuttgart, Goerdeler the ex-mayor of Leipzig, and generals such as Beck, Hammerstein, Halder and others of equal standing. I fully agreed with Locker-Lampson that the Chamberlain policy was sabotaging the resistance movement, and in particular was weakening the hands of the religious

leaders of every denomination. We were supported by Dr. Wirth, who had been a cabinet minister under the Weimar Republic. He said that the resistance movement had its roots in the many millions of faithful adherents of the churches and gave us an impressive list of "Aryans" who had been shot or sent to concentration camps. He estimated the number of Germans, i.e. non-Jewish Germans, who actively supported the resistance at over four millions. Their number was growing and the national discontent with the régime was increasing.

Churchill asked Richards to let him have such details as the Focus had on the resistance movement, so that he could make them available to the government. As a devoted upholder of Parliament he felt that we could only support the resistance movement as and when the British government openly condemned the Nazi régime. It was our task to make the government realise the frightfulness of the situation and act accordingly.

Waley-Cohen was not happy about the reaction to his appeal; he wanted something more positive and more immediate. But Churchill insisted that under present conditions such a speech as Waley-Cohen had asked him to make would do no good; it would impress neither Chamberlain nor Halifax. The Focus, he assured us, had already won friends and supporters in the government, and by increasing their number we might yet and in good time bring about a change in government policy.

A few days later we had another meeting to discuss the situation caused by the Halifax visit. It had weakened British prestige and increased Hitler's. Reports received from Germany made it evident that those who were in the resistance movement on religious grounds were most upset at this disowning by Halifax of his own religious convictions in order to toady to Goering and Hitler. One report called Halifax's visit a discouraging and disgusting example of "fellowship with those who had gathered themselves together against the souls of the righteous, and condemned innocent blood". Confirmation also reached us that, after Halifax's visit, Hitler had irrevocably decided to attack Austria and make it part of the Nazi Reich. We also publicised that piece of information as widely as we could.

Anthony Eden finally did become our guest on December 16th. Our luncheons were always confidential but this time we took even more stringent precautions than usual to avoid it



receiving any publicity<sup>1</sup> in view of Eden's position as Foreign Secretary.

Eden's speech was short but very revealing. He made clear his growing anxieties about the international situation created by the practices of the two dictators, Hitler and Mussolini. He thought it important not to yield in negotiation on any important issue. Firmness and patience would be needed and the support of the nation. He gave us some detailed information about his own personal views and it became evident to all of us that there was a deep-rooted divergence of views between the Foreign Secretary and Mr. Chamberlain. This position was not evident from Chamberlain's speech in the House on October 3rd when he had nothing but praise for Eden's co-operation and thereby created the impression that a state of complete harmony existed between the two of them.

The Foreign Secretary had much to say in praise of the Focus. He was, he said, greatly impressed and encouraged at seeing so many prominent people supporting it. To Churchill he paid special tribute and added appreciation of the good work Steed and the Focus had done in America.

There was no long discussion after Eden had spoken, for he had very frankly answered the questions which had been put to him. Guedalla said we should now make a stronger demand for Churchill and some other Focus members to be brought into the Cabinet. Wall concluded from what Eden had said that Chamberlain's view was not apparently that of all his party, and was certainly not shared by the majority of the electorate. He thought that we were now witnessing a flat abandonment of democratic principles, and something much too like a dictator's disregard of the popular will. Churchill brought our meeting to a close by warmly thanking the Foreign Secretary for having come to speak to us.

<sup>1</sup> At the luncheon the following M.P.s were present: The Duchess of Atholl, Sir Arthur Salter, Sir Archibald Sinclair, J. A. de Rothschild, Emrys Evans, Lt.-Com. Fletcher, Lt.-Com. Locker-Lampson, Duncan Sandys and Ronald Cartland. The others present, in addition to Mr. and Mrs. Churchill, were Lord Lloyd, Sir Walter Layton, Sir Robert Vansittart, Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, Sir Malcolm Robertson, Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Lady Chamberlain, A. M. Wall, Alderman Toole, Kingsley Martin, Wilson Harris, Philip Guedalla, Dr. Gregory, Dr. Sydney Berry, Dr. A. Alexander, J. Arthur Rank, Harcourt Johnstone, Wickham Steed and myself.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ANNEXATION OF AUSTRIA

WE of the Focus had always paid great attention to the press and, as far as I myself was concerned, to the financial press in particular. At this time *The Financial Times* was regarded by many as the mouthpiece of the City with a reputation for integrity like that of the City itself. It was widely read both at home and abroad, and its opinions had very great influence. We were, therefore, much concerned, in particular Sir Robert Waley-Cohen who best understood the fateful implications, at the appearance in it of seven articles (November 30th to December 8th) from which it was clear that the Nazi propaganda machine had succeeded in misinforming and misleading the author. The articles were most favourable to the Nazis and had a most discouraging effect on the anti-Nazis in Germany itself. We attempted to undo as much of the harm as possible by giving the readers of *The Financial Times* a true picture. Our reply was as detailed as the articles we refuted, but *The Financial Times* refused to print it. It must suffice here to note some of the more glaring Nazi fabrications foisted on the paper.

The articles ignored moral considerations altogether and painted the Nazis' new economic order in glowing colours. The author estimated Nazi expenditure at 35 milliard marks, whereas in fact it amounted to 55 milliard. Of this 24 milliards could be deducted as available from surplus revenue, leaving a balance of 20 milliards, in fact 30 milliards. These 30 milliards were being financed by acceptance credits to be prolonged indefinitely. These short-term credits could not be converted into long-term loans. Furthermore, the proceeds of these acceptances, amounting to many milliards of marks, were being invested in non-productive armaments which could only become productive by waging war.

Again, the articles stated that the position of the workers, including office employees, had improved. This was a plain mis-

statement, based on the propaganda argument that it was not realistic to base the calculation on the existing wage rates since these did not reflect the substantial increases derived from overtime. We pointed out in our reply that according to official German statistics, the sum paid in 1932 to all wage and salary earners was 26.2 milliard marks; in 1936 the amount paid was 35.01 milliards. The former figure represented the gross payments made to 12,318,000 people, while the latter represented gross payments to 17,163,000 people. This meant that in 1932 each employed person had a gross income per annum of 2,127 marks, but in 1936 the gross income had fallen to 2,039 marks. Thus, under the Nazi economy real wage incomes had fallen, not risen, and the fall was further accentuated by compulsory contributions made to the party and party organisations, which did not exist in 1932. In addition, again according to official figures, the purchasing power of the mark had fallen during this period, e.g. the price of meat had risen by 18%, of butter by 35%, of margarine by 44%, of potatoes by 27%, of eggs by 31%, and of clothing by 24%. These facts were concealed from the readers of *The Financial Times*.

Virtually every statement or interpretation in the articles as affecting co-operation with the free world, which the author advocated, could be disproved. When properly interpreted the articles themselves provided evidence that the Nazi government could only find salvation from bankruptcy by embarking on a war of conquest. The Nazis pursued objectives the very opposite of those pursued by the Western powers. This was the fundamental error which *The Financial Times* had been induced to accept, and its acceptance had deceived its readers. Briefly, by their credit expansion the democratic countries financed in the main a constructive business, which would ultimately make it possible to capitalise such finance by long-term loans, while in Nazi Germany the vast credit expansion was from the very outset a deficit transaction by which the credits could never be repaid, and in the end would increase misery, poverty and enslavement and lead straight to war.

It was not surprising that the Nazi government was immensely pleased with these articles, urging as they did a "real and permanent co-operation with Germany", from which the author expected that it would be possible to find a solution to some of

the urgent problems of today. We in the Focus considered that their publication, coupled with the refusal to print a refutation, was a major tragedy.

Despite all our efforts *The Financial Times* steadily refused to allow us to reply. In addition, just before the articles appeared, Schacht, the President of the Reichsbank and Minister of Economics, who had forged the tools for the Nazis, became terrified when he realised the reckless uses to which the tools were being put. He warned Hitler of unavoidable economic collapse unless there was a drastic and immediate change of policy. As a result Schacht had to resign. That could hardly be regarded as a favourable omen for the collaboration which *The Financial Times* was advocating. We drew the attention of the paper to the significance of Schacht's resignation, but had no response.

When we met again about the middle of January, 1938, Hitler stood triumphant, in possession of a formidable war machine which he was using to terrify his opponents. However, there was some evidence that he was not yet ready to risk putting that machine into action. He needed more and yet more war material at any price and by any device, ignoring economic no less than moral considerations. Goering who had been put in charge of war production, told the German people that they must forgo butter to get guns, for the guns would ultimately by means of conquest procure for them a higher material standard of living.

We in the Focus were convinced that there was still time to raise the spiritual and moral issue, and so bring into play powers which would ultimately break Hitler. It was for the British government to give the signal for counter-action, and we devoted all our efforts to making certain that, at Hitler's first flagrant breach of treaty or pledge, effect would be given to Churchill's demand that Chamberlain should act decisively and at once.

While we continued to try to prepare the country spiritually and intellectually for the emergency that we felt certain would arise, we were shocked to learn of Vansittart's dismissal from his post (January 1st, 1938) and his relegation to another in which his influence would be virtually nil. Here was another triumph for Hitler. This encroachment by a foreign power on the sphere of a British prime minister was resented not only by our members and supporters, but by masses of the public at large who expressed their indignation in speech and letters.

The effect abroad was distressing. It was natural that Hitler's position in his own country was strengthened, but less natural and certainly more distressing that it should be strengthened in the very countries he was seeking to dominate. At this time I received a visit from Dr. Ruzic, the governor of Yugoslavia's largest province, who would have been one of Churchill's hosts had the latter been able to go to Yugoslavia. I arranged for him and several other important Yugoslav visitors to meet members of the Focus. We were told that Nazi influence was growing with irresistible force; their country was now being flooded with Nazi propaganda. Ruzic himself had confiscated many of their publications, but it was not in his power to ban them altogether because of the increasing support that was given in high places to Nazi agents; the same influences made it more difficult for him to give preference or prominence to the material that he obtained from the Focus.

Because of the prominence given to Nazi publications Churchill was much disturbed at the official treatment which his *Evening Standard* article had received in Yugoslavia. He wrote to me from Chartwell on January 3rd, 1938, thanking me for the translations Richards had sent of some complimentary articles in the Yugoslav papers, but was greatly concerned at the recent policy of the present prime minister of Yugoslavia which seemed to him to be contrary to the interests of peace and freedom in Europe. The very mild article he had written for *The Evening Standard* would in the ordinary course have been published in the chief Belgrade newspaper, but much to the paper's regret it had been deleted by the military censor. Churchill added that he had "informed the Foreign Office of the incident".

I took the matter up with the Yugoslav military censor through Mazuranic and Ruzic, and the article was subsequently released for publication. We did our best to have it distributed on a large scale.

Among the members of the German resistance movement who contacted the Focus at this time was Carl Goerdeler, the former Lord Mayor of Leipzig. His object was to enlist the support of the British government whose continuous encouragement of Hitler was, he emphasised, breaking the back of the movement. His information gave us little that was new or of specific importance; it only confirmed what we had known for a considerable

time. Very few of us were inspired by his suggestions about what should be done after Hitler had been brought down by the resistance movement; they were far from satisfactory from a democratic point of view. He contacted Vansittart who took very much the same view.

A few members of the Focus, however, including myself, supported Sir Robert Waley-Cohen who again insisted that the German resistance movement should be supported, and that it would be better policy to emphasise the good intentions of that movement than to speculate on its future political possibilities. This was a risk, as Sir Robert said, which in his opinion was far smaller than the fatal risk which the government was taking of making Hitler respectable.

We were greatly encouraged when we learned that Roosevelt's interest in the Focus, stimulated by Steed's visit, was far from academic. The President was convinced—and greatly concerned—that, if unchallenged, the Nazi régime would succeed in destroying the very fabric of the democratic world and nullify every conception of justice, freedom and peace. He, therefore (on January 11th), sent a message to Chamberlain suggesting a joint approach by the United States and Britain, which could not fail to marshal public opinion throughout the world against the Nazis. To our unspeakable amazement and regret Chamberlain rejected this, just as he had rejected all that the Focus and Churchill in particular had advocated. Yet we persisted! We had high hopes that coming events would justify all our warnings, which Chamberlain would eventually welcome. Our hope was strengthened by a report that the British embassy in Berlin had confirmed to Chamberlain that our interpretation of Nazism and Nazi policy was correct.

On February 16th, 1938, the Duchess of Atholl was about to go to Yugoslavia under the auspices of the International Peace Campaign. She wanted to discuss the Yugoslav position with me and get some letters of introduction to my friends. I therefore invited the Duchess to luncheon before her journey. We discussed the Spanish Civil War and similar topics. She was outspoken in her criticism of Chamberlain's appeasement policy and wholeheartedly condemned his blind trust in Hitler and his fellow-gangsters. As a result of her fearless attitude, which she displayed in contradistinction to her fellow-Conservatives, she had acquired

the nickname "Red Kitty", under which she was also known in Yugoslavia. Apart from letters of introduction to my various friends in Yugoslavia which I gladly gave her, she asked me for some information about the actual inner political position in that country. I also gave her some details about who-was-who in the political world over there.

Duncan Sandys had visited Germany and on his return I invited him to luncheon. We discussed the present and future work of the Focus, and what could be done in the light of his experiences in Germany. Duncan Sandys told me that he was impressed by the colossal precautions taken by the Nazis against air attacks. He mentioned that practically every attic he had seen was heavily protected by sandbags and the like. He only wished that our bomber force was strong enough to justify Hitler's elaborate measures of defence, a view which I fully shared. This shortcoming could best be repaired by a virile Ministry of Supply.

Information was now reaching us daily to the effect that the danger to Austria was very real. Trustworthy Austrian sources revealed the details of Hitler's plans to annex that country by force. The General Staff, which included many members of the resistance movement, had warned Hitler that the German army was still unprepared for a major war, but their warnings were brushed aside. Hitler was sure that Chamberlain would never act, and that he could rely on the prime minister's moral, political and military neutrality more than on the views of his generals, who had not got his inside knowledge of the decadence of the democracies. The generals were not convinced that Britain would tolerate an armed invasion of Austria, and kept on warning Hitler not to count on it. If he were wrong, Britain's refusal to accept his Austrian solution could prove fatal to the Reich. Not only unconvinced but incensed, Hitler himself took over the post of Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, and so was in sole control of the German war-machine.

Meantime his propaganda agents stepped up the vile attacks on Eden, Churchill and Duff Cooper, with the result that Chamberlain's attitude to Eden became such as to make co-operation between them a practical impossibility. Eden had no alternative but to resign the office of Foreign Secretary (February 20th). Hitler had secured another triumph and could justify his assessment of the British prime minister to his doubting generals.

There were others who had shared the generals' views. At the end of February Mazuranc in a public speech expressed his confidence that Britain would not stand by while innocent people, men, women and helpless children, were done to death in south-eastern Europe. The man who reflected the true spirit of Britain in her hour of need was Winston Churchill, he said. I sent Churchill a copy of a translation of the speech; it pleased him because, as he said, it showed him that in spite of all the Nazi intimidation the democratic spirit in that part of Europe was not losing ground.

The Focus was increasingly convinced that there existed in this country an unconquerable spirit and moral force which no military force could quell. With such evidence of the feelings of the British public we knew that, if Chamberlain denounced Hitler as the enemy of every rule of law, it would follow him wholeheartedly. We tried every means of impressing these facts on the government and begged it not to ignore them now that the rape of Austria was a question of days. On March 12th it was announced that Ribbentrop was leaving the embassy in London to return to Berlin in order to become Hitler's Foreign Minister. Next day German troops entered Austria according to plan. The most sinister elements at the disposal of Himmler, head of the Gestapo, were let loose on the Austrian people, and reports soon came in of mass butcheries, torture and other concomitants of Nazi rule, deepening the impression that this was a most flagrant violation of all Hitler's pledged words. We were unanimous in believing that this was the time for the British government to act, and that it was not too late to destroy Hitler. We felt that British action would have a tremendous effect and command an immense following in all countries, even in the dictatorships.

Lady Violet and Waley-Cohen were foremost in support of Churchill's insistence that the Austrian outrage should not go unchallenged, and that Britain should not accept Hitler's maxim that the only right in the world is that of military power. We felt that we had arrived at the critical hour in the cause of justice and freedom, that it was the clear duty of the Chamberlain government to champion that cause now. The climate of public opinion was such that action would have been supported by the nation, which realised that to accept the rape of Austria as a



*fait accompli* merely increased the risk of a world war, and that to profess belief once again in Hitler's assurances would only render the democracies ridiculous.

The Focus suggested that the government should send an ultimatum to Hitler, demanding that he quit Austria and, until the ultimatum was accepted, the British ambassador and British subjects should leave Germany and the German ambassador here be handed his passports. We recalled the words of Thiers, when Bismarck refused to withdraw his German troops from France in 1871: "Your troops can stay in France only so long as the conscience of the world tolerates them there." In the case of Austria we had a far stronger military, legal and moral case to uphold. But the suggestion fell on deaf ears, and all through the next months Churchill's hope that the next—and the next and the next—act of aggression would be met by drastic action, was steadily disappointed. In that dark period Chamberlain and his colleagues never seriously raised the moral issue, thus following Machiavelli in rejecting spiritual forces and moral laws in affairs of state. They persisted in their obstinate faith in Hitler; and in that faith, expressed in the friendly relations maintained by British ministers with notorious Nazi leaders, they put in dire jeopardy the moral supremacy of this country.

To leave Austria in Hitler's hands, moreover, was to put him in control of the trade routes and communication centres of south-eastern Europe, and to give him power over Yugoslavia with its agricultural and mineral resources, over Rumania with its oil, and over Czechoslovakia with its highly developed heavy industry, its war factories and its fifty divisions of highly trained, well-equipped men. The danger was visible to all, but the Chamberlain government virtually ignored it. Their anxiety was fleeting, and they eagerly accepted at their face value the assurances given by Goering when, after German troops had entered Vienna, he declared to Mastny, the Czech ambassador in Berlin: "I give you my word of honour that Czechoslovakia has nothing to fear from the Reich."

The course which Hitler had set for himself and for Germany was now quite clear. The pace was quickened and the policy of Britain—if it ever was a policy—of giving in to the Nazis to give Britain time to rearm, was outdated and impossible of success.

When Czechoslovakia was surrendered in September, there was no more hope of saving freedom except by fighting.

By this time most of the members of the Focus, myself among them, felt that our main work had been done. If we had failed to alter the course of government policy, we had at least in the three years in which we had been active, made the British people alive to the issues. We had kept them informed about developments; we had interpreted those developments; we had revealed to them the precise menace to Britain of Hitler and his policies. If we had failed to move Chamberlain and his colleagues, we had aroused the nation, and by the time of Munich more than half of it was on our side; the half that supported us virtually absorbed the other half after the rape of Prague in March, 1939. By now the problem was not Hitler; that was as plain as its solution. The real problem was Chamberlain, and in these last months of activity the Focus concentrated on attacking him. That was an activity in which, being technically still a German subject, I felt that it would be inappropriate for me to take any part. My application, strongly supported by prominent members of the Focus, to become a naturalised British subject, failed, and in the circumstances I preferred not to attend meetings of the Focus at which matters were discussed which were strictly speaking not those originally intended.

All that remained was to help keep Churchill's flag flying. Only he, as his friends realised and proclaimed abroad, could transform British policy. The moral weakness of the Chamberlain government could not marshal the moral forces of the nation, forces which, instead of being used by the government, only served to embarrass it. By encouraging Hitler the government became an obstacle to peace. Fundamentally it had lost the confidence of the nation, and that confidence was passing to the man who, above all others, had consistently laid before the people the great moral issues involved. We of the Focus could at least look back with satisfaction on what we had done. The British people was now spiritually and intellectually prepared to face the worst with calm courage, and in this vital psychological rearmament of the democracies the Focus had played no small part.

## CHAPTER XI

### MUNICH, PRAGUE AND WAR

THE pace of events now quickened and practically each new happening was a triumph for Hitler and a humiliation for all those who loved freedom. On April 16th the Chamberlain government signed the Anglo-Italian agreement which recognised Mussolini's African conquests. In May the propaganda campaign conducted by the Nazis against Czechoslovakia reached new depths of vileness. We never failed to unmask Hitler's designs and explain how they were succeeding for lack of opposition, but the government preferred to remain blind to the obvious.

For a moment in May we thought that there had been a change in policy. We had always urged that the British ambassador should be recalled from Berlin at the first sign of aggression. Now we suddenly learned that Neville Henderson, our ambassador there, had asked for transport facilities from the German government with the intention of evacuating the embassy. Hitler and Goering were thoroughly alarmed; they feared that they had miscalculated the complaisance of the British government; the French were delighted; there was new hope in eastern Europe; the German General Staff was relieved as well as pleased. But it was all a mistake. Instead of taking advantage of the situation that had suddenly been created, the Foreign Office instructed the ambassador to explain that all he wanted was routine transport facilities for a number of his staff proceeding on leave. The effect on Hitler went entirely unremarked and a great opportunity, perhaps the greatest yet, was lost.

Meantime there was still Winston Churchill. As the Conservative party denied him opportunity, the Focus organised another public meeting for him in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, in May, 1938. Lord Derby was to have taken the chair but withdrew at the last minute, saying that he felt that "if, being head of the Conservative party here, I intervened now, I would give the matter more prominence and more publicity than it would

otherwise get". Churchill was deeply shocked; he felt that he had been insulted and wanted to call the meeting off, but was persuaded to accept Alderman Toole as his chairman instead. I put it to Churchill that Derby's refusal was a blessing in disguise; for that nobleman's appearance in the chair would have given the impression that this was a Conservative party affair, whereas we wanted to be, and to be seen to be, strictly non-party. At any rate Churchill went to Manchester and met with an unexpected measure of support and success.

On May 31st we organised another meeting for him in the City Hall, Sheffield, and a little later a third meeting in Birmingham. The gist of all his speeches can be given in his own words: "Our aim is not the encirclement of Germany but the encirclement of an aggressor, and to combat the volcanic forces of the European dictators. We and other countries stand in great danger. Certainly it would be a great crime to form a war combination against a single state, but to form a combination for mutual defence against a palpable aggressor is not only no crime, it is simply the highest moral duty."

As it became clear that Hitler's next act of aggression would be the incorporation of Czechoslovakia into the Nazi Reich, we in the Focus became very anxious to learn more about the Russian attitude. As Churchill put it: "the Russians do not trust Chamberlain, and Chamberlain does not trust the Russians." We shared this distrust of the Russians, but felt that this should not prevent the government from at least negotiating with them, instead of putting blind faith in Hitler.

I personally encountered the official attitude at this time in the course of my business activities. I was shown a Russian film which I was asked to distribute in England after it had been dubbed with English sub-titles. The film was called *The War of Tomorrow*. It showed every detail of Hitler's preparations for the invasion of Russia. At a given signal and without any warning the Germans attacked in the early hours one morning, and pushed deep into Russian territory, sacking and burning villages, exterminating the population unless they could be used for the benefit of the German war-machine. After a series of victories on land, sea and in the air, the Germans began to weaken; the Russians counter-attacked in force and turned the tide; there were some remarkable shots of air battles. In the end the Ger-

mans were thrown back over their own frontiers, and a never-ending stream of Russian troops poured into Germany. Russian ships landed an invading force at Koenigsberg, and the film showed them being enthusiastically welcomed by the Germans; there was a veritable orgy of fraternisation. I found it impressive, and said I would finance its distribution in Britain on condition, which the Russians accepted, that I could at my discretion cut out all Communist propaganda. My colleagues in the Focus agreed that only good could come out of its presentation; from it the British people and the government could see how the Russian mind was working in a direction favourable to peace. But when it was shown to the responsible British authorities they decided that it could not be shown since it might disturb the friendly relations between the Reich and our government. The official attitude was another shock to the Focus; it was also an eye-opener to the Russians. Unfortunately nothing could open the eyes of the government.

To be able to campaign more effectively against the government's policy, a majority of our members agreed to participate in or acquire the League of Nations journal *Headway*. I disagreed for in my view such action was not in keeping with the objects of the Focus. Our campaign was avowedly all-party, while the policy of the new *Headway* would be to turn out the Conservative government.

In the meantime I had embarked on a project of my own, the evacuation of all Jews then under Nazi rule. I received a good deal of encouragement and *The Times* published a letter from me on July 15th, 1938, from which I quote the extract below:

"The German persecution is directed not only against Jews but against non-Aryans in general. The National Socialist State considers as one of its fundamental doctrines the creation of a Germanic state of Aryan nationals which should exclude all non-Aryan elements, and endeavour to bring to Germany all those Germanic Aryans now living under a foreign flag. In order to carry through this process of racial purity within the borders of Germany, they want to rid themselves of all non-Aryan subjects.

"Germany should therefore be assisted in her attempts to get back German Aryan citizens by exchanging them against those non-Aryan subjects which she wants—as a matter of internal policy—to get rid of. From a *numerus clausus* point of view this

solution presents no difficulties, since there are many million Germanic Aryans living abroad. Such a procedure would in no way affect the employment or the economic position of either party. It would equally help to overcome the difficulty in which Germany finds herself now to allow the transfer of the emigrants' assets to a foreign country, as in this case a clearing system could easily be introduced between the two emigrating parties and any deficiency thus arising could, without great sacrifice, be made good by a fund which could be specially created for such purpose. Such a fund would surely find the greatest support from all parties concerned and both Germany and the state who receives the refugees would ultimately benefit by its operation.

"This solution should stop unilateral deportation of citizens from any part of Europe whether for racial, religious or economic reasons. . . ."

My scheme found a good deal of support and Churchill wrote to me on July 18th that he had "heard it commented on very favourably in various quarters; of course the other side will never look at your plan, but none the less it was a good answer to them". Archibald Sinclair said he had read my letter "with admiration and delight. Quite frankly, however, my own impression is that it is a strong and shrewd controversial thrust rather than a practical proposal. . . . If you can persuade the Foreign Office to take it up, I shall certainly support it." Philip Noel-Baker, who was then much concerned with refugees, thought the plan "thoroughly sound and just in itself. . . . Moreover it seems to me to have the supreme advantage of providing a really strong bargaining point against the present German government. Once Aryan refugees started arriving back in Germany, I believe the expulsion of refugees might cease at once". Other letters which I received, especially some from Germany, were on the same lines. Steed, too, was in favour of my plan. Some time before at a big meeting of protest at Friends' House, he had argued that the right way to deal with Hitler would be to send back to Germany one Aryan for every penniless plundered Jew, and that a beginning should be made with the wealthiest Aryans. *The Daily Herald* had been the only paper to report him. He wrote that he would like to discuss my proposal with me, for it seemed more businesslike than his own. In that discussion it came out that in his hatred for everything German he now

saw nothing in my proposal except a possible increase in German manpower by the influx of Aryans from other countries, and in my suggestion of a clearing system only an increase in Germany's wealth. I thought that an extremely narrow-minded point of view, and the other members of the Focus who knew about it, agreed. I have a feeling that Steed never forgave me.

His attitude was clearly exceptional. The rest of us agreed that the adoption of such a scheme would bring about the first breach in the terrorist wall, since it would mean the virtual abandonment of the Nuremberg Laws.

The Foreign Office did not take it up and the German government was relieved of what would have been a very considerable embarrassment. I had not really expected success, but it at least earned me a precious conversation with Chaim Weizmann.

A good non-Jewish friend of mine, Mr. James Malcolm, who was an untiring supporter of the Balfour Declaration, had frequently discussed my proposal with Weizmann, to whom he had also explained my association with the Focus. Weizmann showed considerable interest and wanted to meet me, whereupon Malcolm arranged a luncheon meeting for Tuesday, March 17th, 1939. At that time Weizmann was engaged in the struggle with the British authorities over Palestine. Our chief subject of discussion was the Palestine issue and Weizmann said he was horrified at the British government's policy of closing the doors of Palestine to Jewish refugees. I told him that a large section of the non-Jewish British public, including some very influential people, was opposed to the government's policy from a deep humanitarian point of view. Amongst others I mentioned Lady Violet Bonham Carter, who had repeatedly reminded our politicians that it was the very glory of this country that British shores throughout the centuries had offered sanctuary to the oppressed and that Britain had thrown its doors wide open to fugitives and those who were persecuted. Weizmann was impressed by what I told him, but in view of the British government's attitude did not believe that anything could come of it. Notwithstanding this, he urged me to go on with my work for the Focus with Churchill. During our conversation he was called to the telephone to take a long-distance call, but to my surprise he came back within two minutes in a state of great indignation. He said that he had refused to talk on the telephone for the lines

were always being tapped. I was shocked and said: "But there is no Gestapo in England." Yet he insisted and stated that he had reliable evidence that his conversations were being monitored by government agents.

Dr. Weizmann said that in his opinion Whitehall was a Central Office for the liquidation of the British Empire. Though they work very slowly, he remarked sarcastically, they are very efficient and bound to succeed in the end. Then we talked about an invention, or rather, a discovery made by him in connection with the production of yeast. "You are always interested in providing risk finance for new inventions," he said, "it would be a great thing if you could promote the manufacture of a new product which would enable us to dispense with the use of oil. That would be a great commercial proposition and a very great inducement to the establishment of peace in the Middle East." I asked him if there was anything I could do to help him about Palestine. He shook his head and went on to deplore the continuous disregard of solemn obligations and the political duplicity of those with whom he had to negotiate, I asked him how long that would continue. He paused for a moment and then with a visionary look in his eyes slowly quoted the words of the prophet: "Until cities be waste without inhabitants, and houses without man and the land become utterly waste."<sup>1</sup>

Events were now moving to the final crisis. On September 12th Hitler declared at Nuremberg that the German army was being concentrated on the frontiers of Czechoslovakia. On the fifteenth Chamberlain went to see Hitler for the first time, and on the twenty-second for the second time. On September 24th Hitler declared that he had no further interest in Czechoslovakia once the Sudeten problem had been settled: "This is the last territorial claim I have in Europe." The Focus had already informed the government of Hitler's intention to annex *all* Czechoslovakia by force.

On September 27th there was a partial mobilisation of the British fleet, and on that day Chamberlain made the notorious broadcast in which he said: "How horrible, how fantastic and incredible it is that we should be digging trenches here and trying on gas masks because of a quarrel in a far-away country of which we know nothing." On the night of September 29th-30th

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah vi, v. 11.



the democracies surrendered abjectly in Munich, and on his return to London Chamberlain waved the paper signed by Hitler and himself, crying: "This is the second time in our history that there has come from Germany peace with honour. I believe it is peace in our time."

Peace with honour! With the notorious Nazi murderers and their concentration camp record, and the sombre catalogue of broken pledges for over fifteen years!

Sir Samuel Hoare, a prominent member of Chamberlain's cabinet, expressed his delight and satisfaction at the great possibilities of this country's future association with Nazi Germany, from which he visualised eternal benefits for the human race and the coming of a Golden Age. Locker-Lampson replied with great indignation that Hoare must be completely deaf to the voice of his conscience, which must have spoken to him during his daily prayers and during his diligent attendance at church. He branded Hoare's statement as blatant insanity, and an ugly betrayal of democracy, endangering the very existence of our democratic institutions. To speak of a "Golden Age" in this context amounted to nothing less than a recognition of the Nazi terror régime, with a record of more than fifteen years of continuous acts of perjury, foul murder, tearing-up of treaties, imprisoning and torturing to death of hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children without any charge or trial. Equally disquieting was the news that Chamberlain still cherished the hope that Hitler would honour this, his latest promise.

For the members of the Focus it was a hard time. Churchill had no illusions and suggested that a telegram should be sent to Chamberlain at Munich signed by representatives of the three political parties urging him to make no further concessions. Lady Violet and Sinclair agreed to sign it. So did Noel-Baker, subject to the approval of the Labour Party, but the latter could not be contacted in time. George Lloyd agreed at once to sign; Eden refused. Churchill was greatly distressed that party interests should cause divisions at this fatal moment. His comment on Chamberlain's statement to Parliament was that the partition forced on Czechoslovakia by Britain and France was a complete surrender by the Western democracies to a Nazi threat of violence, and that what they were compromising was not just the fate of Czechoslovakia but the freedom of the world and of

democracy. Duff Cooper resigned from the government and supported Churchill.

Then followed the horrors attendant on a Nazi invasion. The never-ending stream of refugees, the reports from the British ambassador, made it quite clear that there could be no peace with a power from whose persecution no one could feel secure.

It was not surprising to us, therefore, when we heard on November 9th that a young Jew named Grynszpan had got into the German embassy in Paris and shot dead Herr von Rath the third secretary. Hitler worked himself up into a more than usually sinister frenzy. Under his orders and Himmler's supervision the terror was increased, and vengeance out of all proportion to the crime was wreaked on the Jews in the notorious "Crystal Night", when throughout Germany Jewish shops and homes were wrecked, synagogues burned down, Jews beaten up, killed or flung into concentration camps, and a free hand was given to looters and sadists. The Nazis made a free issue of steel whips!

Propaganda directed with diabolical ingenuity not only accused the Jews in general, but linked the killing of van Rath with Hitler's democratic opponents: Churchill himself was accused by Goebbels of complicity. Not that this had any effect on Churchill who, sharing the moral abhorrence of the British people, did not hesitate to condemn the outrages. He was deeply concerned, as indeed were the vast majority of his fellow-countrymen, but he was also deeply worried at the estrangement of the government from the majority. There was no hope, whatever the nation felt, of any action from the British government: Chamberlain was still under the spell of Munich. The Focus was asked to organise meetings and provide speakers to keep the British public cognisant of the real issue, the maintenance of law against the godless. Peace, we felt, had already given way to war. We achieved that end indeed, but nothing more. The world, shocked and terrified, waited in vain for action. It only received confirmation—for the moment at least—from Ribbentrop's cynical statement to Hitler: "No moral conception will make the British government move." Even the British press was now unanimous in condemning the new terror; and for the first time certain newspapers friendly to the Chamberlain policy,

if not to the Nazis, were confiscated in Germany. Again for the first time the German press reported the reaction abroad.

Throughout Great Britain turbulent and over-crowded meetings of protest were held to give expression to the horror which was felt, and to the desire which was fervently expressed to hold out a helping hand to the Jewish victims of Nazi Germany. Heartrending expressions were used to show how deeply the general public felt and shared the sufferings of these poor souls. But, as Lady Violet Bonham Carter rightly put it at the Albert Hall: "There is one thing the Jewish victims cannot share with us, namely our shame." The audience was stirred and deeply moved when Lady Violet's voice rang out with great emotion: "I say it in all reverence that if our Lord came back to earth today to try our faith, it is as a refugee that He would come to us."

If generals and politicians in Germany were silent, the churches were not. In Protestant and Catholic churches alike protests were made, and the concentration camps began to fill up with victims guilty of no other crime than of behaving as Christians in a pagan land.

It was to our undoing that the Chamberlain government had been found wanting in spiritual strength and moral courage to oppose Hitler's vile and criminal acts of aggression throughout the years.

But Churchill, Lady Violet, Wickham Steed, Sir Archibald Sinclair and Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, amongst many others, were foremost in stressing the all important moral issue which has never failed to appeal to the vast majority of the people of this country. It became ever more apparent that Churchill had deepened his interest and faith in those unconquerable and eternal spiritual forces. It was obvious from the very outset of Hitler's acts of aggression that the issue at stake was neither territorial nor financial, but altogether moral. The reasons why the world had to endure Hitler's criminal acts for several years despite this was only "because the religious and moral control of individual conduct and national policy has been greatly weakened when it was most required."<sup>1</sup>

The sands were now running out. As I have already said, the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the *Religious Foundations of Internationalism* by Professor Norman Bentwich.

work of the Focus was done. It had enlightened and, I think, strengthened the British people; it had failed to enlighten the Prime Minister. That was left to Hitler who finally did so on March 14th when he marched his troops into Prague. The subsequent guarantee given to Poland by the disillusioned Chamberlain meant either that Hitler would renounce his planned dream of world conquest or that there would be war. And we were greatly encouraged when throughout that summer popular demand grew for Churchill to be brought into the Cabinet. "Churchill must come back" was the headline in the national press. "Churchill must come back" was on the boards that the sandwich-men paraded up and down the streets of London, even in Downing Street itself.

On August 24th after Hitler had signed his pact with Stalin, Chamberlain made the speech which he ought to have made eleven months earlier. "If in spite of all we find ourselves forced to embark on a struggle, we shall not be fighting for the future of a far-off foreign country; we shall be fighting for the preservation of these principles the destruction of which would involve the destruction of all possibility of peace and security in the world."

Churchill was most anxious to learn more about the reaction and mood of the Yugoslav people and was pleased when I told him that Mazuranic would be coming to London. Churchill's secretary asked me to make an appointment with Mazuranic whom I contacted immediately. To my very great regret he informed me that his government considered the position so critical that he had been asked to return to Belgrade at once. On August 25th I wrote to Churchill: "I wish to thank you very much indeed for your kindness in making yourself available in these critical days to see Dr. Mazuranic. Unfortunately he arrived very late last night and in view of the present crisis he was urged this morning to return immediately to his country. I had a short general talk with him and hope to hear further from him when he has arrived home." When Mazuranic arrived in Belgrade war had already been declared.

On September 1st Churchill accepted Chamberlain's offer of a seat in the Cabinet; it was a War Cabinet. So far as the campaign for the future Prime Minister was concerned, the Focus had won a decisive if belated victory.

## EPILOGUE

It only remains for me to record my own fate. Convinced that Britain could not fail to make a stand for freedom no matter what the cost, I had begun to wonder just how my work for the Focus would affect me if it came, as I felt it must come, to war with Germany, and I still a German subject. Through Steed I had received a pledge from Vansittart that my activities, of which Vansittart knew and approved, would in no way prejudice me in the eyes of the authorities. In fact Wickham Steed assured me that I had earned the gratitude of every member of the Focus and also of the government. In his letter of June 6th, 1938, he confirmed this and wrote: "I should propose to Sir Robert Vansittart either verbally or in writing that a condition of your assistance being given to any work which our Focus might do, would be that you receive a pledge that your activities in this country would not prejudice you in any way in the eyes of the British authorities." Shortly afterwards Steed informed me that he had received such a pledge from Sir Robert Vansittart.

I discussed the matter with other members of the Focus and only Waley-Cohen did not seem to think much of the promises I had received. "There arose a king which knew not Joseph," he quoted, "the memory of politicians is amazingly short." After Munich I wrote to the Home Office, as Steed and other colleagues advised, and offered my services to the government in the event of war. I only received the usual acknowledgment, a printed postcard saying that my communication had been received. On September 1st, 1939, I went myself to the Home Office and asked what I could do to help the common cause. I was told to send in a new application, and went straight home to do so. Before I had finished the letter I was interrupted. Two plain-clothes detectives from Scotland Yard entered the room and told me that they had come to arrest me as an enemy alien.

None of my papers were seized; there was no search for documents; no charge was preferred. I was taken to an internment camp, set up mainly for Nazis like Hitler's friend Hanfstaengl. I asked to be allowed to contact my solicitor but this was refused. I became No. 2 prisoner of war, although war had not yet been declared.

## POSTSCRIPT

AFTER my wife and I had returned from internment I contacted Richards in order to discuss my experiences during the time of my internment. He urged me to write them down and volunteered to assist me in the publication of my internment story, which he successfully negotiated. As a result my book *The Protecting Power* was issued soon after the war.

During the remaining years of the war Richards co-operated with me in a number of charitable activities for the British and Allied forces. Amongst them he also organised concerts given by my wife in aid of Yugoslavia and other countries suffering from the Nazi terror.

Politically, I discussed with him Churchill's position after the war when I hoped that he would choose to become the undisputed leader of a United Europe, which I felt in common with the people of the free world, was the only hope for freedom and peace. Again Richards promised his full support. We prepared a number of documents and references for Churchill's consideration when the time arrived.

By the grace of God victory over the Nazi military forces was won and the Nazi war machine, utterly destroyed, lay prostrate at the feet of the Allied governments.

Notwithstanding our considerable material shortcomings this victory was made possible through our spiritual stamina which inspired us to fight against terrifying odds. From this victory a world-wide reconciliation and new fellowship could emerge; and the hope and vista of such a peace became the inexhaustible source from which we drew the moral and physical strength to bear, resist and conquer the physical cruelties and hardships of war.

This human fellowship should find its foremost and immediate expression in the establishment of a United Europe. The idea of European unity is as old as Europe itself. But now the time had

matured by the common bitter experience of the past and, in particular, by the events before the war as described in the preceding pages.

Winston Churchill was undoubtedly best qualified to rouse the free world to a powerful moral challenge against the enemies of individual freedom, freedom of thought and freedom of religion. Churchill was surely the man to fulfil this, our greatest hope.

I discussed my views with Richards who at my request referred my plan in outline to Churchill with a view to arranging an appointment for me to see him. I was fully prepared to co-operate with Churchill once again in the same way as I had done over the work of the Focus.

Richards arranged a meeting with Churchill at which Duncan Sandys was present. When we met I felt that Churchill was somewhat embarrassed at meeting me after my internment, so I anticipated anything he might have said by introducing the subject: "When the wheels of the war machine are set in motion these things do happen, and I have taken it all in a spirit of submission and feel no bitterness towards anyone." Obviously relieved Churchill patted my shoulder saying: "Very noble, very noble indeed." I told Churchill that I was about to become a British subject and that I had made an application to the Home Office.

We then discussed my ideas about a United Europe, and Churchill agreed in principle with the great importance of this issue. I specially emphasised that this United Europe ought to be based on the religious-ethical values of our society and not exclusively upon material considerations. "Unity in the sphere of economy does not itself produce unity in society."<sup>1</sup>

He then suggested that I should co-operate with Duncan Sandys, with whom I left shortly afterwards. Before we parted Churchill made a few appreciative remarks about the work I had done in the years when he was in the political wilderness and asked me what he could do for me now. I replied: "I have served a great cause and a great man and I am content." Later on he supported my application for naturalisation and I became a British subject.

And I am still content.

<sup>1</sup> *The Religious Foundation of Internationalism*, opp. cit.



## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

### 1933

Jan. 30th	Hitler becomes German Chancellor.
Feb. 27th	The Reichstag Fire.
Mar. 24th	Hitler receives emergency powers; end of democratic rule in Germany.
Oct. 19th	Germany leaves the League of Nations.

### 1934

June 30th	The Roehm purge.
July 25th	The Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss murdered.
Aug. 2nd	Death of President von Hindenburg. Hitler becomes both President and Chancellor.

### 1935

Jan. 13th	The Saar population votes for return to Germany.
Mar. 9th	Hitler announces constitution of German Air Force; a breach of the Treaty of Versailles.
Mar. 16th	Conscription re-introduced in Germany.
June 7th	Baldwin replaces Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister.
June 18th	Anglo-German Naval Treaty signed.
June 27th	Results of Peace Ballot announced.
Sept. 16th	Hitler accepts the Nuremberg Laws against the Jews.
Oct. 3rd	Italian invasion of Abyssinia.
Oct. 15th	German Staff College re-opened in violation of the Treaty of Versailles.

### 1936

Jan. 20th	Death of George V.
Mar. 7th	Hitler re-occupies the Rhineland.
July 11th	Hitler signs non-aggression pact with Austria.
July 18th	Spanish Civil War breaks out.
Aug. 24th	Conscription in Germany extended to two years service.

- Dec. 3rd The Focus holds its first public meeting in the Albert Hall.  
 Dec. 10th Abdication of Edward VIII; accession of George VI.

## 1937

- Feb. 14th The Manchester Manifesto.  
 May 18th Coronation of George VI.  
 May 28th Baldwin retires and is succeeded as Prime Minister by Neville Chamberlain.  
 June 4th Hitler takes over command of Germany's armed forces.

## 1938

- Jan. 1st Sir Robert Vansittart is superseded as Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office.  
 Jan. 11th Roosevelt's message to Neville Chamberlain.  
 Feb. 20th Eden resigns and is succeeded as Foreign Minister by Halifax.  
 April 16th Anglo-Italian treaty signed; conquest of Abyssinia recognised by Britain.  
 July 26th Russian assurances to Czechoslovakia about Prague.  
 Sept. 15th Czech crisis; Chamberlain's first visit to Hitler.  
 Sept. 22nd Chamberlain's second visit to Hitler.  
 Sept. 24th Chamberlain returns to London, Hitler's terms to be rejected; partial mobilisation in France.  
 Sept. 28th British fleet mobilised.  
 Sept. 30th Western statesmen surrender at Munich; Czechoslovakia to be divided.  
 Sept. 30th Chamberlain's return to London; "Peace with Honour".  
 Oct. 1st Duff Cooper resigns as First Lord of the Admiralty.  
 Oct. 5th Benes resigns as President of Czechoslovakia.

## 1939

- Jan. 18th Diplomatic offensive against Poland opens.  
 Mar. 14th Hitler occupies Prague; dissolution of Czechoslovakia.  
 Mar. 31st British pledge to Poland announced.  
 April 7th Italy invades and annexes Albania.  
 April 27th Conscription in Britain.  
 April 28th Hitler denounces the Anglo-German Naval Treaty and the Treaty of Non-aggression with Poland.  
 May 22nd Pact of Steel signed between Germany and Italy.  
 Aug. 23rd Russo-German Pact signed.  
 Sept. 1st Hitler invades Poland; World War II begins; Churchill enters the Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty.  
 Sept. 3rd Britain at war with Germany.

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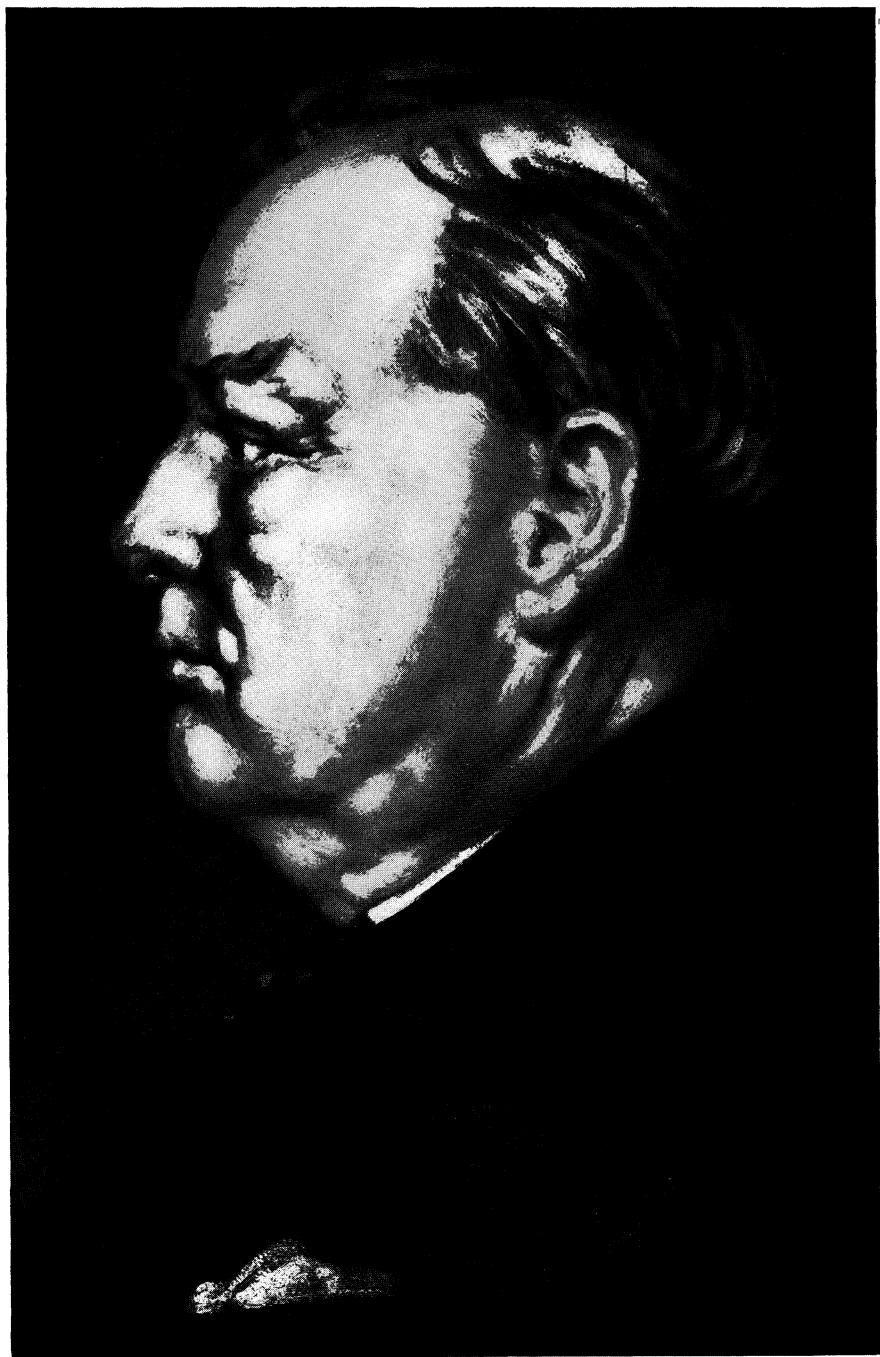


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*A Footnote to the History of the Thirties*







SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL  
*from the painting by Egerton Cooper, R.A.*