GEOFFREY DAWSON, EDITOR OF THE TIMES (LONDON), AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE APPEASEMENT MOVEMENT

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Bruce T. Riggs, B.A., M.Div.
Denton, Texas

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The appeasement movement in England sought to remove the reasons for Adolph Hitler's hostility. It did so by advocating a return to Germany of land and colonial holdings, and a removal of the penalties inflicted upon Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. While the movement itself is well documented, the contribution of The Times under the leadership of Geoffrey Dawson is not. This work deals with his direct involvement with appeasement, the British leaders and citizens involved in the movement, and the use of The Times to reinforce their program.

The primary data employed in this work are the words of Geoffrey Dawson, through his diaries and correspondence, and the material printed in The Times, in the form of editorials. The diaries and correspondence represent a new and more thorough approach to the involvement of Dawson and The Times. Their impact is evaluated on the basis of British Government documents, the correspondence of British citizens both private and public, and the effects on German perception regarding England's position regarding appeasement.

It is the contention of this writer that Geoffrey Dawson held a significant position in the movement that has to this point remained unexamined. The material analyzed, from 1935 through the Munich Crisis of September 1938, demonstrates the depth and importance of his contribution to appeasement. The work demonstrates an until now unknown link between Geoffrey Dawson, The Times, and official England.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: APPEASEMENT AND THE TIMES

The Munich Crisis revealed the instability in Western resolve that made the Second World War inevitable. Neville Chamberlain, John Simon, Samuel Hoare, Edward Halifax, Horace Wilson and a host of others saw their reputations shattered. Their disastrous service to England became known as appeasement. It was not appeasement in the time honored sense of diplomatic maneuvering, but a blind ignorance of the circumstances and irresponsibility regarding the potential consequences. The belief, still widely held, was that these men and others walked into Hitler's plans with high expectations and low ability.

The actual prosecution of the appeasement processes boasted a large pedigree. The political scandal ruined many careers and reputations. Others avoided exposure. Geoffrey Dawson, the Editor of The Times (London), is one such man. This dissertation explores Geoffrey Dawson's contribution to the appeasement movement.

Dawson led the literary effort for the movement through the editorial pages of The Times. Dawson played a key role in disseminating government information and propaganda.

Dawson's involvement in the inner circles of government was deep and extensive.

Dawson participated in the effort to discredit the French as a responsible ally, and helped suppress and underfund advances in British war capability. He believed unblinkingly in the process of appeasement. Dawson supported and encouraged Neville Chamberlain's exclusion of the Foreign Office from the management of appeasement and encouraged Chamberlain's failed solo efforts with Hitler.

The Times contributed to the horrendous political policies of the 1930s. Dawson's role remains barely appreciated and almost undisclosed. Dawson's support of England's catastrophic impotence requires a reevaluation. In almost any work on the appeasement, The Times and Dawson appear, but their contributions have not been adequately analyzed. Dawson involved himself in the daily workings of the government and its key players. His amount of influence and his extensive involvement provides the basis for this work.

Geoffrey Dawson played the role of unofficial propaganda minister. He worked first with Stanley Baldwin, and then Neville Chamberlain. Without Dawson's work, always behind the scenes, appeasement would have never gained the popular influence it achieved. Without the power and vehicle of his paper, and the major role he played as ex officio spokesman for Chamberlain's policies,

appeasement would have produced far less success.

The appeasers required no reason to court Dawson. In fact, he already backed a variety of appeasement moves dating from the end of the Great War. He did not need an introduction into government circles to support the policies it used. Geoffrey Dawson was a part of an entrenched and established upper class of British society. He shared their views and most certainly would not have allowed himself to be placed in a situation where he could be used. If anything, Dawson used his connections to provide and bolster arguments for his positions.

Dawson was not a hidden, unrevealed secret weapon used by the appeasers. The position Dawson occupied in society was one of crucial importance to the success of the policy. Moreover, he used his powerful, untouchable position to advance and enliven an idea in which he firmly believed. The exclusion of Dawson from any analysis of appeasement is not merely a minor omission, but is an example of the decisive factors in Dawson's achievement.

To fully view Dawson's role in the appeasement process, it is necessary to take note of the enormous political and economic chaos that overwhelmed Europe following the First World War. The circumstances that led to appeasement, as it manifested itself in the thirties, all find direct relation to the Treaty of Versailles.

The issue of war guilt, and the ensuing punishment of

Germany, received negative reaction from a broad political and social spectrum. Men like Dawson thought the Versailles arrangements calamitous. This view found equal support and expression from Winston Churchill, himself a life-time ardent foe of Dawson's. Other prominent people argued that the striping of the Germans of her place "to which she is entitled by her history, her civilization and her power" threatened the peaceful settlement of Europe.[1]

Many thought that if Britain could restore relations with Germany, Britain could regain its own manifest sense of purpose. Dawson, himself an adamant colonialist, believed that the economic security of the Commonwealth allowed it to mediate problems of European peace. Dawson and others involved with the problems of post-World War I Europe saw France as a decisively negative factor in achieving that peace.

France suffered the most territorial damage, lost more men than any other nation in the First War, and demanded the most revenge from Germany at Versailles. David Lloyd George, representing Britain at Versailles, believed he faced little alternative but to support French demands. Dawson, angered by what he saw as a potentially explosive situation with Germany noted, "It was Mr. Lloyd George who

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[1] Winston S. Churchill quoted in, William Manchester, The Last Lion Winston Spencer Churchill: Alone 1932-1940 (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1988), 102.

first demanded these huge amounts, who insisted, against the terms of Armistice, on the inclusions.... in the bill."[2]

Following the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, a variety of immediate diplomatic moves reduced the Treaties restrictions. The revisions to the treaty began immediately because the victorious nations themselves did not have the energy or the enforcement ability to manage control.

The weakening of the Treaty of Versailles had a logical basis. From the British standpoint Europe of the twenties and thirties fell prey to what they saw as the destablizing threat of dictatorship. Portugal, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Russia, and Italy developed both left and right wing forms of government that the leadership of England thought threatening to continental stability. The specter of Germany following in the path of the wave of dictatorship provided a major motivation for the British to moderate a more humane settlement. The British believed that the French were unstable and self-consumed, a weak and ineffective ally. Whether that was a clear picture of the French in the 1930s had little bearing on the British perceptions.

The Locarno Conference sought to settle border disputes and to solidify a means of developing further negotiation in

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[2] A. Lentin, Guilt at Versailles: Lloyd George and the Pre-History of Appeasement (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1985), 143.

Europe. The Locarno Conference provided possibilities for better relations with Germany. The Locarno Conference failed, in part, because it was not reconciled to any European historical precedent. The Treaty was not an adequate means of addressing European thoughts about nationalistic pride.

The Three-Power Naval Conference broke down in 1927, destructing itself over disagreements by the United States and Great Britain. Even the victorious nations could not agree on what shape the world should assume. Their own intransigence failed to inspire European confidence.

Signed in 1928 by sixty-four nations outlawing war as a means of settling international disputes, the Kellogg-Briand Pact received massive political lip-service from public and diplomatic circles. Kellogg-Briand received the signatures, but not one of the nations that signed it believed in its premise. The American public, deep in isolation, did not inspire an enormous amount of confidence on the part of European nations. The American public endorsed the treaty but remained uninterested in international involvement. For the Americans the treaty represented, "the featherheadedness typical of a nation that was simultaneously trying to enforce a ban on alcohol."[3]

In 1932 the Lausanne Conference laid to rest the

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[3] George F. Will, The Pursuit of Virtue and Other Tory Notions (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 139.

controversial reparation element of Versailles. To many, who would later lead the late 1930s push for appeasement, Lausanne indicated the positive power of negotiation. Unfortunately when the conference convened, changes in the German political structure led to limited success.

Throughout the two decades following the First World War, Britain softened the impact of the settlements on Germany. British leaders did this, in part because of political fear. They did it also because they believed Germany's claims legitimate. Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, tried to assuage German grievances by assuring them that any future settlements in Europe would naturally include Germany as an important element. Inclusion would be accomplished

> first by a comprehensive European settlement, and when that failed, by a Five Power Agreement that should lead to a European settlement, less comprehensive, but none the less effective, by tying confined to settlements first in Western and Central Europe, without the complication of any further agreement in Eastern Europe.[4]

The problem with the increasing demands of Hitler in the 1930s was that his demands went unanswered. British leaders supporting appeasement did not argue that the punishments in Versailles against Germany had no basis.

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[4] E. L. Woodward, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, Second Series, XV, number 455, memo from Robert Vansittart (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1977).

They believed instead that the potential to calm German anger could be found in the legal reduction of Versailles strictures. Hitler claimed anti-German feelings created the problem. Yet almost since their establishment, the demands of the Versailles Treaty underwent reduction.

Germany's economic struggle in the 1930s had little direct relation to anti-German sentiments. Most of the world in the 1930s experienced harsh economic circumstances. Germany had nothing to fear from England and no serious threat from the perennially unstable political situation in France. Hitler successfully blamed Versailles for Germany's problems. No one in power, particularly in England, offered a cogent argument against him.

To the public, appeasement was a reasonable response to the recently revealed horrors and losses of the First World War. In 1929, Robert Graves's Goodbye to All That brought out the first record of the war that illustrated a lack of images reflecting grandeur and heroism, images that were the stock of political production.

Also in 1929 "Journey's End," Robert C. Sherriff's powerful anti-war play, stunned the British public. His sober revelations about the plight of the common soldier went against the grain of the standard statements about what had taken place in France. His play ignited controversy and aroused the mobilization of public opinion to uncover the truth.

Erich Maria Remarque's play Im Westen nichts Neues opened in Berlin, and later in England as "All Quiet on the Western Front." The similar suffering of the German soldier and the uselessness of war brought strong reactions from people all over the world.

The realization of the meaning of nearly one million British dead from the war came late in Britain, but it came. When it arrived the previously solid Tory majority suffered an enormous political defeat in the 1933 by-election. The public anti-war feelings threatened the Tories. The anti-war sentiment forced rethinking about the use and destructiveness of war.[5]

The believers in appeasement in the mid to late thirties developed a new tactic concerning Germany. First Stanley Baldwin, and then Neville Chamberlain backed by the ever present Geoffrey Dawson, argued the case for appeasement. They said that even if Germany presented a threat to European stability, England could not now afford to confront him. The primary reason given, one that found repetition for the remainder of the decade, argued British financial inability to deal with the problem.

John Evelyn Wrench notes that Chamberlain and Dawson properly understood Hitler's threat, but also understood Britain's limitations. They believed that the United

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[5] William Manchester, The Last Lion, 47-48.

Kingdom's weakness in armaments and general unpreparedness for air attacks from Germany would take time for financial and industrial preparation. Chamberlain et al also understood that the military, economic, and political weakness of France rendered them useless as a supporter of multi-national European peace, much less a reliable military ally.

Looming over these questions were the claims, believed legitimate by Dawson and Chamberlain, that the Versailles break-up of traditional Germany constituted the real threat to European peace. From 1935 on the question of German minorities living within Austria and Czechoslovakia provided the primary emphasis of appeasement arguments.[6]

Advocates for appeasement presented two reasons for their beliefs. First was the need to purchase time. The argument they put forward was that Munich (and by using Munich the entire process of appeasement) purchased "a year of peace, in which to rearm." It also brought a "united nation into war by showing Hitler's wickedness beyond doubt. Both these reasons were put forward by the Government, and accepted by many who could not check them. Both were false."[7]

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[6] John Evelyn Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times (London: Hutchinson and Company Ltd., 1955), 115.

[7] Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, The Appeasers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), xi-xii.

England never achieved air parity with Germany. At the time the lack of money was the reason for the lagging defense build-up. It was rather a lack of vision and will. Appeasement crippled Western resolve. The Soviet Union realized that Britain would do anything to avoid facing Hitler and adjusted their Foreign policy accordingly. The Soviet government opted for unilateral agreements with the French.

Baldwin's second argument was that a united nation saw and understood the wickedness of Hitler. This argument proved equally wrong. The government failed to recognize the character and intent of Hitler. The British government misled the public about their motives, and exaggerated their successes. When war came, the nation was not united, but mystified that so much supposed achievement produced so little results.

The issues of morality, which guided the early move to rectify Versailles, found a post-World War II interpretation. The demonstration of hysteria and weakness produced in the post-war analysis of appeasement argued that Munich did in fact buy time. After the war the appeasers argued that the Europeans failure to stop Hitler early was because they lacked the military capacity to do so.

The issue of "Munich-bought-much-needed-time" has an interesting detractor. The Aga Khan, neighbor of Dawson, associate of Chamberlain, and friend of Hitler, paints a

much different interpretation of the reasons behind the continuation of appeasement. He notes

> This is a post hoc thesis shaped to fit the pattern of subsequent events. Then the case for Munich as I heard it stated by members of the Government and by other champions of the settlement, and with all sincerity by myself, was propounded as a moral question and ran as follows: would Great Britain be justified in going to war to prevent the Germans of Czechoslovakia from declaring their choice by plebiscite, and in consequence to compel them to remain under Czechoslovakian rule.[8]

The government pursued a policy upon which it alone decided. With Dawson as their pamphleteer, the politicians proclaimed the moral, not military, reasons for appeasing Hitler. Public policy might have been against rearmament. The opposition to rearmament did not need to include the political capitulation of Chamberlain, nor the murder of Czechoslovakia. The Times watered down government information and produced the requisite sentiment of public opinion. Despite years of warnings by English politicians, and Hitler himself, the appeasers stuck to their plans. Their beliefs held one simple, misguided point that bordered on canon. They held that appeasement took root in "the belief that human nature could not be entirely overwhelmed by evil". They believed that as long as they kept trying "that the most irascible politician could be placated, if

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[8] Aga Khan, The Memoirs of Aga Khan and World Enough and Time (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1954), 264.

treated with respect."[9]

The English political tradition did not prepare Chamberlain for Hitler. The out-of-fashion belief in the ability of the persuasive power of English righteousness did not prepare Geoffrey Dawson for Hitler's relentless drive for war. The mistaken belief about who and what Hitler was, and what the British were no longer, created a spectacle of meandering intellectual failings. Finally the dead certainty of the appeasers, in the face of a harsh and growing reality, created an estuary of pedantic egotism that reached appalling proportions.

Britain's social history with the Germans, and the resentment of the French, offers a degree of explanation to the persistence of the reproachment of the appeasers. The British could trace blood lines with the Germans which produced royalty and political sympathy for hundreds of years. The British had a long history of military, political, and colonial antagonism with the French. The Anglo-German relationship was not a creation of the thirties, nor was British-French resentment.

The British also stood in sympathy with Germany on a variety of pragmatic levels. The first issue that found ground for the support of Hitler was his anti-communism. As Wrench notes the British felt that a stable Germany

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[9] Martin Gilbert, The Roots of Appeasement (New York: The New American Library, 1966), 146.

"undoubtedly stood as a wedge between Russian Communism and the West, and this was a fact of which Geoffrey was fully cognizant."[10]

Anti-Semitism in Germany produced another problem for the British. It was hard for a nation that shared the resentment and fear of the Jews to criticize Hitler for his remonstrations. The notion of anti-Semitism had roots in British society dating back hundreds of years. There were few people anywhere in Europe who argued about the superiority of race more than the English.

Of a greater concern for the leaders of the greatest colonial power in history was the need to maintain economic security in a world increasingly slipping from British control. An ardent colonialist, Dawson feared for the safety and vitality of the British Empire and felt no clash of interest with Germany on the continent. He believed that the solution to Germany's problems lay in an association with an economically powerful, yet benevolent England.[11]

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[10] Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times, 362. Dawson saw the ability of the government to take power from free people during the strike of 1926. He particularly remembered the shut-down of The Times and the use of the press as a propaganda tool by Winston Churchill. For a good picture of upper class fears of communism emanating from the strike in 1926 see, Julian Symons, The General Strike: A Historical Portrait (London: The Cresset Library, 1957).

[11] William R. Rock, British Appeasement in the 1930s (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1977), 63. For a more detailed explanation of British economic ideas concerning Germany see, Gustav Schmidt, The Politics and Economics of Appeasement: British Foreign Policy in the 1930s (Hamburg: Berg Publishers 1986).

People in and out of government, protested the direction, means, and content of appeasement. They found themselves in an uphill battle against Baldwin's snail-like reactions, and Chamberlain's hectoring and misplaced self-confidence. Chamberlain's force and determination made Robert Vansittart at the Foreign Office, Duff Cooper in Chamberlain's own Cabinet, and in 1938 Anthony Eden, then Foreign Secretary, all victims.

Men like Winston Churchill agitated against the nature of British appeasement toward Hitler almost from its inception. In his struggle against Chamberlain, Churchill assembled a credible and potent amount of information from dissatisfied members of different government agencies, including the military. Churchill did not oppose appeasement. He shared many of the same sentiments of most of the hard-line appeasers. His problem was that he saw defeatism in government policies and thought that resolution and determination needed to be added to any credible presentation of the appeasement philosophy.

The spirit of the old Empire did not help to understand recent history. Following the Crimean War, schoolboys learned "The Charge of the Light Brigade". After the First World War it was "In Flanders Fields". The First World War was the first war that the British went into with a sense of reluctance. The ruling class, which provided so much important leadership for centuries, had a different look and

approach to the world and to their own future. They resembled

> a ruling class which has become unsure of itself, and fearful to the point of apology of losing privileges and material advantages which it has no longer any sense of deserving tends to produce a type of individual at once gullible and pitiable, whose qualities of intelligence, pertinacity and devotion to the public good are all directed to finding occasions to surrender.[12]

The politicians in power needed, and sought out, other sources of affirmation. They rejected the system in place designed to provide that affirmation, (probably because they would not have received it) and closed into a smaller and smaller sphere of communication and exchange.

> The politicians, especially Baldwin, but also Simon and Kingsley Wood, considered themselves more able to assess public opinion than the civil servants (in some cases this meant that they trusted the editors of leading newspapers, such as Dawson of The Times more than leading civil servants at the Foreign Office).[13]

As the crisis in Europe escalated Chamberlain's rejection of professional advice became the style and substance of his approach. Chamberlain rejected the warnings of his professionals and sought the advise of a rank amateur like Dawson.

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[12] Malcolm Muggeridge, "Punch" December 7, 1955, 673.

[13] Schmidt, The Politics and Economics of Appeasement, 316.

> Under the leadership of The Times (Dawson and Barrington-Ward) Fleet Street, from Right to Left, did everything in its power to help Neville Chamberlain and his wretched government turn the whole country yellow.[14]

Coming into the decisive late 1930s, Hitler faced an inexperienced British Prime Minister, a lack of vision in professional political circles within the Tory party, and the Editor of The Times. Chamberlain, the Conservative's and Dawson met all of his needs, and constituted the style of opponent to which he had adjusted. They expressed fear of war, and a willingness to do anything to prevent it. They were the kind of men who were willing to do anything to get rid of Hitler except confront him.

The issues of Europe between the wars and the subject of appeasement produced a remarkable amount of books, articles, and careers. There are few historical periods which have attracted so much literary analysis and speculation. Many works deserve serious consideration as primary material, while an almost equal amount represent some of the worst contemporary efforts at historical writing. Few, in fact almost none, examine Geoffrey Dawson's role in those fateful and calamitous years.

More biographies, autobiographies, and formal historical works on the political, military, and social

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[14] Robert Boothby, Boothby: Reflections of a Rebel (London: Hutchinson of London, 1978), 182.

issues of the thirties exist for this time frame than almost any other period of twentieth century Europe. These works supply the grounds for the defense, or attack, on appeasement. Some are better than others, but the literary quality of these works are not the only basis for their evaluation.

My Political Life by Leo Amery is an example of the high quality of writing and analysis available concerning the pre-war events in England. Keith Feiling produced an essential biography, The Life of Neville Chamberlain, (1946). This work, done in the unenviable presence of Chamberlain's two sisters and mother, is still the standard work on the Prime Minister. Further material regarding Chamberlain's activities include, Larry Fuchser's, Neville Chamberlain: A Study in the Politics of History, (1982).

One of the best, and for some unknown reason the least appreciated, is Robert Vansittart's The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart, (1946). This book is one of the examples of clear thinking that translated itself into clear writing. It contains valuable personal sketches of the most important members of the movement, and insightful reflection by on of England's greatest statesman. Reading this work eliminates the question of why Vansittart faced so much intense dislike from the appeasers.

Nine Troubled Years by Lord Templewood (Samuel Hoare) presents the other end of the perspective. Its defense of

appeasement is long, tedious, and careless. A historical work, it is a post-war defense that has the characteristics of self-defense. It is reminiscent of Malcolm Muggeridge's comment on another work written during the thirties, that it was disliked even by people who did not read it.

Other suggested works on appeasement are, William R. Rock's British Appeasement in the 1930's, (1978). Neville Thompson's The Anti-Appeasers; Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930's, (1971). Also Arthur Furnia's The Diplomacy of Appeasement: Anglo-French Relations and the Prelude to World War II, 1931-1938, (1960).

Some useful works on Munich include, Jean-Pierre Azema's book, From Munich to the Liberation, 1938-1944, (1984), George Kennan's, From Prague After Munich; Diplomatic Papers, 1938-1940, (1968), and J. W. Wheeler-Bennett's, Munich: Prologue to Tragedy, (1948).

Martin Gilbert produced two works that analyze the activity of the appeasers. The Appeasers, written with Richard Gott in 1963, is a detailed attack on the people and policies supportive of appeasement. This book is of value for two reasons. First, it is a comprehensive outline of the diplomatic activity and reasoning behind the drive to appease Hitler. Brilliantly documented, yet hardly ponderous, this volume provides an excellent account of the key moments in the late thirties. This is particularly true concerning the Czechoslovakian Crisis.

The second reason this book is of such interest is because of Gilbert's work that followed it in 1966. The Roots of Appeasement refutes the arguments that Gilbert and Gott so clearly raised in The Appeasers. Gilbert provides the reader with the key to his change of heart in the credits in his introduction. He thanks Colin Coote, Basil Liddell-Hart, Robin Barrington-Ward, Lord Strang, and A. J. P. Taylor for setting him right on the issue of appeasement.[15]

What makes this list so important is that these were men who fought for the ludicrous policy that helped produce the environment that led to war. Of particular interest is A. J. P. Taylor. Taylor always claimed that Munich bought time and room for the solidifying of England's morale and defenses.

There is also the remarkable statement by Gilbert that Chamberlain was guilty of nothing wrong because he was no different from his predecessors. This begs the question of whether any of his predecessors were ever correct in their dealings with the Nazis. Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin are not the kind of people who offer a favorable comparison regarding their dealing with the Germans.

Nevertheless Gilbert is wrong in defending Chamberlain

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[15] Gilbert, The Roots of Appeasement, xiii. To list Robin Barrington-Ward as a man who understood the value of Chamberlain's policy is remarkable testimony to a man who was wrong on every count concerning both appeasement and Hitler.

as just a similar link in a chain. Chamberlain eliminated multi-national cooperation on the German and Czechoslovakian question. He circumvented the Foreign Office, and led the effort to negotiate with Hitler on his own. As unimpressive as MacDonald was, coupled with the diplomatic plodding displayed by the elderly Baldwin, Chamberlain was a giant of activity.

Gilbert also praises Chamberlain for staying with the idea of appeasement in 1938 despite Hitler's "growing advocacy of violence." It is difficult at best to find a point in Hitler's political life where he did not advocate violence.[16]

Finally, Gilbert analyzed Chamberlain's claim to the heritage of appeasement in an extraordinary fashion. While the quote is somewhat long, it is relevant to Gilbert's change of attitude between 1963 and 1966. He says

> Appeasement was never an apologetic, shy, or shameful creed. Its adherents strove openly to organize Europe in a new and unusual way, based, not upon a mere reluctance to go to war again, but upon a fierce determination not to destroy yet another generation of European youth. Appeasement was a search for international relations conducted without resort to armed conflict. It was a search for methods to resolve national grievances without stirring up hatred and fear. If such a world did not exist - and after so vicious a war could not exist - the task of appeasement was to create it. Appeasement sought to satisfy legitimate national aspirations without, in the same process,

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[16] Ibid., xii.

formenting aggressive, destructive nationalism.[17]

Within this paragraph reside the reasons appeasement failed. Not the theory noted here by Gilbert, but the staunch reality of the world as it was. The leaders of appeasement were apologetic. They did not openly attempt to organize Europe, but to carve it up to satisfy their own guilt and fear. They shirked diplomatic responsibility following the invasion of Austria and Czechoslovakia. Their only hope was that it would not come to their shores. Appeasement meant to satisfy legitimate British political aspirations, Hitler's aspirations required war.

They did not see the reality because they believed in something so strongly they ignored the results of their efforts. In the desire for personal fulfillment that the victory of appeasement could have brought, they ignored the facts. Gilbert defends this position without citing the monstrous production that emanated from the callous reasoning of the appeasers.

There are few works which examined the activity of The Times and Dawson in particular. The History of The Times Volume VI, part II, is one such work. Written by Iverach McDonald, it scourges Dawson, Barrington-Ward, and the operation of the paper during the thirties. A defender of the appeasement movement in general, McDonald intensely

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[17] Ibid., 159.

criticized the maneuvering of the paper, and Dawson's leadership.

John Evelyn Wrench's Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times is the only biographical work on Dawson. Wrench's personal devotion to "the Chief's memory" is a good guide to use in evaluating this particular work. Fatally watered down by out-of-context quotes, platitudes, and explanations regarding the attitude and positions of Dawson this book fails to clearly identify the man and the issues. This book is not an accurate historical work.[18]

Wrench claims to let Dawson's words speak for themselves, but a review of Dawson's work in his own hands reveals that Wrench does all the talking. This book is an act of worship that glosses over the more significant episodes in the Editor's career. It is less a work of history than a gift to the Dawson family.

Geoffrey Dawson led a brilliant and capable career. He lasted longer than most editors of great papers, and lived to see, and regret, the folly of his activities. Previously unstudied, Dawson's activities will now face the light of examination.

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[18] Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson, 15.

CHAPTER II

DAWSON AND THE TIMES

Geoffrey Dawson's relationship to the appeasement process extend from his connection to The Times. A graduate of Eton and Oxford, by 1900 Dawson served as Assistant Private Secretary to Joseph Chamberlain. During his service with Chamberlain, he was recruited to the "Kindergarten" of Viscount Milner. His relationship with Milner led him to the Editorship of the Johannesburg Star. In 1910 for family reasons Dawson left Africa and took a job with The Times as a correspondent. After only two years on the job, he advanced to the position of Editor.

Dawson split with the paper in 1919 when the paper's owner, Lord Northcliffe, demanded Dawson write articles critical of Lloyd George's Cabinet. Northcliffe disliked Dawson's lack of deference, and his policy of political activity and interests. In 1919 Dawson tendered his resignation.

In a bitterly worded statement prepared for the paper, Dawson noted that his resignation came about due to proprietorial heavy-handedness. He toned down his final copy. Dawson believed that Northcliffe wanted "a more

active part" in the running of the paper. When Dawson returned to the paper in 1923, his employment centered on the issue of proprietary involvement.[1]

Dawson's reputation brought him a variety of offers from other papers. He always intended to return to The Times. Dawson's chance came in 1922. In 1922 the paper got a new and different kind of owner in John Jacob Astor.

Astor expressed interest in Dawson's return and went so far as to offer him an opportunity to submit his conditions. What followed was perhaps unprecedented in the history of a major newspaper. It was Dawson's manifesto for complete control, and Astor, believing Dawson the only choice, acquiesced.

Dawson's primary concern, in fact, judging by the archive collection his only concern, was the role of the Managing Editor. He intended to make sure that the circumstances that surrounded his earlier departure did not recur. He began by stating, "I foresee endless possibilities of friction if the Manager (or Managing Director) is also the channel of communications between the Proprietor (or Board of Directors) and the Editor."[2]

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[1] Stephen E. Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: Volume II The Twentieth Century, (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 350.

[2] Dawson Archive box 69 leaf 63 undated. Many of the papers in Dawson's negotiating process were in-house or personal and carry no date and were assembled in the Dawson collection in Oxford in as close to chronological order as possible.

Dawson wanted a clear line to the owner without engagement with the low level, yet often powerful, surrogates that haunt large organizations. Dawson's "Constitution" contained a list of statements about the nature of the position of Editor. He stated, "The Proprietor acts only through his Manager or Editor, according to their respective portfolios." Also included was a description of the demeanor of the Proprietor, "The position of the Proprietor is analogous to that of an absolute monarch wise enough, in the public interest, to use his powers constitutionally." And finally a statement about who had control of the content of the leader, or editorial page. "The opinions of The Times are expressed only in its leading articles, for which, as for all other editorial matter, the Editor is solely responsible...."[3]

Dawson further outlined his strategy for control by stating the paper's purpose. "The purpose of The Times is two fold - namely, to reflect and guide British opinion." He also claimed the right of staff selection, "No editor can do his work properly if his correspondents are liable to be appointed except by his own choice or with his full approval."[4]

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[3] Dawson Archive box 69 leaf 64-65 undated.

[4] Dawson Archive box 69 leaf 56-57 and 61, 2 November 1922; Dawson Archive box 69 leaf 63 undated.

Finally Dawson clarified the meaning of the word "Editorial" and referred to his situation with Northcliffe as evidence of the need for broad editorial control. He said the word editorial meant, "everything printed in the paper" and went on to specify who should have the authority to make that kind of decision. He noted "the final judgement of the Editor, who may be confronted (as I was confronted on the eve of the war) with a political manifesto masquerading as an advertisement" should have complete, unquestioned authority to "strike it out at the last moment."[5]

Dawson's demands were as extraordinary as they were comprehensive. He defined what stood as suitable for every word in the paper. He decided the purpose of the paper, and the meaning of the goals it should pursue. He defined the right to control the staff of the paper, and the circumstances under which they would be hired. The most important accomplishment Dawson achieved, however, was the description of the position, powers, and rights of the owner.

Dawson tried to put his victory in a dim light (perhaps to give Astor some kind of face saving opportunity later) by claiming that both he and Astor were each giving up something. Dawson did not specify exactly what he was

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[5] Dawson Archive box 69 leaf 62 undated.

surrendering, and one must wonder if Astor himself found Dawson's sacrifice possible to discern.[6]

Dawson achieved unfettered editorial control. By the 1930s there was no longer a Foreign Editor, but it did not matter. With supreme confidence in his ability to assess accurately the condition of the world, Dawson guided the paper into all matters of British concern. Together with his assistant, Robin McGowan Barrington-Ward, Dawson consumed himself with the task of setting the world right.[7]

Dawson maintained a powerful hold on the material and substance of The Times. He and his assistant Robin Barrington-Ward, eliminated the position of Foreign Editor and used edited copy from their foreign correspondence. By the early 1930s Dawson had complete control over all elements of The Times, from the material printed to the entire paper staff. He was in a perfect position to use the paper for personal and political reasons.

Geoffrey Dawson was a man with a fundamental and profound lack of humor. Even in his diaries there is little display of even modest wittiness. His great devotion to his three loves, his family, hunting, and The Times outline the limited parameters of his world. Unfortunately Dawson's

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[6] Dawson Archive box 69 leaves 67-72.

[7] The History of The Times: The 150th Anniversary and Beyond 1912-1948, Part II chapters XIII-XXIV (London: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1952), 904-905.

affiliation with the paper gave him a pulpit upon which to engage his lack of humor. "To have specialized knowledge of Foreign Affairs was to be quite out of fashion; it was the day of the uninhibited amateur." Dawson, quite the uninhibited amateur, had the opportunity, the inclination, and the means to do a great deal more damage than the average theoretician.[8]

Dawson believed that the Great War came about because of a lack of adequate public understanding. If the minds of the people found an opportunity for understanding by their leaders, the government would not have dared enter the war. Dawson purposed to ensure that the people understood the real issues facing them in the thirties, so as to prevent the next war.

Dawson used The Times to criticize Japanese expansion, the Italian aggression against Ethiopia, the spread of communism, and fascism in general. Hitler and the Germanic attitude utilizing the same methods of expansion, managed to escape Dawson's ire. During a conversation with Winston Churchill concerning the strength of the Germans, Dawson remarked, "To take your argument at its own valuation - mind you, I'm not saying I agree with it - but if the Germans are

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[8] Anthony Eden, The Memoirs of Anthony Eden: The Reckoning (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 24-27.

as powerful as you say, oughtn't we to go in with them."[9]

Long-time personal associate and friend of Dawson's, Edward Halifax, noted that Dawson always promoted Anglo-German fellowship with more public fervor than the Government. The question, soon answered, was how far would The Times go, and who were Dawson's inside friends. The question that was most important was who was Dawson trying to seduce.[10]

Dawson protested the notion that he and the Government were in league together regarding policy. That was an accurate objection, but his actions lent support to the belief. Most Europeans of any note accepted the relationship between The Times and government pronouncements based simply on the leaders penned by Dawson. The other problem for Dawson, and the British, was that Europeans accepted the notion of party papers. The German's did not have any doubt that The Times represented Conservative party ideas. Europeans likewise accepted the notion that the Conservative party could and would select a paper to float its diplomatic and public assertions. Documents on British Foreign Policy include the constantly voiced concern by

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[9] Manchester, The Last Lion, Winston Spencer Churchill: Alone (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1988), 252.

[10] Alan Campbell Johnson Viscount Halifax: A Biography (New York: Ives Washburn Inc., 1941), 380. Johnson understates the friendship between Dawson and Halifax. Their relationship was long and close. This extended to Halifax's tenure as Foreign Secretary with calamitous results.

British diplomats about damage done by The Times editorials.

This belief presented problems for allies who the British would need in the future. Fearing their diplomatic dispatches would be discussed on the leader pages of The Times, foreign diplomats sometimes muted their private conversations.

> The manner of slanting and cutting of news from Germany is well documented. Given that many foreign governments regarded The Times as an official source, the composite effect of taking its views as an indication of Government policy may have led the French in particular to misunderstanding.[11]

The primary consideration that consumed Dawson's interests had to do with the security of the nation. Dawson believed this concern placed a special burden on the paper, and therefore on himself. He wrote less as a critic of the government, and more as an independent-minded, informed member of the governing class.

He decisively represented the aims of the Government because he was a member of the establishment. His background gave him the same ideas. His anticipation of government actions seemed to place him as a member of the official inner circle. He may have mirrored the government regarding appeasement, but he was not in the government's

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[11] Keith Middlemas, Diplomacy of Illusion: The British Government and Germany, 1937-1939 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), 102.

employ.

Dawson believed more in the mission of The Times as an instrument of influence. He could be swayed by friends and was often more moved by friendship than policy. He did not possess a great knowledge of European issues. He could support British rearmament because friends thought it was important. He could also conspire against Czechoslovakia, unaware of the danger of such a policy. His independence pre-supposed a world-traveller level of sophistication when his knowledge was really little more than superficial.[12]

For all of Dawson's motivation and desire to prevent another war, he had gaps in knowledge and ability that undermined his sincerity. Basil Liddell Hart, friend of Dawson's and occasional contributor to The Times, noted

> he was one of the most talented men I have met. His talents were so various that I was puzzled why his interest did not correspondingly cover all the main field with which a great newspaper has to deal. For example, he never seemed to show any such strong interest in foreign affairs and defence as he did in industrial, or Colonial affairs.[13]

At The Times there was a perfect balance of intellectual and procedural muscle between Dawson and his assistant Barrington-Ward. Known as B.-W., he shared

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[12] Iverach McDonald, The History of The Times: Struggles in War and Peace (London: Time Books, 1954), 12-14.

[13] Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart, The Memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart, Volume II (London: Cassell, 1965), 148-149.

Dawson's anxiety for the safety of the United Kingdom. He brought to his job an almost religions zeal towards the issue of peace.

Wounded in France, and a recipient of the D. S. O., he had what Dawson lacked: firsthand experience with the horror of war. He was a man of focus and extraordinary detail. He was the master of late-night surgery and improvisation, able to "shift from papers to people, from people to ideas, from concept to detail, from detail to sub-editing, from tactics to strategy and back again." He wrote on a variety of topics with ease and intelligence. His real job was the role of Mr. Hyde to Dawson's Doctor Jekyll. In this role he complimented Dawson perfectly.[14]

Barrington-Ward complained about the punishment of Germany even as he saw it take place. He watched in Paris as the peace makers carved up the German Empire. He emphatically believed that if the punishment inflicted on the Germans could not find immediate remedy, the next war had already begun.

A critic once said of Barrington-Ward that he "dragged the nation's self-forged fetters around with him and raised his voice in grief-stricken moans of self-reproach." Barrington-Ward argued that the question of appeasement should not find detraction on the basis of the fear of

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[14] McDonald, The History of The Times, 462.

Germany's strength. He bristled at the notion of European national cowardice and asked, "must there be resistance to demands which ought to have been granted when Germany was weak, merely because she is no longer weak?"[15]

Dawson had a position of power that subsidized his personal laziness and periods of aversion to work. B.-W. had none of those problems. The apostle of peace at The Times was more a true believer than his superior. Dawson took extended vacations at critical moments. Barrington-Ward stayed at his post even to the detriment of his health. Barrington-Ward became a "radical Tory who grasped the stick at the wrong end and held on to it longer than anybody." He was one of the last in England to give up on appeasement.[16]

The staff in The Times editorial office reflected the patriarchal influence of Dawson's mentor, Lord Milner. Like Milner he staffed his office with young, talented, and articulate young men who played a role in furthering appeasement. Dawson directed, edited, and nurtured these young men with a professional fondness that underlies his dedication to the paper and its goals. His lack of personal dedication to his staff writers who disagreed with him, as in the case of Anthony Winn in October 1938, revealed

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[15] Lentin, Guilt at Versailles, 51.

[16] McDonald, The History of The Times, 464.

Dawson's contempt for underlings who did not follow his orders and policies.

Colin Reith Coote wrote on foreign affairs and matters of defense and imparted excoriating leaders on French politics and economics. He reflected Dawson's belief that the French were of such an unstable stock that to count on them in any concern rendered Britain's peace prospects moribund.[17]

Dudley Disraeli Brahan also covered foreign policy issues and France. He supported the general feelings at The Times that the situation in England required independent thinking. His editorial work portrayed Europe as unsettled and unsuited for multi-national peace arrangements.

John Vernon Radcliff wrote on domestic issues relating to government expenditures, and the ensuing hardships of the British economy. He specialized in financial arguments that would later find purchase in post-war rationalizing about the movement to appease Hitler.

Aubrey Leo Kennedy issued some of the more significant articles outlining the Czechoslovakian problem. He shared the common British suspicion of Eastern Europeans, and offered compellingly articulate reasoning for the dismemberment of the Czech state. He offered eye-witness

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[17] The Times Archive, London. The references to the particular areas of concentration of Dawson's assistants come from the Day Book used by Dawson at The Times for his notices of author and subject content for each days editorial page.

reports to the paper from Germany. Over time he came to have less regard for the Germans than did others at the paper. His writing reflects some of the best and most persuasive of the young men working at The Times. Many of the more notable leaders regarding more salient issues came from his hand.

William Iverach McDonald covered Eastern European politics and the seamy side of French political issues. His work was less polished than some of the other correspondents, and he was one of the younger men in Dawson's Kindergarten. He also wrote on the issue of Communism, and his fear and suspicion of Russia mirrored Dawson's and Barrington-Ward's views.

Basil Liddell Hart wrote for the paper on an ad hoc basis. He enjoyed a love-hate relationship with Dawson who regarded him as something of a dilettante. Liddell Hart's work covered the newest developments of the German war machine. His reports for the paper, as well as his personal correspondence with his editor, confirmed Dawson's belief that the Germans were ahead of the British in military technology and design. Liddell Hart enjoyed a vagabond existence at the paper, and he probably never had much chance of making the permanent staff. He was not one to show much deference, and that was something Dawson required.

Dawson and Barrington-Ward reserved their remarks in print for only the most serious issues. Between them

Barrington-Ward wrote most often. Dawson had a genuine ability for articulation and genius in print which often eluded his partner.

Following the September 7, 1938 leader demanding a Sudeten plebiscite, Dawson refused to reveal the author's true identity. He rewrote the text for Leo Kennedy, and tried to shield him from blame. In truth, Dawson so rewrote the leader that his own style and intensity overshadowed Kennedy as the author.

The mix of young talent often collided with the political sentiment of the editor and the policy of the paper. Even though there was rigid adherence to Dawson's rule, there was dissent, albeit private and in-house. "Even a paper such as The Times which constantly seemed to present a solid front of support for Chamberlain, was in fact ridden with dissent." Liddell Hart noted that often only one or two men within the editorial staff agreed with the editorial content of the paper.[18]

Dawson's influence at The Times extended to all areas of the paper. He seldom wrote the leaders. The awe of the young men toward him, and the balancing of talent between him and Barrington-Ward did not require it of him. His spirit hovered over the offices in Printing House Square. When occasion demanded it, Dawson could produce a style of

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[18] Cockett, Twilight of Truth, 965; McDonald, The History of The Times, 460.

literary genius that distinguished itself even in an age of accomplished writers. When he chose to write, he was one of the most persuasive men in the country. Even his opponents and enemies admired his talent. Unfortunately for Britain, his persuasiveness and eloquence masked his thin veil of knowledge about Europe.

Newspapers contained the most authoritative media power in England, and Dawson ran the most important of them all. In the 1930s England experimented with the possibilities of radio news. Television was still below the horizon. In England most people still received most of their information from the papers. People had a wide variety of choices and orientations regarding political and social issues from which to choose. In 1937 there were fifty-two morning, eighty-five evening, and eighteen Sunday papers available. They were not all national papers, but they all carried national news and perspectives. These papers were not all on the same level of literary accuracy and skill. This is partly so because some papers wrote to narrow proscribed markets. It is also true because some papers were written for people of narrow political or religious persuasions.

While not possessing the widest circulation in England, The Times was by far the most authoritative and quotable regarding information of national importance. Its circulation rose from 187,000 daily subscribers in 1930 to 204,491 subscribers in 1939. This figure did not account

for newsstand circulation. It was the only paper in England to have constant, direct contact with the leadership in the government. Much like that leadership, The Times struggled to maintain what remained of the Victorian Empire and Victorian authority.[19]

The increase in the paper's circulation enlarged Dawson's personal prestige and his respect with important political leaders. Whether his prestige as editor contributed to his ability to draw on his friend's power, or whether he simply would have had it by his position in British society is not clear. His position did grant him access to people in power. That was all he needed to write and oversee the "insightful" pieces that became a fixture in The Times.

There was also the matter of his connections extending from the Milner Kindergarten. Dawson, Philip Kerr, Leo Amery, and the Astor family all had connections to Milner. This is not to allege that they took their political clues from any past indoctrination. In fact, it was not indoctrination. It was a perspective of the nature of the world that Milner inspired.

The people from the Kindergarten were not of any distinctive party allegiance. The members of the kindergarten, and even Milner himself, were "liberal in the

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[19] Franklin Gannon, The British Press and Germany: 1936-1939 (Oxford:Clarendon Press, 1971), 56.

unspecialized sense of the term, and they were temperamentally attracted to the liberalist conservatism of Waldorf Astor." After Milner's death in 1925, Astor became the patron saint of the appeasers. He was, in a way, the bearer of the flame of the old Milner orientation.[20]

Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr) reflected the pragmatism that mirrored the outlook of those steeped in Milner rhetoric.

> My view is quite simple. I loath all the dictatorships. I think that after Litvinov with his intrigue all over Europe to keep the European powers on the edge of war or to drive them into war is the next, and that Hitler, who is a visionary rather that a gangster, is by far the least evil of the lot.[21]

Lothian's view of Hitler found support from most people associated with appeasement. It was not out of any belief in Hitler's methods or National Socialism, but because he offered the British a tangible reward for their support.

Dawson vented his political interests, not only in the pages of The Times, but in the homes and offices of the most powerful men in England. Dawson's best contact in government, and the key to his better relationship with Neville Chamberlain, developed through Edward Halifax. As

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[20] Christopher Sykes, The Life of Lady Astor (Chicago: Academy Publishers, 1972), 34.

[21] Lothian to Lady Asquith in 1936, as quoted in Gilbert, The Appeasers, 164.

important as Chamberlain was in personally prosecuting appeasement, Halifax and Dawson guided the "unofficial official" movement of the policy. The relationship between Halifax and Dawson bear this claim out well.

> It was not for nothing that The Times was thus taken to be the semi-official conduit of the British government's thinking abroad, and every nuance of its long and elegant leaders was scrupulously scrutinized in the chancelleries and embassies of the world. It was a charge that was always strenuously denied by both The Times and the government, but it was one which was, nevertheless fundamentally true - as the action of Dawson during the appeasement years were to demonstrate.[22]

It was through the leading articles of The Times that the Germans learned about government policies. As Chamberlain became more independent in his pursuit of appeasement, Halifax continued to give important information to Dawson in advance of Foreign Office notice or action. Facing changing opinions in his own administration, Chamberlain looked more and more to the leadership of Dawson to explain and validate his activities. Dawson's biographer states,

> the records available certainly give the impression that Chamberlain valued the Editor's opinion and was strengthened in his own views by the knowledge that Geoffrey agreed with his policy

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[22] Cockett, Twilight of Truth, 13.

and would support it in The Times.[23]

Chamberlain lacked a sophisticated view of German politics. He failed dismally "to grasp the dynamics of Hitler's regime and did not display a deep understanding of the aims, beliefs and practices of National Socialism." Dawson rushed into the fold to provide the intellectual articulation Chamberlain lacked. He added the carefully screened evidence needed to manipulate public opinion in such a way as to strengthen Chamberlain's gambit. Dawson's "disinterested patriotism was unquestionable; the effects of his advice and his actions were disastrous."[24]

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[23] Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times, 373. There seems to be little documented evidence for this claim outside of circumstantial material. Chamberlain trusted almost no one with the exception of his sisters Ida and Hilda. The evidence of collusion here is difficult to maintain but the evidence based on activity and the hope of Chamberlain do bear up.

[24] Keith Robbins, Appeasement (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1982), 79-80; John Connell, "From Milner to Munich" 12 March 1955, cutting book Times archive.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

In January 1935 John Simon, British Foreign Minister cabled the ambassador to Germany, Sir G. Clerk and ordered that Clerk request that the Germans appear before the League of Nations in advance of the plebiscite concerning the Saar region. Germany had no intention of appearing before the League. They believed the plebiscite would favor them and intended to let the outcome of the election do their talking.

Separated from Germany as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, but with the provision of the right to a plebiscite, the Saar requested readmission to the Third Reich as a German possession. The British, anxious to have the Germans appear before the League, hoped to demonstrate that Germany remained willing to use democratic procedures in the reclamation of their former territory. The British also hoped to demonstrate to the members of the League that diplomatic and conciliatory approaches remained possible despite Hitler's growing acrimony.

Simon had another reason for his request to the Germans. He wanted England in the role of primary

negotiator. The suggestion was as much a matter of hope in the League as it was a political posture on the part of the British to "make it known publicly that such a suggestion has been made."[1]

The British further hoped that possible League discussions concerning the Saar might also have the secondary benefit of isolating the Soviet Union from active participation in Western European unrest. The Soviets recognized the strategy and communicated their irritation to the British Ambassador. John Simon believed that the Soviets were not likely to participate in any constructive form of negotiations that abated the tenuous tension in the League and might further complicate League opinion on reducing the penalties imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. The Times editorial on January 12, and the ensuing controversy did little to usage his fears.[2]

On January 12 The Times argued "that the restrictions imposed by the Treaty should operate no longer against any signatory power." The paper further stated "it is open to any beneficiary of a settlement to surrender the advantage

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[1] Great Britain Foreign Office, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Second Series, XII, Number 321, January 8, 1935, J. Simon to G. Clerk. The Plebiscite action on the Saar was already a fait accompli, Simon merely found the public pronouncement of the invitation to be in the interest of the further British designs for leadership of the League.

[2] Ibid., January 12, 1935, no. 333.

he enjoys. It is open to the victorious powers which signed the Treaty of Versailles to give up their advantage, fully or in part." The leader came at a time when the entirely legal plebiscite already fostered high anxiety.

Dawson's suggestion that the entire treaty itself undergo voluntary remission complicated the League negotiating ability. It placed the rights of German colonial claims outside of the Versailles strictures. Robert Vansittart recognized the potential for confusion on the part of League members and noted that The Times merely complicated issues.

Vansittart's concern materialized on the following Monday in the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung an unofficial yet authoritative paper representing Nazi views. In Berlin Sir Eric Phipps reported to Simon

> "The "D.A.Z." receives the proposal that the ex-allies should formally waive their rights under Part V of the Treaty and legalize Germany's defaults very ungracious. Germany needs no such pardon. She has right on her side."

From sources in the German Government the Foreign Office received reports that The Times' suggestions of January 12 constituted the official British position. The Germans, however, perceived the limited negotiations concerning the League regarding the Saar as not representative of the true British stance. Geoffrey Dawson managed to undermine League, and therefore British

diplomacy, by offering The Times, and ostensibly the Government's, format and method for future negotiation.[3]

The British predicament came from supporting the League and wanting to ease tensions created by the Treaty of Versailles. Official British positions still supported the League. Unfortunately, the League was ineffective regarding the German situation. On 12 January The Times indicated the difficulty of the British diplomatic position. The Times created a problem; the more it became the official voice of British policy, the weaker became official diplomacy.

The French government thought The Times was the legitimate expression of British diplomatic opinion. On January 16, 1935, Anthony Eden learned from Mr. Patterson in Paris, that Foreign Minister Pierre Laval was "embarrassed by the extent to which our press was foreshadowing a change of view on the part of the French Government in respect of German re-armament." Eden believed that for the French press The Times spoke for the British Cabinet. Regardless of how the French government arrived at this conclusion, they believed that the official British position supported the German belief that the "victorious nations should renounce the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles." This perception caused considerable concern.

Neither the French nor the British desired unilateral

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[3] The Times, "A Critical Moment," January 12, 1935, and DBFP, Second Series, XII, 336.

treaties. Despite press reports, the French wanted the Franco-Russian treaty to remain in place. The French acceptance of The Times as an official position indicated how truly official British pronouncements did not influence French confidence.[4]

On January 21, The Times further complicated the British position. In the leader "League Success", the paper suggested that opposition to the Saar Plebiscite originated, not from fear of war, but on the issue of Austrian and Czechoslovakian security. The Times challenged the contention of many members of the League who believed that Hitler intended to use the Saar as one step of many to reassert German hegemony.

The paper further argued the goal of British diplomacy should have little interest in maintaining sovereign nations that forced Hitler to violence. The author of the leader, Leo Kennedy stated

> The common objective of all diplomatic negotiations at the present time is, in the eyes of the British Government, the pacification of Europe. Everything that contributes to it will be welcomed, everything that challenges or delays it will be deplored.[5]

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[4] DBFP, Second Series, XII, 341, January 16, 1935. Anthony Eden to John Simon.

[5] The Times, "League Success," January 21, 1935, 13.

For Austria, and particularly Czechoslovakia, the notion that the official British diplomatic position differed from their private assurances created a great deal of consternation. Many League members feared increased German confidence. The Foreign Office did not support the growing nationalism of the Germans, but it privately supported the plebiscite. The Times represented what most people believed. The appeasers wanted the League to change the Versailles Treaty, but if it did not, the British were not going hinder the Germans from doing so.

The British diplomatic corps believed that the perception of Naziism differed depending on if the observer was in or outside of Germany. Ambassador Eric Phipps writing to John Simon added two other observations. Hitler's victory in the Saar would lead to more public demands and less private diplomacy. The popularity of National Socialism in England allowed Hitler to escape criticism and ignore the League of Nations. Phipps said that Hitler's personal popularity offered him the alternative to reject the League with impunity.[6]

Geoffrey Dawson, meanwhile, maintained his relationships with the ruling party in the British Government. On January 26, he "visited Stanley Baldwin in the morning about the confusion of our politics." Dawson

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[6] DBFP, Second Series, XII, 361, Phipps to Simon.

did not clarify the confusion in his diary.

Three days later Dawson finished "my conference, my letters, and my plan of leaders and went down to the House of Commons (where things were going rather better) to see the PM - at his urgent request, though he had nothing particular to say." Dawson had ready access to Stanley Baldwin and used it to his advantage. Then the following night "meeting with Philip [Kerr] back from Berlin. V. interesting about Germany. A bit confusing about Neville C, Duff Cooper and the Red Maitz." The meeting with Lothian produced something printable.[7]

Geoffrey Dawson and Lord Lothian agreed on little. They did however agree on appeasement and the belief that the French bore a great deal of the responsibility for the tension in Europe. Dawson and Lothian played the anti-German view of the French to the hilt, knowing that most British citizens felt the same way. Nevertheless Lothian's visit to Berlin provided grist for The Times view that Germany presented nothing to fear.

Dawson opened the pages of his paper to Lothian's newly acquired pro-German experience. Lothian responded with a two day series that explained the source for the tension in Europe. His title said it all. "Germany and France: The Heart of the Peace Problem, A Hope of Solution" explained

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[7] Dawson Diary, January 26, 1935; DD, January 29, 1935; DD, January 30, 1935.

that France' stubborn attitude toward security offended the Germans. The concentration on security, not fairness, proved the stumbling block to peace. If France approached Germany out of a sense of fairness, security issues would dissipate.

Lothian explained to Dawson's readers

> The central fact today is that Germany does not want war and is prepared to renounce it absolutely as a method of settling her disputes with her neighbors.

Kerr told The Times that "I have not the slightest doubt that this attitude is perfectly sincere. Hitler's Germany does not want war."[8]

Lord Lothian's Times article created a diplomatic imbroglio. In Berlin Kerr stayed at the ambassador's residence. The publication of his visit indicated official approval. Both the British and Germans placed respectability on Lothian's visit. His articles appearance in The Times pleased the German government immensely.[9]

By February 11 Dawson again picked up the argument of European realignment. The Times argued

> the conviction that the trouble of Europe was

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[8] The Times. "Germany and France: the Heart of the Peace Problem, A Hope of Solution," January 31, 1935, 15, and February 1, 1935, 16.

[9] DBFP, Second Series, XII, 431, Vansittart to Phipps, February 7, 1935.

> essentially psychological and that a bold application of the Freudian principle of dragging fears and complexes into the light might show the uneasy countries that most of them were not founded on dangers of fact.[10]

This view supported the Government's optimism on proposed Anglo-German discussion set for early in March. Within a week The Times suggested that the talks could "serve to clear up certain obvious sources of mistrust between France and Germany." The remainder of the article stood as a defense of the League, arguing that the nations of Europe had more opportunity of solving their problems if they allowed on the League to operate as intended.

Once again The Times offered a view favorable to the Germans and relevant to German discussions with the British Government. As usual The Times settled on the side of the Germans, and against the French. The British government still did not see The Times as a potential source of official trouble, but the French authorities did.[11]

The French were not alone in their concern that any British bilateral arraignments with Germany threatened the peace. From Moscow Lord Chilston, the British Ambassador to the Soviet Union, sent an urgent message to Simon. Chilston

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[10] The Times, "The New World Order," 13, February 11, 1935. The remainder of the article stood as a defence of the League and argued that the nations of Europe had more opportunity of solving their problems if they would rely on the League to operate as it was intended.

[11] The Times, "German Reply," February 16, 1935, 13.

noted that the Soviets think

> the entire responsibility for the maintenance of peace in Europe rests upon those leaders of English politics who, under disguise of working for peace are in reality strengthening the position of the enemies of peace.

Chilston felt that the unnamed "friends of Hitler in London" and would damage relations with Russia if appeasement escalated without other guarantees.

Over the next two days Chilston's warnings to Simon materialized, not in the sense of further warnings from the Russians but in reports from the British ambassador to Germany. On February 19 and 20 Phipps noted further Times involvement in German diplomacy stating

> German paper "Berliner Tageblatt" contained brief article stating "a direct contact between men who have, abroad, the ear of the people and have public opinion behind them and the leading personality in Germany, is in the interest of both parties: further it must be of importance for the English representative in view of those negotiations, to get to know the new Germany.

Phipps noted that the informational source of the articles came from a direct link to The Times.

> Times correspondent says he was approached semi-officially and asked to send a message explaining that this reference to "representatives" meant that German Government hoped to receive visits from you (Simon) and from Mr. Baldwin. They did not, however, like to put this more clearly. The "Times" correspondent sent the message accordingly.

On the 20th, a day loaded with significant diplomatic exchanges plus a politically charged leader in The Times, Phipps noted warned against "semi-official `Times' statement referring to the necessity of postponing any visit until diplomatic negotiations have proceeded further." Phipps also that other British papers "confine themselves to reproducing message from "Times" correspondent explaining German opinion on this subject."[12]

On the same day according to Phipps, the Germans objected to the coming talks between the French and Soviets. He expressed the opinion that the German objected to becoming "as the "Times" had put it, to be the nut between a pair of Franco-Russian nutcrackers." Phipps admitted to conversations with Times correspondent about leaks, yet he stated in his own Foreign Office memo that he told the correspondent that the "scope of Anglo-German conversations will be unlimited." Enclosing this sentiment Dawson stated, "The best hope of advance lies in a British visit to

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[12] DBFP Second Series, XII, 464, February 18, 1935, Chilston to Simon; 470, February 19, 1935, Phipps to Simon; 473, February 20, 1935, Phipps to Simon.

Berlin."[13]

So there it was. The most important diplomat in Berlin acknowledged that the Germans quoted their concern about other matters of foreign policy from the pages of The Times. At the same time Phipps used a Times correspondent to plant information constructive to British aims. For his part, Dawson responded with a leader paving the way for independent British talks with the Germans.

By the first week in March the British government published a white paper on defense needs and strategy. The paper had two effects, from the German standpoint bad and from the French good. The paper noted a need to modernize and increase the size of all aspects of British defense. Leo Kennedy noted that the Government admitted they had "postponed the adoption of measures of national defence" as long as possible. He cited the Government assertion that "our contribution in time of need, could have little decisive effect" and so needed improvement.

The press in England, and the French Government, applauded the British statement. Hitler did not. The

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[13] DBFP Second Series, v XII, 476, Phipps to Sargent; DBFP Second Series, v XII, 481, Phipps to Simon; The Times, "Equality in Negotiations," February 20, 1935, 15. For more information regarding the advance information about German reservations concerning the Franco-Soviet pact see The Times, "Germany and the London Plan," February 13, 1935, 15. Dawson, to his defence, did not publish this as a means of creating difficulty with the French or forecasting British moves, but merely as a means of expressing his own interest in the diplomatic concerns of the Germans.

British debate, and Hitler's information, made it clear to the Germans that the policy debate was a response to his actions. He threatened to postponement of the March 7 meeting with Simon. The British offered no consolation. Considering previous British policy and attitudes Hitler was quite surprised.[14]

With the Franco-Soviet Pact Hitler cried foul creating British dismay. For the Soviets the pact provided a defense, albeit a temporary one, from German rearmament. The French achieved security from the east, and military coverage of their eastern border.

The pact, however, weakened the League charter's basic premise of offering membership protection without the need for bilateral treaties. From Moscow, Chilston told John Simon that the Soviets intended the treaty to be an affront to Hitler. Chilston also lamented the fact that the French gained nothing by its signing, noting "What is it that France hopes to gain by an alliance with the Soviet Union?"

In fact, the treaty might have upset the already tenuous situation in German policy circles. From Berlin Phipps informed Simon that instead of making the situation calmer the treaty offered Hitler another reason to distrust League assurances. "Indeed they [the Germans] will probably claim superiority over her [the League] in view of added

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[14] The Times, "Defense and Peace," March 5, 1935, 16; DBFP Second Series, XII, March 5, 1935, Clerk (Paris) to Simon.

danger from Russia." With this treaty the Soviets had their first opportunity to get involved with the deteriorating situation.[15]

On March 15 The Times informed its readers that British air and sea defenses had shocking gaps, both in technology and numbers. Basil Liddell Hart's work for the paper was noteworthy and exactly expressed the concern of the British diplomats in Berlin.

Liddell Hart wrote that England could not protect themselves from the sea because no money existed to provide the ships. He also explained that there was no technical means of protecting England from the air. He urged that the Government seek ways of "classifying the risks and the needs in order of importance, and of arraigning expenditures accordingly." As a military assessment from an informed source to the government the report would have caused no serious concern. Military reports stayed, at least most of the time, secret. Coming from The Times, the report had the characteristic of a political statement for German consumption.

Phipps informed Simon the report could not have been more misplaced.

> Article by military correspondent in "The Times" on March 14th has aroused almost unhealthy

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[15] DBFP Second Series, XII, 552, Chilston to Simon, March 9, 1935; DBFP Second Series, XII, 556, Phipps to Simon, March 11, 1935.

> interest here more particularly the argument showing that England's power at sea has gone for ever. Gratuitous information of this sort can, in my opinion, do a good deal of mischief in Germany in the present conditions.[16]

Dawson saw no danger in assuring the Germans that England intended no hostility. Given the circumstances of the Russo-French treaty, Liddell Hart's leader, in the opinion of Dawson, offered proof to the Germans that no British threat existed.

Hitler contradicted Dawson's belief that no real dangers existed. In mid-March Hitler issued orders for compulsory conscription. His move prompted serious concern for the appeasers because on this point they believed they had achieved limited success with the German head of state. Baldwin was completely nonplussed. Dawson, the great giver of assurance and international diplomat, was not. He spent most of the day in his offices mobilizing his editorial board. The nature of Dawson's work was to ensure a planned yet often delayed visit to Hitler. "I urged them to go on with the Berlin mission if possible to straighten it but they saw great difficulty in the suggestion." Returning that evening Dawson wrote a leader to make sure that people "not panic."[17]

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[16] The Times, "Naval Policy," March 15,1935, 14-15; DBFP Second Series, XII, 567, March 15, 1935, Phipps to Simon.

[17] Dawson Diary, March 17, 1935.

With the Government at an impasse Dawson was more than willing to offer his talent. He focused on the primary European events, being particularly sensitive to the German standpoint. He had little hesitation about putting a positive interpretation on potentially explosive events. His March 18 leading editorial explained and delineated the German argument for conscription. The Treaty of Versailles was the real enemy to peace.

Concerned with massive negative news about Germany Dawson tried to contain the damage. "My difficulty was to prevent every leader in our paper from being about Germany." Considering the times and circumstances Dawson's tendency toward omissions was unclear. Many appeasers felt that negative publicity toward the Nazi's increased Hitler's intransigence. In his own mind Dawson simply performed a public service.

Ambassador Phipps notified Simon that the incremental increases in policy on the part of the British toward the Germans threatened the League. It produced in Germany the "tendency ... to rejoice at breaking of common front against Germany." Dawson, evidently a more important voice to the Nazis than Phipps, worked on the erstwhile British position.

> I plugged again myself into the European problem. I planned another leader with Leo K. The Lords were discovering capitalism. I picked up Philip Lothian... brought him to dinner very interesting on Hitler

popularity.[18]

Dawson's preoccupation with insignificant elements of the European crisis was his most glaring weakness. Issues of ethnicity, nationalism, and colonialism shook Europe, but Dawson understood none of those issues. His belief in the dark sid of Hitler's personality never appreciably altered Dawson's opinion. While Dawson understood old-style British colonialism, he never appreciated how Hitler understood the word. When faced with Hitler's arguments for expansion and the return of old territory Dawson simply misunderstood the message. The material transmitted from Dawson through The Times argued for Germany's position. Dawson became an unwitting supporter of Hitler.

Dawson also invested too much energy in the policy of mutual defense. Even as late as March 1935 he failed to see that the Leagues inability to protect Europe against an expansive Germany threatened the peace. By now Hitler understood the problems in the Anglo-French relationship. He expertly exploited the influence of the paper by picking and choosing which side and issues to publicly support.

Hitler supported the British insistence on limits to naval production. Concerning the French, Hitler was willing to work unilaterally, but not with them. This belief found

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[18] The Times, "Conscription and Germany," March 18, 1935, 11; DBFP Second Series, XII, 613, March 19, 1935, Phipps to Simon; D.D., March 20, 1935; D.D., March 21, 1935.

support in France because the British, even though telling the French about the negotiations, left them out. The damage to Anglo-French relations outweighed the political weight of the decisions.

The British Ambassador to Germany, Eric Phipps noted in a sobering analysis of the impending Eden visit, the concern that Germany felt that their needs and desires transcended negotiation or discussion. Phipps warned Simon that England must show "inflexible determination in opposing a German policy of force combined with a refusal to join in any concrete and collective collaboration." He finished his note with the warning, "I feel that if things drift much longer the situation here will get out of hand and military tendency will grow apace."

The next day the meaning of the message revealed Hitler's real intentions. Phipps informed Simon that the talks touched on "Czechoslovakia whose existence he [Hitler] considers a regrettable smudge on the map of Europe." The reality of Czechoslovakia's existence posed certain problems for Hitler, and therefore for the British. Hitler's obsession with Czechoslovakia took on less importance because of the second part of the message. That part of the message assumed the rebuilding of a new Germany. That meant the assumption of sovereign Austria. "Sudeten must be reunited when Austria joins Germany. The problem of

disposing of the Czechs is exorcising him."[19]

Hitler did not need to worry about problems with the British press. Phipps told Simon on April 4 that while Hitler suffered irritation at the way most British papers treated him, the situation would "naturally not last if the "Times" continues to give him encouragement, as I understand it does in its issue of today."[20]

On April 9 Phipps noted to Simon that a friend of his in Germany believed that British diplomats had been unsuccessful in convincing the Germans that Dawson's leaders did not reflect Downing Street opinion. Phipps expressed concern that Baldwin needed "to put the world on its guard against taking such leaders as "inspired"."[21]

The next day Geoffrey Dawson dined with John Astor, the owner of The Times. The content of part of their conversation concerned the anger in the Foreign Office over Times editorials. Dawson had Astor's support to keep up the pressure for appeasement. He also notified Dawson of "a friend in the cabinet" who supported Times positions.[22]

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[19] DBFP Second Series, XII, 625, March 21, 1935 and 635, March 21, 1935.

[20] DBFP Second Series, XII, 690, April 4, 1935, Phipps to Simon.

[21] Ibid., 706, April 9, 1935.

[22] DD, April 10, 1935.

This destructive situation found full expression in the Stressa conference. Supported by the appeasers as a clear and reasoned expression of the League's ability to solve diplomatic problems, the conference failed dramatically. The frightened French showed up for the conference on the heels of their announced intention to enter into a bilateral treaty with the Soviet Union. Mussolini came to the conference to ensure that he would not meet with serious resistance for his planned invasion of Ethiopia. Dawson never understood that Stressa displayed the League's inability to mediate any crisis. He missed the essential problem with continued negotiation with Hitler; such a policy emasculated the League of Nations.

The Stressa Conference met from April 11 through the 14th. The participants, England, France, and Italy, allegedly met to discuss the diffusion of European tensions but the agendas on all sides concerned parochial political positions. Mussolini attended at the last minute only on the agreement that his growing interest in Abyssinia remain outside the scope of the conference. The British and French agreed. They had their own deals with Italy, and each wanted the favor of the Italian dictator.

The conference produced empty results for the British and French. For Mussolini "no questions were asked about [his] intentions: Abyssinia was not in Europe he had apparently received on assurance, or an impression, of

France's passivity on that score from Laval in January." For the British part the only real goal of Stressa was to "reject anything leading to heightened tensions in Europe."[23]

On April 26 Ramsay MacDonald wrote in The Times that Stressa brought the world closer to peace. He encouraged the continuation of conferences such as Stressa and noted that without them the danger of war increased. Of Versailles, he stated he had never seen "anything but disaster ensuing from and to the League of Nations if it is used by victors to perpetuate the position and mind that they were in on the day of their victory."

Phipps reported that the Germans ordered their papers to "keep the comment mild" and downplay the importance of the utterances of a Prime Minister. Clerk from Paris wrote Simon that the article made "a deep impression in responsible circles."[24]

On April 30, The Times published a secret report detailing the German submarine program. Where Dawson got the information remained itself a secret, but the information created concern. With the Anglo-German Naval discussions only days away, the release of classified

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[23] Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1948), 119-120; Seton-Watson, Britain and the Dictators (New York: Fertig, 1968), 232-236.

[24] The Times, "Peace Germany and Stressa," April 26, 1935, 16 and 18; DBFP Second Series, XIII, 143; Ibid., 141.

material cast doubts on the part of some in the Government about the security of Government business. It also gave credence to the growing allegations about Dawson's influence and importance to the Government.

Phipps reported that the publication of "confidential information of the Admiralty" intended to clear the air for the forthcoming naval conversations. It produced, however, the opposite effect. Phipps echoed the concern of people wary of Hitler's promises, the fear that some people in MacDonald's Cabinet or close to it, intended to help the Germans at the bargaining table.[25]

Within a month, using his information on German armaments, Dawson argued that these weapons reflected a realistic and historic need on the part of the German people. The Times said, "Germany simply must be given a position appropriate to a nation which is normally the most powerful single State in Europe." The leader laid out the conditions of the present unacceptable position of European power stating, "no arrangement which accorded any other position to Germany could be anything but artificial." The leader ended acknowledging Ramsay MacDonald's premise that Europe now should "move[ing] away from the Versailles regime."

The leader on the next day excused the Germans, and

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[25] The Times, "German Naval Strength," April 30, 1935, 16; DBFP Second Series, XIII, 150.

ostensibly Hitler, for their aggressive created by the Treaty of Versailles. The Times stated that Germany bore a right to force "equality" because that was the failed basis of the League of Nations in the beginning.[26]

On May 4 Dawson attended to his more unofficial duties, that of Government confidant and advisor to the incoming Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin. In his diary of May 4 Dawson described his advise to Baldwin on the makeup of his new cabinet. "Winston - keep out by bringing up "India" problem, (a reference to the colonial dispute with Parliament at the end of the 20s). L. G. (Lloyd George) - no, nuisance value - Winston and L.G. together impossible. No liberals. Reasonable Labour - I thought it hopeless."[27]

On May 17 The Times returned to its advocacy of Hitler's aims. The leader said

> Herr Hitler has not himself put forward any claim that is wholly unreasonable, his arbitrary infringement of international obligations has been in respect of those which he himself has been consistent in repudiation, and which Germany as a whole has never pretended genuinely to accept.

On the heels of his understanding of Hitler's actions Dawson offered a warning, a warning that Britain should heed, not

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[26] The Times, "British Foreign Policy," May 3, 1935, 17, "British Foreign Policy"; Ibid., "Organizing Europe," May 4, 1935, 13.

[27] Dawson Archive, Box 78 leaf 107, noted as "private meeting with SB on reconstruction of Government."

resist

> If he has resorted to abrupt and irregular methods, the blame is not entirely on him. Germany has therefore had an excuse for resorting to subterfuge and force in order to establish claims which were generally regarded as legitimate. The policy of putting obstacles in the way of legitimate claims has weakened the position of the other Powers in the event of Germany putting forward claims hereafter that may by general consent be regarded as unjustified.[28]

On May 21, Hitler addressed the German nation, and therefore most of the world. Lacking his normal vitriol and decibels, his speech contained an offer of peace. How his speech received comment in Britain demonstrated the differences between policy makers and Dawson's understanding of the diplomatic situation and policy debate.

The diplomats, having a somewhat less altruistic opinion than Dawson, and based on a somewhat better knowledge of Hitler and the conditions, played down the peace aspect of the speech. Clerk in Paris noted that the speech contained a better tone but no real substance. The last line of his report contained his true evaluation of the content of the speech. He stated, "In some quarter the speech is regarded as a further manoeuvre to detach Great Britain from France and some uneasiness in expressed on this

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[28] The Times, "Back to Foreign Affairs," May 12, 1935, 17.

account."[29]

While offering two sides in the argument about Hitler's intentions Dawson managed to paint caution and concern as criminal. The Times noted that men like Stanley Baldwin, while expressing thanks for the tone of the speech misunderstood the real impact it contained. The leader acknowledged Baldwin's concern for continued care and stepped up defense production. Dawson then waded in, proclaiming

> There are no greater enemies to the peace of Europe than those who would spread an atmosphere of suspicion about an important and long awaited pronouncement of this kind before it is even delivered and when its contents are a matter of pure conjecture.

The Times further characterized the cautious concern of men like Baldwin as a "crime against peace" and noted Hitler's approach provided an "a practical advocate of the limitations of armaments." Dawson's statement, that self-defense and caution in dealing with Hitler constituted a crime, exhibited part of the difficulty with Dawson's understanding of foreign affairs. He failed to see the dictators as enemies of peace. He chose, instead to focus on his belief about the evil nature of Versailles.[30]

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[29] DBFP Second Series, XIII, 244, May 16, 1935, Clerk to Simon.

[30] The Times, "Herr Hitler's Speech," May 22, 1935, 17.

Whether Dawson had information concerning the Clerk document of May 16 is unknown, but his correspondence a week later reflected that knowledge. As a diplomatic insider to the government, that knowledge was not outside the realm of possibility. He wrote that the danger on the continent did not reside in Germany, but in "French jealousies and suspicions, which will grow stronger as Anglo-German agreement comes nearer."[31]

As a conservative Prime Minister in the appeasement movement, Stanley Baldwin contributed to the international reputation of The Times. His article outlined his hope for European peace. It appeared on the May 28 leader page and expressed the same format as Dawson's for constructive peace. In Germany Phipps noted to Simon his concern that Germany would accept the British notion that by "abandoning recrimination over the past history is disarmament." He sent to Simon an undated minute by Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. It said in part, "This would be too easy if the Germans were allowed to get away entirely with their misrepresentation of the past. No-one wants to recriminate but it is difficult to leave the last word to distortion, indeed to falsehood."[32]

Stanley Baldwin was prepared to move against the

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[31] DA, Box 78 leaf 106-107, May 23, 1935.

[32] DBFP Second Series, XIII, 258, May 28, 1935, Phipps to Simon.

problems created by the Treaty of Versailles. Through the Summer of 1935 further Anglo-German talks loomed, and the possibility of continued peace seemed likely.

Geoffrey Dawson accomplished two things in the first half of 1935. He presented Adolph Hitler to the British world as a reasonable and concerned leader. Dawson also undermined the League of Nations by his blind belief that European bilateral peace treaties strengthened the League's ability to keep the peace.

Despite the growing belligerence of Mussolini the summer of 1935 held brighter prospects for peace in the world. Geoffrey Dawson felt that his efforts had produced significant steps in the search for peace.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEATH OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The history of Italy's interest in Ethiopia extended into the nineteenth century. Previous attempts having failed in the early twentieth century, Italy had abandoned its desire for conquest. In fact, Italy sponsored Ethiopia for membership in the League of Nations.

By the mid 1920s Mussolini developed a personal interest in Ethiopia. He needed to test his military forces and distract his citizens from their economic problems. A limited war with few diplomatic or military consequences appealed to him. By 1935, the League of Nations was pursing arbitration over land claims between Ethiopia and Italy. Mussolini stood to profit from the situation. Because of the concerns of Britain and France over the growing German threat Mussolini felt free to make his move.

In the spring of 1935 Hitler announced a policy of military conscription at the same time Ethiopia's case appeared before the League. Many members of the League opposed an Italian claim for land based on a particular manipulation of colonial history. It was almost the same claim made by Hitler. In need of a solid front in Europe,

the League capitulated and gave way to Italy. The Stressa Conference in April provided no solution to the problem. Britain and France turned to a direct policy of limited accommodation with Italy. Hoping for European calm, Dawson initially thought that small concessions by Ethiopia supported Continental stability. Mussolini's speech of May 14 demanded land from Ethiopia with a position which paralleled earlier Times suggestions. The British Ambassador to Italy remarked to the Foreign Office, "Signor Mussolini's speech which I fear resulted from The Times indiscretions" helped to "legitimate Italian aspirations."[1]

Dawson, having spent the minimum amount of time on the Italo-Abyssinian question, concerned himself with more important European affairs. He attended a luncheon for Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's new Ambassador-at-Large. According to Dawson they had a "varied and most interesting talk." The luncheon took place at Leo Kennedy's house, a quiet place for two men to meet. Von Ribbentrop considered Dawson a major source to understanding the British view of German policy. Private meetings between Dawson and other German leaders occurred on a fairly regular and informal basis. Dawson enjoyed every opportunity to assure the

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[1] Medlicott, Dankin, Bennett, eds., Documents On British Foreign Policy, Second Series, Volume XII, 264, Drummond (Rome) to Simon, May 15, 1935.

Germans that England meant them no harm.[2]

On June 17, the secret "Maffy Report" outlined Britain's options in dealing with Italy and concluded an easy Italian victory uncontested by the League. The report strenuously argued a cautious British policy and urged that "frontier adjustments" should be used to satisfy the Italian claims. The report warned that any military action against Italy meant most British access to their North African holdings. All in all, the report constituted a grim and realistic evaluation of the League's collective policy of defense.[3]

In a speech before the House of Commons, Anthony Eden spelled out the British dilemma. He noted that the problem went beyond the difficulties with Italy. He reflected upon the deeper question of the League's ability to respond to threats with affirmative action. About Italy he said

> Her policy is not in accordance, for instance, with the separate treaties which she has signed with Ethiopia and with Great Britain and France; it is contrary to the spirit both of the Kellog Pact and of the covenant. It threatens the very foundation of the collective system. It casts renewed doubts upon the value of treaties....[4]

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[2] Dawson Diary, June 17, 1935.

[3] DBFP Second Series, XIV, Appendix II, June 18, 1935.

[4] The Times, "Mr. Eden's Statement," July 2, 1935, 16.

The real task was dealing with Hitler's Germany in a true spirit of collective security, and for each member not to pursue solutions in the context of narrow national interests. Hitler's pending withdrawal from the League did not improve the situation.

As usual, Dawson and The Times, missed the point. The paper argued that League problems originated with the French and not the analysis expressed by the Maffy Report. In "A League for Peace" The Times argued that the League mishandled the Ethiopian crisis because the French resented the British positions on other issues. The Times claimed that Italian and French resentment came from the belief that the "British Government has more than once indicated that they cannot commit themselves beforehand to active intervention in Austria."[5]

Dawson's view completely overlooked the single-minded positions taken by all parties involved. He did not understand the unilateral attitudes of the British government, and he ignored the developing diplomatic relationship between France and Italy. Finally, Dawson did not recognize the League of Nations' general morbidity.

Dawson's concern about Austria placed something new into the policy debate. His unfortunate editorial raising the Austrian issue revealed Geoffrey Dawson's dazzling

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[5] The Times, "A League for Peace," July 8, 1935, 16.

ability to confuse pertinent policy analysis. While the problems of Austria needed attention, the current issue before the flaccid League in the summer of 1935 concerned Italy and Ethiopia. By implicating France in the problems endemic to the whole League, Dawson prepared the way for his desired goal of independent Anglo-German diplomacy free of League multi-national shortcomings.

Aware of the danger on the continent the deteriorating problem of the League did not constitute the only concern for the British. There existed very few allies the British trusted, and most of those did not have the geographical and military importance of the French. At the same time, there existed a historic antagonism between the two countries that overwhelmed the real issues in 1935.

Sir Robert Vansittart held the job of dealing with the French as the Anglo-French relationship deteriorated. His note to Admiral Ernle Chalfield exposed the depth of the problem. Responding to a warning about diplomatic entanglements with the French, Vansittart responded

> You know all that I have said and written for many years past about the weakness of this country and it's political consequences. You may therefore be very sure that I shall do and say nothing in Paris, and I am sure Eden would say the same, which might expose us to consequences for which we were not prepared.[6]

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[6] DBFP Second Series, XIV, 421, August 8, 1935. Vansittart to Chalfield, note 3. To be fair to The Times and Dawson, distrust of the peculiar political situation between France and England did not begin in the 1930s. It would be hard to find too many people

On August 11 The Times erroneously reported that Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, had agreed to cede land to Italy in order to forestall an invasion. The Times reported the story as fact. This left the diplomats to read about critical information from the pages of a newspaper. The story was false. Dawson's editorial pages remained a presence in the world of the diplomats.[7]

On September 2 Anthony Eden left for Italy. He wanted a peaceful conclusion to the crisis. Dawson stressed for The Times readers two significant issues regarding Eden's mission. Dawson recounted the crisis and noted that the core of the problem resided with the French whose "new-found friendship with Italy was risking the utter breakdown of the League of Nations."

Second, lest anyone notice that the French and Germans worked toward the same evil ends, Dawson clarified the issue regarding the French-Italian collusion over Ethiopia.

> It is a case, if proved, of deliberate aggression by one member of the League on another, not the one-sided rejection of an enforced treaty. Considerations which cannot but be moving the logical minds of Frenchmen.[8]

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with connections to the Government that possessed any real affection for the French and vice versa.

[7] The Times, August 12, 1935, 10; and DBFP Second Series, XIV, 436, Hoare to Barton, (Addis Ababa).

[8] The Times, "Mr. Eden Sets Out," September 2, 1935, 13.

Dawson made a distinction between which countries could violate the Treaty of Versailles and those which could not. If the treaty imposed constituted enforcement in the eyes of the dissenting nation, any violation of international law was acceptable. Only when disagreements constituted two-sided issues could treaty enforcement function.

Dawson's analysis allowed any breach by Germany of post-World War agreements because Germany claimed that those terms had been imposed by threat of force. Dawson did not apply the same test to the colonial claims of Italy, which were the same Germany made. Dawson supported the use of League sanctions against Italy, while urging that the same sanctions should not apply in the case of Germany. Dawson's apparent double standard of treaty responsibilities helped drive the wedge of distrust further into League members' confidence in the doctrine of mutual defense.

Sir Samuel Hoare addressed the League Assembly on 11 September. He indicted "certain powerful nations" who threatened to undermine the League's viability. He reinforced the positive "British attitude about the League." Hoare argued that economic sanctions against Italy should take the form of "economic, rather than political or territorial" inducements. Hoare's speech failed to rally the League against Mussolini's moral breach of League

strictures.[9]

The speech belied the general tension that existed in Great Britain over the continuing ability of British foreign policy to remain and function within the League. For the first time, Hoare publicly accused Germany of partisan dickering with League members. The speech assured Mussolini that the League would not hamper his Ethiopian policy.

On September 16 The Times praised the announcement of a visit by French Foreign Minister Pierre Laval to Mussolini. With a backhanded compliment, Barrington-Ward thanked the French Minister for his efforts, noting that even the French and Laval rose "to commit his country to its full share in the common maintenance of the rule of law and in the collective restraint of unprovoked aggression." Barrington-Ward warned Italy against "imperialistic expansion" and argued that the League would "focus opinion and apply it."[10]

On September 17 The Times noted the growing acrimony in Germany over Lithuania. The underlying theme of Leo Kennedy's leader dealt with new laws in Germany which governed and restricted the activities of Jews. The leader cautioned British over-reaction to the German use of limited restrictions on ethnic minorities. Given traditional British anti-semitism, it would have been hard to say

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[9] DBFP Second Series, XIV, Appendix IV, September 11, 1935.

[10] The Times, "A Plain Issue," September 16, 1935, 13.

otherwise.[11]

If Italy invaded Ethiopia, Dawson believed that imposing serious sanctions against Mussolini would pose problems for the fragile European economy. Focusing on the word "sanction" he offered warning, hoping that the use of kinder words would "restrict the sphere of hostilities." Dawson hoped that if war came at least it might be limited, and he urged his readers to "refrain from all actions or dealings which are calculated to facilitate or prolong the war."[12]

What Dawson did not know, or would not admit, was that the French and British supplied Italy with war material all through the summer of 1935. Even sanctions, if imposed, would still not restrict important raw materials from reaching Italy, England found itself in a competition with France for foreign trade. The British did not intend to lose, regardless of the desire of the League.

On September 23 and September 26 Robert Vansittart met with French officials about possible sanctions against Italy. By the end of the meetings Vansittart understood that the French would provide no military or economic help for the Ethiopians. Citing the Covenant Charter the French

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[11] The Times, "Germany and the Crisis," September 17, 1935, 15.

[12] The Times, "The League and the Empire," September 20, 1935, 15.

requested British guarantees concerning European security in Europe. In a hotly worded memo Vansittart noted that the only thing the French agreed to was a mission on the part of Foreign Minister Laval with the possible cooperation of Samuel Hoare, to Mussolini.[13]

Italy invaded Ethiopia on October 4, 1935. The Times' three articles displayed the paper's loyalties and concerns. The first comment came through a leader by Robin Barrington-Ward. Barrington-Ward ripped Mussolini for bad excuses that "could not be improved upon by Swift to Lewis Carroll." In an statement aimed only at the Italians, he stated "what cannot be compromised is a principle. British opinion has a firm grasp of this truth." Considering that compromise of principle became the method of the appeasers, Barrington-Ward's comments reflect a sad irony.

In the same issue the paper reported on Winston Churchill's speech to the British Socialist Party. In "Mr. Churchill's Peek; Changed Attitude of Socialists" The Times noted

> What an extraordinary spectacle the Socialists Party presented to-day. Here were men who for years had been trying their utmost to cut down every form of national defence now exhibiting themselves in a most pugnacious and belligerent guise with a truculent tone and harsh language which he was glad the Government and Foreign Office had not applied in the handling of this very difficult and delicate international

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[13] DBFP, Second Series, XIV, 629, September 23, 1935, and 650, September 26, 1935.

> situation. The Tories seemed to be the only sincere peace lovers in the whole country.[14]

Churchill did not call for military force against the Italians. The speech was about national defense. Many Socialists supported an increase in the military budget. They watched Hitler eliminate their fellow socialists in Germany. They understood the Government's need to increase the home defense. The "sincere peace lovers" in the Tory party however, had no intention of allocating large amounts of money for arms. A called election by Stanley Baldwin loomed in the next few weeks, and arms for defense would become the political tool of the Tories, not of the Left.

A third story in The Times defined British policy regarding both Germany and Italy. In "Germany and Italy; Neutral Policy Affirmed," Dawson stated that the Germans felt sympathy for the Abyssinians! His statement included the belief that "a distinct sympathy with Great Britain is perceptible and a deepened distrust of France." Dawson further added that issues epitomizing the "moral and political in the present European Crisis had been assumed by Great Britain."[15]

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[14] The Times, "The War Begins," October 4, 1935, 17; Ibid., "Mr. Churchill's Peek; Changed Attitude of Socialists," 8.

[15] The Times, "Germany and Italy; Neutral Policy Affirmed," October 4, 1935, 13.

Reality did not plague Dawson's positions in the fall of 1935. He believed that a principle undergirded the German cause of colonial claims, but not those of the Italians. That principal was that the Germans simply wanted a return of their colonies lost by force. The Italians threatened war because of their desire to expand. He did not think that re-arming given a massive German buildup sensible. Finally, and more ominously, he blamed France for the diplomatic problems of Europe. He aligned Britain with Germany in a dance macabre of moralizing with Adolph Hitler.

The heir apparent to Stanley Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain, watched the grim European situation and Italy in particular, with the same sense of fear and confusion as the rest of the world. He told his sister Ida, "He [Mussolini] keeps on sending messages which seem to indicate that if we don't attack him he may yet call a halt. But they don't square with his actions and it looks like sanctions at an early date." He also noted the problem of military force given the weakness of the League. "People are scared of another war in Europe, but I believe we can keep clear of that for the French are determined not to fight and we are not going to act without them."[16]

Unilateral military action was out of the question. The condition of the British military was inadequate.

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[16] Neville Chamberlain to Ida, October 5, 1935, Chamberlain Archive, 18\1\935.

Responding to The Times' criticism of defensive action based on their claims of the weakness of the British military, Winston Churchill noted, "One sometimes hears that the "Times" is not British owned may not have some truth in them; certainly the "Times" is not always British minded."[17]

French assistance was the another primary problem restricting British action. Chamberlain wrote

> But the French have been as disloyal as they could. Their papers in particular. Their correspondence have been steadily expressing in Rome that they were all the time holding back a ferocious Britain, determined to destroy Geneva and humiliate the dictators.[18]

Both Great Britain and France faced the reality of weakness in the League of Nations. Its impotence in all levels of diplomacy forced both England and France to contemplate the possibilities of future European crises without any faith in collective security.

On October 21, Geoffrey Dawson lunched with Baldwin, and consulted Anthony Eden about happenings with the League. "I had a good talk to S.B. after lunch and going on to the F.O. found Anthony Eden just back from Geneva." Dawson's growing concern about Baldwin appeared for the first time as he wrote, "S.B. characteristically uncommunicative but full

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[17] DA Box 78 leaf 127, October 10, 1935.

[18] Chamberlain to Ida, October 19, 1935, 18\1\937.

of irrelevant talk and opportunity bits."[19]

On October 22, 1935 Germany formally left the League. The Germans had taken no part in the League for two years but the official departure of Hitler offered Dawson, the great defender of League goals, an opportunity to preach. He stated

> No official statement of foreign aims by Herr Hitler since he took office has been incompatible with the principle which the British and other Governments are now vigorously defending.

Dawson further noted that Britain, and the world, were "watching and weighing the efficacy of the collective system."[20]

Dawson's explanation of the similarity of German, British, and unnamed "other Governments" positions fell short of any definitive outline. He believed that the essential power of the League of Nations remained, albeit in a different capacity. "British policy has never wavered in its determination to make a success of the Covenant to which as a nation we are solemnly pledged." In aligning Germany and Britain, Dawson excused Hitler from all future claims, citing them as privileges of League membership, a right to

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[19] DD, October 21, 1935. From this time on Dawson grew increasingly skeptical of Baldwin's grasp of events. The "old vicar" became the scapegoat to Dawson's energetic belief in the power of appeasement.

[20] The Times, "The Empty Chair," October 22, 1935, 17.

which Germany as a result of her withdrawal, was no longer entitled.[21]

With the election approaching in November, Baldwin addressed the Peace Society concerning their fears that the conservatives intended to fan the flames of confrontation through a massive rearmament program. Baldwin told the assembly "Do not fear or misunderstand when the Government say they are looking to our defenses. I give you my word that there will be no great armaments."[22]

Baldwin's predicament with the upcoming election hinged on his knowledge that the "Peace Vote" constituted a serious contribution, or liability, to Tory strength. He courted the rearmament people in May of 1935 with the offer of peace through strength. In October he offered the pacifists his belief in the need to avoid war at all costs. Both sides were outraged. Winston Churchill, particularly, quoted from both sides of Baldwin's promises to each party with great effect.[23]

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[21] The Times, " A Statesman's Speech," October 23, 1935, 15. Dawson always held to the belief that Germany should, despite withdraw from the League, be given the privilege of membership. It was not because he hoped to convince the German's to return to the League, but because he favored German arguments about their former colonial claims.

[22] Cato, Guilty Men (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1940), 36.

[23] John Barnes and David Nicholson eds., The Empire at Bay; The Leo Amery Diaries 1929-1945 (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 430 and 430n. Amery argues that the political ploy of Baldwin in the 1935 election was misquoted in Guilty Men but the essential quality, or lack thereof, of Baldwin's grotesque offer to the peace groups

The Times offered Baldwin an opportunity to explain his position on November 12, just two days before the election. The sum of the article indicated that Baldwin acknowledged politicking for the peace vote. The questions that pacifists later demanded answers to were the extent of deceit in the Prime Minister's comments. Baldwin, in his Times article, prophetically argued that defense and peace were allies. He denied that pandering to both sides of an issue constituted deceit, and the election results bore him out.[24]

Whatever rationale Baldwin employed, the election handed the Conservatives a massive number of seats in Parliament. They won three-hundred and eighty-seven seats. The Labor Party hardly survived. The margin of victory gave the Conservatives a landslide and gave Britain the government that lasted until 1945.[25]

With election matters settled, Geoffrey Dawson returned to the issue of the Ethiopian crisis. The primary issue, forcing a resolution of the crisis, rested with the work of Samuel Hoare and Minister Laval. The so-called Hoare-Laval mission began in September. Working outside the direct control of the League of Nations, but with the League's

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undermined his reputation nonetheless.

[24] The Times, "Election Issues," November 12, 1935, 14.

[25] Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars 1918-1940 (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1955), 553.

blessings, the two men labored to first, convince Mussolini, and later the Ethiopians, that compromise offered the only way out of full sanctions by the League.

The Italians had nothing to gain by the end of hostilities. Through the troublesome fall of 1935 Hoare and Laval concluded that Ethiopia must give large portions of its territory to Italy.

On November 18, slightly more than two weeks before the conclusion of the agreement, Geoffrey Dawson met Samuel Hoare at the Foreign Office. Their conversation over lunch was decidedly pro-League. Dawson did not know at that time that an agreement favoring the Italians was near.[26]

On December 2, the British Cabinet met regarding the proposed oil embargo against Italy. Instead, the Cabinet urged Hoare to continue negotiations. The plan decided upon granted Italy an economic monopoly in large portions of Ethiopia. The plan also offered alterations in the frontier favorable to Italy.

To the surprise of almost everyone, Laval agreed to the plan. The plan also included a communique sent to Mussolini in draft form before the plan became a formal proposal in Geneva or Addis Ababa. This forced the plan back to the League and away from a singular British and French operation. While the plan was agreed upon by both men, it

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[26] DD, November 18, 1935.

still required the approval of the British cabinet, and therein was the source of the problem.

What the British government would have done could only be speculated upon. By the time the confidential plan appeared before the Cabinet the proposal had already appeared in the French press. Amazingly, Dawson criticized press leakages for the "nasty situation deriving out of Sam Hoare's approval w Laval."[27]

On December 10 a brief, highly charged debate took place in the House. Dawson "spent the afternoon probing the Hoare-Laval peace treaty." He noted Anthony Eden seemed "solemn," and allowed that "leaks in the House of Commons was putting the best face on it in a sudden debate." During the debate Baldwin uttered a comment he would later rue. He noted that his lips were "not yet unsealed. Were these troubles over I would make a case - and I guarantee that not a man would go into the lobby against us." Baldwin's support of the Hoare-Laval treaty came apart.[28]

On December 13 Horace Rumbold wrote to Dawson concerning his leader "The Way Out" in which Dawson ripped

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[27] DD, December 9, 1935. It is hard to imagine how Dawson would have responded if he knew the full text of the plan. To this point all he knew was that an agreement had been reached. His perspective, and his role in approving the destruction of the plan came only after he learned of the harm the agreement caused to the League of Nations.

[28] DD, December 10, 1935 and, John Barnes and David Nicholson, eds., The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929-1945 (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 336-37.

the plan, and criticized the leadership for weakening the League. Rumbold, using a less than vague racial remark noted about Laval stating "somebody said to me that the only white thing about Laval was his tie and even that is only washed occasionally."[29]

On the same day Dawson returned to his office and found "that the public on the track of the Paris proposals was imminent and got Braham writing a leader on it. The clamor was still going on and there was nothing in the official version to allay it."[30]

On December 16, prior to the return of Hoare from Paris and with the "magisterial words of The Times editorial "A Corridor for Camels" echoing in their minds, the Government decided to climb down." According to Dawson the proposal left Ethiopia with "no more than a strip of scrub, restricted to the sort of traffic which has entered Ethiopia from the days of King Solomon, a corridor for camels." Dawson warned that England could not "endorse an unjust peace." He further argued that this time leaks in the French press had no responsibility for the quality of the agreement. He complained that had the story not broken in advance of action the British Government planned to "endorse the peace proposals as "an opportunity of negotiation" and

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[29] DA, Box 78 leaf 138, December 13, 1935.

[30] DD, December 13, 1935.

proceeded to dispatch them to the belligerent, as the White Paper shows, with the strongest possible plea for the "careful and favourable consideration" of the Emperor.[31]

Secretary of the League, Maxwell Garnett, wrote to thank Dawson for his December 16 leader. Garnett stated that Dawson's insight provided the "silver lining in the dark cloud which now overshadows international relations is the magnificent lead given by The Times toward right thinking and right action." By the end of the week Hoare would be the victim of right thinking and action.[32]

Following three days of frenzied meetings to soften the damage, the Cabinet endorsed the decision that Hoare had to go. Eden was the new choice for Foreign Secretary. For his part in it Baldwin had to "don sackcloth and ashes." All in all, it was a miserable performance by everyone involved. A friend of Dawson's framed the issue with the cliche it deserved, "No one has yet pointed out that the recent crisis was in reality an Eton v Harrow foursome, in which the two Harrovians, Baldwin and Hoare, were trounced by the two Etonians, Dawson and Eden."[33]

The fatal cracks in the League of Nations appeared in

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[31] Barnes and Nicholson, Empire at Bay, 337; The Times, "A Corridor for Camels," December 16, 1935, 15.

[32] DA, Box 78 leaf 150, Maxwell Garnett to Dawson.

[33] Barnes and Nicholson, Empire at Bay, 337; DA, Box 78 leaf 165, John Hiles to Geoffrey Dawson, from the Hopgarden, Eton College, Windsor.

the fall of 1935. The fault already existed but the testing of the power of the League revealed their deficiencies. Leo Amery said that the League died in 1935 because of the "wishful thinking of sincere but misguided enthusiasts and by the interplay of our [British] party politics." Amery's evaluation was accurate concerning British policy, but it lacks the proper view of the existing conditions of the League.[34]

Two practices of the British Government in 1935 revealed the League's weaknesses. The first practice was the British willingness to go outside of the League in its pursuit of bilateral agreements with Germany. Britain, however, frowned on French practices similar to its own, and so weakened its only powerful ally in Europe.

The second practice proved far deadlier in the next few years. In 1935 the British showed a willingness to exchange territory for peace. Even though the Hoare-Laval plan never gained formal British acceptance, the plan itself offered hope to Hitler in his future claims for colonial returns.

In a leader on December 3, Robin Barrington-Ward argued that the British position in Ethiopia had been "settled in its determination to bring the present war to an end and to make it clear for the future that aggression does not pass

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[34] Leo Amery, My Political Life, Volume III (London: Hutchinson, 1955), 190. Amery also argues this position in The Empire at Bay, but with the more general approach of a diary. See Barnes and Nicholson, The Empire at Bay, 338.

as a method of meeting economic needs or of securing readjustments of territory." This statement was false in two respects. First, during the crisis the British government had been settled about almost nothing. Second, British policy showed that aggression did pay returns as a means of securing economic and colonial needs.[35]

Martin Gilbert argues that the Government acted apart from the knowledge of the people who elected them. This particular precedent decided the strategy used by Neville Chamberlain in his dealings with Hitler. Whether the Germans understood the disarray on the part of the British Government was not fully known in 1935. By March 1936, however, Adolph Hitler would once again test the waters of British resolve, and League strength.[36]

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[35] The Times, "The Cabinet and Italy," December 3, 1935, 15. Barrington-Ward argued for the stability of British practices yet the crisis in the Cabinet showed otherwise. As for giving away land for peace, the fact that the British agreed to the deal in absence only of public awareness refutes that position completely.

[36] Martin Gilbert, The Roots of Appeasement (New York: The New American Library, 1966), 151.

CHAPTER V

GERMAN EXPANSION AND LEAGUE MORBIDITY

In March 1936, Hitler stirred fears of another war in Europe by reclaiming the Rhineland. In mid-summer Spain began a civil war. Eventually many of the combatants came from outside Spain's territorial borders. While England gingerly held on to a fragile peace, events in Europe overtook the optimism at The Times.

The resignation of Samuel Hoare did not sever Geoffrey Dawson's freedom of access to the Foreign Office.

> I went over to the F.O. later for a talk w Anthony Eden, who had assumed his high office today. He was under no illusions about his difficulties - was all for "going slow" over our pressure on Italy. Waiting on the U.S.A. giving the Italians no added distractions from our discontent...etc. etc.[1]

Eden later fell under persecution from Dawson and others, but his early activity in office pleased the political sensitivities held by Dawson and his associates. His first speech as Foreign Secretary on 8 January pleased The Times, and Barrington-Ward. Barrington-Ward saw Eden's

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[1] Dawson Diary, Oxford, England, January 2, 1936.

support of the League of Nations as a sign that the belief in collective security was valid. The full meaning of Eden's speech which seemed to indicate full support of the League's role as mediator became a bone of contention in later political endeavors.

Nevertheless Barrington-Ward believed Eden shared his faith in the central occupation of the League. That role required

> A strong League to overawe aggression: a League of reason and conciliation to give assurance that genuine grievances can be otherwise removed: an inclusive League capable of basing order upon appeasement and an arms agreement providing in it's turn a new defence of order.[2]

Robert Vansittart offered a stark disagreement with the perceived message of League support. Eden, the moderate found Vansittart's approach difficult to handle. Eden wrote a memo to King George noting that the policies and pronouncements of Vansittart produced a stumbling block to relations with the Germans. The Foreign Minister suggested that a replacement might be required. When Vansittart learned of Eden's suggestion he threatened to resign. In his autobiography, The Mist Procession, Vansittart explains that his "leanings to resignation were corrected - curiously enough - by Beverbrook, who pointed out that there would

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[2] The Times, "Mr. Eden's Speech," January 8, 1936, 13. Eden's views on the power of the League, over time, would not change. The only thing that changed was The Times view of his performance.

soon be no public service if public servants resigned on issues of policy."[3]

While initially very supportive of the practice of appeasement, Eden saw what other more optimistic visionaries missed. He noted that his "study of the German problem" revealed "definite pre-ordained lines." Despite his concerns for a working relationship with Germany, Eden foresaw a its foreign policy "summed up as the destruction of the peace settlement and re-establishment of Germany as the dominant Power in Europe."

Eden prophesied that the German program existed on two planes. The first, internal through "militarization of the whole nation," and externally by "economic and territorial expansion." Expansion included all "those of German race who are at present citizens of neighboring states."

While Eden may not have known it, he accurately stressed that the primary motivation in expansion, rested not on Hitler's public and personal belief in a united race. He envisioned the problem of German expansionism as rooted in the problems of Hitler's economic inability to maintain growth and development based only on a domestic economic strategy. He accurately predicted that it was "only in the

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[3] Medlicott, Dakin, and Lambert eds., Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939: Second Series, Volume XV (London: Her Majesty' Stationery Office, 1976), Anthony Eden to King George, January 8, 1936; Robert Vansittart, The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart (London: Hutchinson of London, 1958), 542.

economic and financial spheres that Hitler's policy has not proceeded according to plan."[4]

King George V died on January 20, 1936. King George represented one of the last Royal ties to the Victorian Age. He was bright, respected, and well loved throughout the Commonwealth. His passing created immense mourning, and a challenge to the heritage of the crown he labored so hard to uphold.

His son and successor took the name of Edward VIII. The Times ran two consecutive leaders, remembering George and praising the new King. The first, "King George V," on 21 January, recounting his reign and his dedication to the task of Monarchy, noted "Ministers may lay down their responsibilities - the King never."

The second leader on January 22 raved about the new Monarch and informed the public that this young King came to the throne with the perfect pedigree and example. The Times assured the nation that this King would be one to remember. Little did The Times, or anyone else, see the ironic relationship between the statement about monarchial responsibility, and the fact that Edward's aversion to it in favor of love, indeed made him a king of great note. To this point few people knew of, or discussed, the brooding controversy surrounding his personal life. The controversy

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[4] DBFP Second Series, XV, 460, January 17, 1936.

surrounded his affair with Mrs. Wallis Simpson. The call to adulthood and crown were hoped to be sufficient to put an end to those rumors.[5]

With the issues of monarchy settled and calm, Dawson took time for socializing and maintaining his personal relationships. On February 1, Dawson attended a social gathering at the Astor country estate of Cliveden. It provided a place for the wealthy and powerful, to relax and solve the world's problems. Arriving, Dawson "found a vast political party, w Neville Chamberlain, Inskip, Elliots, Bill James M.P., Walter Preston, Momsen and others."[6]

The activity on at Cliveden produced prodigious speculation from outsiders, and served as a bastion of privacy for those in regular attendance. Even the international press speculated about the make-up of the guest lists. Whatever real importance it may have had, Cliveden offered a quiet opportunity for Dawson to informally gather information.

Dawson's personal relationships extended him the opportunity to attend, not only British, but official German functions as well. On February 4 he "lunched at the German Embassy - a little (musical) party and van Hoesch presented a Berlin doctorate to Hyph Allen. The candidate, a Jew,

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[5] The Times, "King George V," January 21, 1936, 13; The Times, "King Edward VIII," January 22, 1936, 11.

[6] Dawson Diary, February 1, 1936.

attended with a telegram from Henson in "The Times" discussing academic cooperation with Jew-baiters."[7]

Dawson enjoyed official recognition from the German diplomatic corps because his opinions reflected a pro-German position. For all of the German confidence in Dawson's foreign policy understanding, he was a stranger to continental Europe. The Germans nevertheless, sought his friendship, and this included the Germans at the top.

> Our common friend, Lord Mount Temple wrote to me recently that he conveyed to you my invitation to come to Berlin, and that you accepted this proposal for March. The reason for the line is to tell you that I am looking forward to your visit and the Fuhrer will be please to make your acquaintance. I am certain that a mutual exchange of views may have good results for the relationship of our two countries, which to my mind, is vital for the future.[8]

Dawson's personal relationship, including the possibility of a meeting with Hitler, provides credence to the notion that leaders in The Times carried weight with the Germans. The question in the mind of the German officials did not have to do with whether or not Dawson had influence in the British government. The Germans cared for the opinions and friendship of Dawson because they believed he

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[7] DD, February 4, 1936. Dawson was a regular with German diplomats because they considered his information to be accurate, and inside. How official they considered his personal opinions has been the subject of lengthy debate.

[8] Dawson Archive, Box 78 leaf 179, February 1936; Joachim von Ribbentrop to Geoffrey Dawson.

held a position that granted him official sanction. And they wanted to use him.

Why a newspaper would be used for this purpose, instead of the professional diplomats, did not disturb the Germans. Given the divisive nature of the debate within the British government, another path had to be chosen to communicate official concerns. To the Germans, and many Britons, the issue of whether The Times had an inside track did not attract debate. Dawson disagreed with the premise that he represented official positions, but to the Germans the counter-perception remained powerful.

At the end of February the House of Commons scheduled a debate on the increase in spending on military equipment. Neville Chamberlain, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, expressed his concern for the economic health of the nation regarding the buildup of military forces. His concern was twofold. The first problem had to do with the belief, widely held in Britain, that with the signing of the Franco-Soviet Pact the Germans would feel free to reoccupy the Rhineland. The Locarno Pact did not prevent the Germans from protecting their interests if other nations signed military treaties. The second problem was the while most Britons felt little danger in this potential, the government agreed it had to respond in some tangible way. This involved spending money Chamberlain knew did not exist.

Chamberlain lamented the probable outcome of the debate

to his sister Hilda. "I am spending the tax payers money on more and more planes much for the purpose of frightening the Germans into keeping the peace. It is a mad mad world." Chamberlain outlined the economic problems to Stanley Baldwin saying that the defense increases would "eat up everything else in this session and that we had better clear some minds on the question."[9]

Chamberlain had a good reputation in Birmingham as a politician with a reputation for domestic affairs. This reputation extended to him from his father Joseph, who had held the same seat in Parliament before Neville. There existed gossip in the Cabinet that Chamberlain saw a domestic economic downturn as a threat to his ascendancy to the Prime Ministry. This is a matter for debate and probably reflected certain jealousies on the part of other Cabinet members over his popularity with the electorate.

Dawson agreed with Chamberlain that the primary issue regarding military spending concerned the damage it would cause to the economy. From early February Basil Liddell Hart carried the mantle of anti-defense spending apologist for The Times. In leaders throughout February and March he warned the nation of the folly and danger of unnecessary defense spending. In the days leading to Hitler's reclamation of the Rhineland, The Times argued that economic

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[9] Chamberlain Archive, Birmingham, England, February 9, 1936, NC 18\1\949.

recovery was the issue for Parliamentary debate.

The British military questioned the pastoral nature of modern Germany. The military understood that in the face of increased German buildup they would need the equipment with which to fight. Military elements expressed little patience with The Times' approach to defense matters.

Dawson, on the other hand, expressed glee on the influence of the paper in forcing The Times view of defense strategy. He believed the rush to rearm came primarily from military pressure with which he disagreed. He noted a lunch with some military ministers and acknowledged their complaints that The Times forced them to act in ways which displeased them. At the end of his entry he exclaimed "So we are getting on!"[10]

The official signing of the Franco-Soviet Pact took place on February 11, 1936. The French argued that the pact fell within the guidelines of the League of Nations, and that all members were thus equally protected. The Germans, and for that matter many British diplomats, felt otherwise.

The Times occupied itself with the German view of the Pact. The paper noted that the Germans had the most to fear. Dawson always argued of the German paranoia about encirclement from other nations, and the German reaction affirmed that fear. To keep in touch with British

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[10] The Times, "Air Land and Sea," February 10, 1936, 13; Dawson Diary, February 10, 1936.

diplomatic response Dawson

> had the best part of an hour w S.B. in his room at the House of Commons. He had had a visit from Sam Hoare, who (contrary to his protestations before Christmas) was itching to be back in the Govt. We discussed defence (in very general terms) & the young King and his danger...etc. etc.[11]

The danger that faced the young King had to do with the potential constitutional crisis produced by his relationship with Mrs. Simpson.

Word from Anthony Eden noted that the "possibility of the re-occupation of Demilitarized Zone in the immediate future cannot be entirely discounted." Eden's information came from sources within the diplomatic corps in Berlin, and reflected the widely held belief that the German's viewed the Franco-Soviet treaty as expansionary license.[12]

The concern about German re-occupation prompted Parliamentary debate, and much personal interest from Dawson. "There were important statements on Defence in both Houses on which B-Ward provided a short leader. The French signed the pact w Soviets." The next day following the debates Dawson "left the office to go about at 6:30 to F.O. for a talk w Anthony E just off again to Germany to settle about the Air Embargo. Discussed that & defence & the

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[11] The Times, "The France-Soviet Treaty," February 11, 1936, 15; Dawson Diary, February 11, 1936.

[12] DBFP, Second Series, XV, 521, February 14, 1935, private memo from Eden to undesignated viewer.

Franco-Soviet pact with him."[13]

Following a week-end at Cliveden, where defense issues dominated the conversation, Dawson pursued gossip from the week-end with a member of his staff. Among the guests at Cliveden, and no doubt a very interested listener, was von Ribbentrop. On Monday Dawson told Leo Kennedy "I tried to impress this upon your friend Rib(bentrop) in the early hours of Saturday morning, when I had a pleasant conversation w him."[14]

Geoffrey Dawson did not see anything odd concerning the discussion of matters of national defense in the presence of the German Ambassador. His worries about what was proper for further reproachment centered on the oddest of concerns for an upper-class Englishman: the issue of German anti-Semitism. Given the long history of British anti-Semitism, Dawson approached a subject with very little bearing on the primary issues. He touched upon Hitler's willingness to carry out his written intentions, but such things never bothered Dawson.

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[13] DD, February 27, and DD, February 28, 1936. While Dawson generally cared little for Eden's lack of experience he took as many opportunities as possible to offer him counsel. For an excellent example of the arguments and fears held by the Germans concerning the Franco-Soviet pact see Roy Douglas, World Crisis and British Decline 1929-1956 (New York: St. Martins Press, 1986), 58 and following.

[14] Dawson Archive, March 3, 1936, letter from Dawson to Leo Kennedy. For insight into the nature of the rest of the political conversation during the preceding weekend see Dawson Diary March 1, 1936.

Dawson discussed the problem of anti-Semitism with Leo Kennedy, recently assigned to Berlin. Dawson assured Kennedy that he could "do a lot of good just now in Berlin if you feel equal to it." Dawson told Kennedy that there was "no lack of clear and sympathetic understanding over here, but they simply must give up their Jew-baiting and other religious persecutions if they are to get the benefit of it."

Kennedy, responding two days later, told Dawson "that they (Germany) will never get our friendship - apart from a political understanding - so long as they go on bullying the Jews." Dawson thus joined the great issue of the day. There is very little apprehension ever expressed about Hitler's written desires for war and expansion. Dawson paid attention to the more obnoxious elements of Nazi activity and missed the more important questions.[15]

On March 7 the Germans entered into the Ruhr. Dawson attended to the work of the day which included reports from his foreign correspondents where

> there was great hubbub in Europe and the French were growing more & more excited. B-W kindly undertook a calming and constructive leader. Our corr(espondents) both in Paris & (oddly enough) in Berlin were indeed to be a bit worried. I went down to the F. O. at 6 for a call on A E & found him in very good form as he reported. S.B. also.

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[15] Dawson Archive, Dawson to Kennedy, March 4, 1936; Kennedy to Dawson, March 6, 1936.

I determined to bring good out of evil.[16]

On the same day Leo Kennedy briefed Dawson about the German situation. He noted that "Germany is working steadily & unremittingly towards a peace which she can accept. If we keep that in mind I don't think we need have any war scares." Kennedy maintained the faith that all Germany was doing was "making herself fit to fight, but does not want to fight now."[17]

On March 9 Dawson began his campaign to "bring good out of evil." In "A Chance to Rebuild" The Times offered one party seeking security, and one guilty party creating disturbances. The choice of who was right and who was at fault displays Dawson's faulty understanding of the European situation. The Times said

> No one in this country can or will wish to dispute that the engagements of Locarno have been grossly violated and that the obligations of the guarantor may now be invoked. With these facts taken for granted, it becomes the task of the guarantor and the guaranteed Powers in council to assume, jointly and dispassionately, the whole meaning of the move which confronts them... Is Germany, who has now repudiated a freely negotiated treaty, ever to be trusted? Is France, who has brought Russia in to redress the balance of man-power in the West, ever to be satisfied?[18]

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[16] DD, March 7, 1936.

[17] Dawson Archive, Kennedy to Dawson, March 7, 1936.

[18] The Times, "A Chance to Rebuild," March 9, 1936, 15.

The Times further noted that the reasoning for France's fears extended to the remaining powers in western Europe. The paper asked if the Franco-Soviet pact would ever have been concluded if "Germany had had no "inequality" to complain of on her western border?" The paper held France responsible for the treaty but added the rest of the western European nations as part members in that guilt. Little mention of German culpability greeted the paper's readers.[19]

The extraordinary reasoning of The Times in acknowledging the repudiation of a "freely negotiated treaty" and underscoring all of the legal strictures available, still managed to place the blame on France and the rest of Europe. Germany's signature on the League of Nations charter and its agreement, albeit by force, of the Treaty of Versailles, could not possibly avoid the use of force or sanctions allowable under treaty guidelines.

The Times' concern was not that Germany ignored its agreements, but that France entered into a strategic agreement disapproved by the British, and that everyone else in Europe forced Hitler to act the way he did. Dawson hoped to contain German expansionism by controlling German fears of encirclement. Dawson did not expect to have to deal with France's traditional fear of aggression and military impotence.

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[19] Ibid., 15.

Dawson gave Hitler his fair share of Times space on the ninth to calm British fears against Hitler's acts. The paper gave substantial space to Hitler's March 8 speech in which he offered long-term proposals for peace to Europe. The paper recounted Hitler's generous, but vague, offer of a twenty-five year non-aggression pact between Germany, France, and Belgium with Britain as the guarantor. Hitler offered a full air pact with the west, a point under strenuous debate in England, and a return to the League of Nations. Almost no one in official Britain took the proposals seriously, but Dawson took every opportunity to make his case for Germany.[20]

Once again Dawson's position on the Franco-Russian treaty mirrored the concerns of the British diplomatic corps. The primary difference between Dawson and the diplomats was that Dawson saw no future problems emanating from Germany. Many in the government did.

On March 13 Stanley Baldwin named Sir Thomas Inskip to head the Ministry for the Crown for the Coordination of Defence. The Times had suggested a ministry to coordinate defense as early as 1935. The idea already had support in the House but the authority and strength of one man over the defense of the Realm required careful consideration.

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[20] Ibid., "Germany Repudiates Locarno," March 9, 1936, 14.

Neville Chamberlain refused the post and suggested his friend Hoare or brother Austen. Hoare, still smarting from the Ethiopian crisis, never had a chance. Austen had little to expect from Baldwin because of a series of critical speeches made by him against the Prime Minister. Winston Churchill seemed a logical choice, and probably expected the job, but his reputation as a disruptive force kept him from getting the job. In the end Baldwin, overlooking Hoare's baggage, accepted him, then in a rare surrender to the opposition of his back benchers and Eden, withdrew his offer.

Finally Baldwin settled on the odd choice of the Attorney General Inskip. Chamberlain noted that the crisis had "afforded an excellent reason for discarding both Winston and Sam since both had European reputations...." Inskip offered little threat to the power brokers in Baldwin's cabinet, and presented no threat to Chamberlain's belief in his impending elevation to Downing Street.[21]

The Times reacted quickly to the appointment of Inskip. The paper claimed Inskip suited to the job and pointed out that the other candidates, primarily Churchill, would have proved "ill-adapted to team work." The Times expressed fear that Churchill's "appointment at this particular moment in the world's affairs might be misunderstood or

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[21] Chamberlain Diaries, March 11, 1936, quoted in Barnes and Nicholson, The Empire at Bay, 340.

misrepresented."

The Times noted all the things that Inskip owned as pedigree but failed to note his lack of training in matters of defense. They avoided any mention of his lackluster career and prophesied great things to come. Even for Dawson great praise of Inskip must have been quite a stretch.[22]

Positive thoughts by The Times, and the appointment of Inskip, failed to give comfort to a critical man at the heart of The Times correspondent campaign. Leo Kennedy accepted the post as Berlin correspondent to offer Dawson's readers a more reasonable (appeasement) approach to official German activities. Kennedy's personal concerns about the Nazis ill intentions blossomed at a bad time for the paper. Kennedy represented The Times as best he could. His problem was that he was not willing to overlook the facts to facilitate appeasement.

Following the re-occupation of the Ruhr, the signing of the Franco-Soviet pact, the offers of peace from Hitler, and the appointment of Inskip, Dawson tried to put an upbeat view of events. Unfortunately his correspondent saw things differently, and first-hand. Despite his doubts Kennedy noted "I'm afraid I've found it extremely hard to see the German point of view in this business, but I am addressing

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[22] The Times, "Mr. Baldwin's Choice," March 14, 1936, 14.

myself to the task."[23]

The task had to do with reporting. The German point of view had to do with a facade covering greater plans than the Rhineland.

> The people at the head of this show are pure gamblers, and do not care two buttons for the League of Nations, which was thrown in by Ribbentrop as a sop to public opinion.

Kennedy worried that the Germans "are extremely formidable" and offered even greater threats to peace. He warned that "one gets indication after indication that they are out for practically the whole programme of Deutschland D U A, uber alles in der welt!" He wrote Dawson of his "big disillusionment since I came here." He added the his "impression is quite definite that if the present regime lasts we shall have the Germany of 1914 to deal w over again."[24]

These notes from a trusted correspondent failed to challenge Dawson's unflagging belief in Hitler's mailability. Despite warnings from a respected friend Dawson stuck to his belief that the problems of modern Germany stemmed more from European intransigence and bullying.

Robin Barrington-Ward offered the official version of

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[23] Dawson Archive, March 12, 1936, Kennedy to Dawson.

[24] Dawson Archive, March 14 and 17, 1936. Kennedy to Dawson.

the recent crisis by noting that "Germany has now accepted the pact. She has cancelled her objections to it by re-occupying the Rhineland." And so once again the solution appeared obvious. With the French still to blame for the tensions, and the Germans responding in some peculiar diplomatic manner, the British had to find another way.[25]

The other way was an unusual and unprecedented meeting of the League Council in London. It was unusual because France objected to answering questions about its treaty with the Soviet Union. It was unprecedented because the Germans attended, yet no longer viewed the League as a viable source of German interests.

Dawson captured the events as he understood them. He, in a backhanded way, noted the British approach. "By the time Ribbentrop had arrived by air N C[hamberlain] & E[den] seemed a bit vague but intimated that they had brought the French a long way."[26]

The Germans blamed European instability on the French, and the French, who recognized the meeting a lost cause, left. "Ribbentrop put the German case to the Council which proceeded (the French) in due form to condemn the coup. The Frenchmen flew back to Paris having come to a Locarno argument for security." The French found anything but

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[25] The Times, "The German Reply," March 16, 1936, 13.

[26] Dawson Diary, March 18, 1936.

security.[27]

The Germans argued that the Rhineland had no real population identified as anything but German and therefore Nazi acts did not constitute a coup. The French, in an argument they lost before they arrived, argued that the Germans stood in violation the Versailles Treaty, regardless of the population of the Rhineland. The British sided with the Germans.

The Times offered the world the German position as the correct one. The paper did not mention the French position at all. All that appeared in the leader was the German claim. The paper issued a warning to the rest of Europe that there must be "a return to a treaty." The paper did not specify which treaty, or what a new treaty might contain. Given the Locarno and League treaty in place, the suggestion, for the French, of another treaty escaped notice.[28]

Perhaps a new suggestion for a different treaty came over Dawson's dinner with Anthony Eden and von Ribbentrop on the evening of March 20. Dawson allowed that Ribbentrop "was a good deal upset & made a strong case for Hitler's

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[27] Ibid., March 19, 1936. By this time no one had any intention of siding with the French. Most of Europe did not want to anger Hitler, and most of Europe did not agree with the French. The issue of right or wrong had nothing to do with the Council deliberations.

[28] The Times, "At the Council Table," March 20, 1936, 15.

attitude. I helped him to take his time & to keep negotiations alive." Dawson, always alert to save the peace, continued to play his part for Hitler's point of view.[29]

Dawson's efforts bore fruit. He noted in his diary on March 22

> I went down to the F. O. at 6 for a talk w A E(den) who was grateful for our help & not without hope of keeping negotiations going. The telegrams fr. Berlin were not hopeless either - Leo Kennedy had apparently been flying w Hitler to Breslau.[30]

Spurred on by the government, with the personal contacts of Dawson, negotiations assured the Germans of breathing space. The Germans had an ally at The Times who held considerable clout.

Dawson returned to his office on April 1 "to find intelligent anticipation of the new Hitler note drifting in from Berlin." The content of the note remains unknown but Dawson believed "things were simmering down & B-W wrote another calming leader." The content of the leader assured readers that "nothing in Herr Hitler's tone refuses discussion and everything in his plan invites it." Whether this view of circumstances originated in Dawson's optimism or in private correspondence from Hitler himself, remains

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[29] Dawson Diary, March 20, 1936.

[30] Dawson Diary, March 22, 1936.

unknown. The Times declared any crisis still-born, and declared a general abating of tension.[31]

Neville Chamberlain wrote to his sister Hilda arguing that the French tried to use Locarno to force the British to get more involved in Europe with anti-Hitlerism. Chamberlain knew, as well as most insiders in England, that the use of French political desires to activate British resolve affected little change on British foreign policy.

More than a year earlier Sir Robert Vansittart wrote, "The confidence placed in us by France is now at a low ebb. But it is scarcely at a lower ebb than our confidence in France. The situation reminds me of a verse written about Sir Eyre Crowe in his younger years,

> Crowe has informed us till we nod
> That he does not believe in God
> But what we really want to know
> Is whether God believes in Crowe.[32]

As early as late 1935 Vansittart, a conservative and strong supporter of the French, gave up on the prospect of getting their assistance. His final lack of faith in them demonstrates the depth to which less conservative members in the government felt concerning the British relationship to France. Vansittart held on to the notion of a Franco-

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[31] Dawson Diary, April 1, 36; Ibid., April 2, 1936, and The Times, "The German Peace Plan," April 2, 1936, 14.

[32] Chamberlain to Hilda April 4, 1936, NC 18\1\955, and DBFP Second Series, XV, 734, December 1, 1935.

British front against German expansion far longer than many of his colleagues. If he had abandoned hope by 1935, one must imagine how much earlier men like Chamberlain and Baldwin had done so.

The stress to European relations found expression in the problems of official British departments. On his return from a visit to Poland, Eden described his frustration at the influence Hitler's peace proposals had on other nations seeking British assurances. He noted that The Times gave Hitler an excuse to argue against "the Versailles habit of mind."

Eden further complained of Times influence as a threat to the British role declaring that the removal of Versailles, in the opinion of the paper, constituted "a mediating and above all an educative force." Far too much stress, he said, "had been laid on the negative side of the Fuhrer's statements on the subject of armaments. These were described as "constructive proposals." Finally noting the predicament caused by Dawson, Eden said, "Unfortunately, The Times was widely regarded in Europe as the organ of the British Government."[33]

Dawson for his part regarded the paper's support of Hitler's peace proposals as the most constructive means of

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[33] Stephen E. Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: Volume 2, The Twentieth Century (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 197-198.

ensuring continued conversations with the Germans. He saw the possibility to "get the utmost out of the professions which accompanied (the occupation of the Rhineland) whether they are sincere or not." If confusion erupted in Eastern countries that was not the problem of the British.[34]

The British basis of confidence sprang from a secret analysis of the views of the German General Staff. Ambassador Phipps informed Eden that the generals held personal and military reservations concerning their faith in Hitler to avoid a war. The prevailing view, always misunderstood by the British government, was that the Generals would not allow Hitler to make war. This view colored British diplomacy until 1939. The British believed that because the German military did not like the National Socialists they would be unwilling to follow Hitler into an extra-border military adventure. The desire on the British to read too much into that concern on the part of the Generals overlooked German military intent for the 1940s which was expansive and well planned.[35]

On April 20, Baldwin delivered a speech in which he claimed that it was Hitler alone who would be responsible for future peace. In the speech Baldwin said that only

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[34] Keith Middlemas, Diplomacy of Illusion: The British Government and Germany, 1937-1939 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), 41.

[35] DBFP Second Series, XV, Enclosure in 228, Phipps to Eden April 6, 1936.

Hitler could "lift the black shadow of fear from Europe [more] than any other man living in Europe." Baldwin intimated that Hitler's will to do so remained the primary question of British foreign policy.

Instead of answering directly through formal channels the Germans called in the person they knew could best send official word to the correct powers. They gave their reply to Leo Kennedy. The "ministry of Foreign Affairs "Times" correspondent was informed that suggestions that Herr Hitler might not be sincere could not be passed over in silence." It was not passed over in silence, it was passed over in secrecy to Geoffrey Dawson, who passed it along to Baldwin.[36]

Dawson maintained his belief in the sincerity of Hitler through his continuous casual meetings with the inner circle of British diplomacy.

> I lunched w Anthony E alone at the Carlton Club... and had a long talk. He was tired & a little grumpy, but perfectly steady in his views & looking forward to grinding on w the German conversations. Edward H had agreed to go to Berlin & to an inevitable reconstruction of the League...its hand was finally played out.

Dawson knew about Halifax' plan to visit Hitler before any announcement of the trip appeared in any official notification. He also had inside information, from Eden,

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[36] The Times, "Prime Minister's Speech," April 20, 1936, 14; DBFP Second Series, XVI, 266, Phipps to Eden.

about the political views of the King. The content of these conversations do not appear in Dawson's diary or personal papers, and the official memoranda remain sealed.[37]

Early in May Geoffrey Dawson spent a weekend at Cliveden. The Prime Minister and other important figures in the government attended. The League of Nations consumed much of the conversation and from Cliveden another guest, Neville Chamberlain, wrote his sister Hilda about his view of the discussions.

> I am sure the time has not yet come for the League to own itself beaten. All the same it is beaten and I an anxious that we should survey the history of the affair and make up our mind what is the best way of working to a more effective method of keeping the peace. I asked the P.M. if he had any ideas on the subject to which he responded that he had not.[38]

While Baldwin had no ideas about the next phase of negotiations with the Germans, his heir apparent, Chamberlain, had plenty. The course of appeasement under Chamberlain dictated the diplomatic circumstances that led to the unstated belief in the need to abandon Austria and Czechoslovakia to the Germans.

Over the last two weekends in May, Dawson consulted his friend Dr. Thomas Jones, former Under-secretary to the

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[37] Dawson Diary, April 22 and 30, 1936.

[38] Dawson Diary, May 2, 1936; Chamberlain to Hilda NC 18\1\959, May 2, 1936.

Cabinet, on his May 21 meeting with Baldwin concerning the nature and state of Foreign Affairs. On the 28th Dawson called on Baldwin and had a long meeting in which the substance of the meeting dealt with the same subject.

To intimate, as has been done by many historians, that Dawson maintained personal relationships, but had little input from, or influence on, Baldwin does not bear up. The extent of his influence can only be speculated upon, but his presence can not be denied. While the substance of the meetings seldom appears in printed form, the significance of the belief of Baldwin, and later Chamberlain, that Dawson had a wide amount of knowledge about Europe remained strong.[39]

Dawson lunched with Halifax and met with Ribbentrop for dinner at the Carlton on June 3, and discussed the need to affirm to France and Germany, British reliability and resolve. He believed that Germany seemed headed in the right direction, but expressed concern that France offered "chaos w strikes."[40]

The leader of June 4 was supposed to help clarify the British position. The leader noted that "prevention of aggression and war remains the guiding principle of British action, and that no breach of it will find this country

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[39] Dawson Diary, May 21 and 28, 1936.

[40] Dawson Diary, June 3, 1936.

tolerant or indifferent." Given that the British already demonstrated that the Germans held a wide latitude in what they considered a breach, and that the French no longer trusted British resolve, the leader constituted more a prayer than a statement of fact.[41]

On June 5 Dawson met with the successor to Leo Kennedy as head of the Berlin office. Dawson "had a talk w Ebbutt, better & off to Berlin on Monday, & tried to impress upon him the futility of much carping at Germany." The replacement of Kennedy came at his request. Physically tired and emotionally disheartened at the circumstances in Germany and The Times, Kennedy needed to come home.[42]

The replacement of Kennedy with Ebbutt proved to be an unintended accident for Dawson. Ebbutt ended up complaining and causing more trouble than Kennedy ever had. Not just complaining as Kennedy had, but with a fluency in German he traveled around the country unattended by translators. His reporting, despite Dawson's censorship, still managed to alert the nation to the real circumstances in the Reich.

Horace Rumbold captured the essence of the direction appeasement headed. He told Dawson that he was "all for an understanding with Germany if we can get one on reasonable terms and not at the expense of a third Power." The words

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[41] The Times, "The British Part," June 4, 1936, 13.

[42] Dawson Diary, June 5, 1936.

third power did not include the lesser states in Europe such as Austria, Poland, or Czechoslovakia. The future of appeasement from Rumbold's perspective only hoped for the safety of the major powers, which in his mind numbered only England and Germany. The designation of third power belonged to France.[43]

The general understanding among the appeasers was that German claims of old territory once within their old borders did not constitute aggressive expansion. Sacrificing allies, even democratic, well-armed ones like Czechoslovakia, posed little problem as long as England stayed out of a war.

Six days later in another leader Rumbold continued his political discussion with Dawson. His note included an illuminating comment on the nature of the German beast.

> One often hears such phrases as "the Germans are so like us." Nothing is more untrue. I could quote many points of difference. For one thing Germans have a streak of brutality which is quite absent in the ordinary Englishman. And Germans like to put up with things which are repugnant to the average man of this country.[44]

It took Leo Kennedy's return to place the problem of the German character in a truer perspective. Maybe Dawson,

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[43] Dawson Archive, June 13, 1936, Box 78 leaf 186, Rumbold to Dawson.

[44] John E. Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times, (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1955) 334-35.

Rumbold, and others saw the differences between Germans and Britons as just a matter of social mores, but Kennedy, the once and future appeaser, knew better. Kennedy returned to England emotionally battered and disillusioned. He offered little warning or advice to Dawson, probably because he knew how it would be accepted, but he did talk to others.

> Mr. Kennedy has returned from Berlin with an entirely different outlook from what he had before he went. He criticized the "soft" policy of "The Times" towards Germany, saying that it has created an entirely wrong impression amongst the Germans who are living, breathing, and thinking only of German aggrandizement and are laughing at us as mere weaklings. He urged me to put forward this view as strongly as I could as coming from him who has seen with his own eyes what was happening in Germany; that it was of the greatest importance that the British Government should tell the Germans off as firmly and sharply as possible at the earliest possible opportunity.[45]

About the conversation with Leeper, Ralph Wingram wrote to Vansittart

> I cannot let this pass without drawing attention to the completeness with which out of the very mouth of the strongest of our adversaries & critics in the "Times" itself, it bears out the F. O. against the "Times" which has been a minor national disaster for years in the hands of poor Mr. Dawson.[46]

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[45] DBFP Second Series, XV, 376, June 22, 1936. Conversation recorded by Reginald A. Leeper with A. L. Kennedy. Kennedy used his exhaustion as his primary reason for returning.

[46] DBFP Second Series, XV, minute to 376, Ralph Wingram to Robert Vansittart. The image that the Foreign Office walked in tandem with appeasement only developed in the post-war histories. Even in the days of Chamberlain the Foreign Office resisted the policy. That is the primary reason Chamberlain had to circumvent

Kennedy had no doubt about who constituted the primary threat to the peace. His replacement, Norman Ebbutt, quickly arrived at the same belief. Still The Times and leaders of government never really took as accurate the words of eyewitnesses.

Reflecting blind faith in Dawson's ideas The Times noted on June 24 that the French stood in the way of a responsible settlement. The leader indicated that the Germans and British shared common goals and desires. It pleaded with France to join their mission or risk being at fault for the results.

June drew to a close and Dawson surveyed a dangerous but calming world. He did not anticipate the two remaining crisis of 1936. He did not know that a disastrous civil war in Spain, and a constitutional dilemma at home, waited in the wings.

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his diplomatic professionals and launch his one-man effort.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND THE ABDICATION CRISIS

At the beginning of July 1936, Geoffrey Dawson received "a delightful F. O. version" of a speech scheduled for the League of Nations presented by the "Nazi emissary fr. Danzig." Dawson accepted the document in advance of any other known public source and offered to do "some tactful treatment in my leader."[1]

In Dawson's "tactful" leader he noted that England displayed weakness in not trusting Germany. He argued that if the British encountered the need to select a continental ally then "a prudent diplomacy would select the strongest partner." The title of the leader, "The League and Germany," curiously indicated that if the choice came down to the League desires, or a peace outside of the League with Germany, then Germany marked the only option.

Dawson reiterated that a "clear understanding with Germany would not solve all the problems of the world; but it would be a strong foundation on which to build." With tension building in Spain, the existing problems with Italy,

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[1] Dawson Diary, Oxford England, July 5,1936.

and the previous frustration between England and France over League action in Ethiopia, Dawson's public statements about the direction of British Foreign Policy did not help. If the British hoped to give Hitler an urgency to specify his options, Times editorial policy gave him no reasons to do so.[2]

The issues of German flexibility left the diplomats to struggle with ways to control the maneuvering ability of the Germans outside of the League. Dawson and The Times argued that the League stood irrelevant to unilateral peace initiatives if those initiatives proved successful. Soon the British unilateral effort at peace making took the very strategy endorsed by Dawson.[3]

An exchange of memos from Orme Sargent and Robert Vansittart framed the problem of dealing with indistinct German objectives. Sargent noted that the Germans maintained "a galaxy of good reasons for wishing to keep their hands free." Vansittart countered, "they have never had any intention of keeping their hands anything but

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[2] The Times, "The League and Germany," July 7, 1936, 15.

[3] In a footnote to Medlicott, Dakin, and Bennett, Documents on British Foreign Policy: Second Series, XVI (London: HMSO,1979), Orme Sargent led the debate against Appeasement within the Foreign Office. He considered Chamberlain's three visits to Germany "a season ticket to Canossa." See also Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, The Appeasers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), 374.

free."[4]

A good reason for the Germans to keep their hands free displayed itself on July 13. Spanish Nationalists led by Francisco Franco attempted a coup on the left wing government of Spain. Following the failed coup, Franco set up an Assembly of Nationalists at Burgos. The Loyalists maintained power in Madrid.

The British remained neutral and distant of the seriousness of the fledgling civil war. The French because of left wing sympathies supported the Loyalists. Early in the conflict the British hoped that other nations would not offer military or political assistance to either side. Desire to maintain the scope of the conflict fueled the wish. While this wish did not come true, in the early weeks of the war diplomatic activity remained sparse. Only later, when the Germans aided the Right and Russians aided the Left, did the British become concerned and more involved.

The Times reported the war, but no leaders appear on the dangers attached to the war until September. Dawson's lack of knowledge of European affairs caused him to underestimate the problems of Right-wing, Left-wing confrontations.

The Times did not consider the Spanish a source of

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[4] Medlicott, Douglas, and Gillian, Documents of British Foreign Policy: Second Series, XVI, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1979), July 8, 1936, 417, note, Orme to Vansittart.

concern because Dawson saw the problems between Germany and England as exclusive to European peace. His own papers provide little assistance. Whatever the cause The Times, at least from an editorial point of view, remained outside and uninterested in the events in Spain throughout most of the summer of 1936.

Following an announcement in mid-July from Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg that negotiations with Hitler reached an agreement on Austrian sovereignty, Neville Chamberlain exulted. To his sister Ida, he wrote "You ask me what I think about German Appeasement, I am glad of it." He noted that because of British patience "here was a danger that at which their might have been an explosion at any time. That danger is removed and once more we are given a little longer in which to arm."[5]

Chamberlain ignored the fact that the agreement with Austria was not a treaty. Like most other government officials, Chamberlain saw the agreement as the first step in the logical reunification of Germany and Austria. He also mistook the fact that the issue of the German Anschluss had more to do with timing and nothing to do with British patience. Chamberlain believed Germany found the prospects for war undesirable. This assurance,with its tragic consequences, influenced Chamberlain's future dealings with

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[5] Chamberlain Archive, July 19, 1936. Chamberlain to Ida, NC\18\1\920.

Hitler.[6]

His most remarkable misstatement to his sister was the belief that the time accorded by Hitler's kindness allowed time for the British to rearm at the pace needed to counter the Germans. The issue caused much controversy among the circle of back-benchers who were upset by Stanley Baldwin's reluctance to efficiently rearm.

On the day after Chamberlain's letter to his sister, he sat in on a secret Parliamentary deputation. The purpose of deputations traditionally would allow members of the majority party to challenge privately the leadership on issues of parochial importance. This deputation revolved around the speed with which the Government was pursuing rearmament.

Among the back-benchers present were Winston Churchill, Sir Robert Mond, Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Oliver Locker-Lampson, Duncan Sandys, Wickham Steed, Philip Guedalla, and A. H. Richards. Churchill advised inclusion of members of the minority party but those approached declined. The opposition stayed out of the inter-party struggle of the Tories.

Each member of the deputation had a particular interest and expertise in certain specific elements of defense preparation. Over several days each member challenged the

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[6] DBFP Second Series, XVII, 23, July 27, 1936, Newton to Eden.

government on their special points of order. At the end of the deputation, it was the government's obligation to respond and prepare a written report outlining conclusions and activities relating to the concerns.

The primary focus of the deputation centered around the lagging of industrial production of war material and air defense readiness. Following the deputation, Baldwin ignored the written reports on defense capability. Secretary to the cabinet, Maurice Hankey, kept secret the results of the material gathered by the ministers to refute the deputation. He, and therefore Baldwin, did not wish to submit the reports to the complainants because of "all the waste of time this would involve."[7]

The results of the government's research into the charges of the deputation argued against the beliefs that Baldwin urgently wanted the nation to hold. The results of the deputation may not have sped up production. In fact, the government knew that production trailed their own estimates.

Baldwin's problem, and later Chamberlain's, was that the money to spend on defense without an appreciable, political claim, jeopardized both the economic recovery and political power of the sitting majority. Baldwin and

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[7] Quoted in Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill: The Prophet of Truth 1922-1939, Volume V (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), 780. For a detailed analysis of the deputation see 768-780.

Chamberlain, the heir apparent, wanted to placate the British voters, and strangely enough, the German government. The leadership discussed the changes in productivity in public, but did not introduce them.

By the end of July the British still underestimated the diplomatic seriousness created by the Spanish Civil War. They failed to come to terms with their own defense problems, and they viewed minor agreements between Hitler and Schuschnigg as major diplomatic breakthroughs. The Times did not warn the nation of the growing danger in Europe. Dawson simply did not comprehend the dynamics of European politics.

The only clear sighted analyst of the German situation, Leo Kennedy, told Dawson of his retirement from the maelstrom of international politics and public life. Kennedy wanted to go home to the country and seek his own solutions to the problems of Europe.

> Writing a book in the country would be exactly right; and moreover it is just the moment to think out quietly what has gone wrong w our diplomacy - for something has gone completely wrong, and work it out in a small book.

He finished his letter to Dawson with a note of sadness that belied his former position as an appeaser. "I quite see that [it] can be said better in a book than in The Times. I believe, as you know, that while Hitler talks of peace he is

preparing war, and I simply must say so."[8]

Most members of Dawson's staff who returned from Hitler's Germany were convinced of his evil intentions. Dawson remained mute on this subject in his diaries. He never questioned how so many good men could be so wrong on the question of appeasement.

By August, The Times editorial policy on the Spanish war changed. Dawson announced that the Spanish conflict was a war in name only. He believed that the rest of European angst resulted, not from the real dangers inherent in a spreading conflict, but in the mass of nations seeking assurances from each other that war would not spread.[9]

The intensity of the Spanish war did spread. With a secret note from the Foreign Office on August 12 Anthony Eden learned that the Spanish Air force had attacked German citizens. At that time the reason for the attack remained unclear. The potential for diplomatic trouble was not. Dawson, Barrington-Ward, and Anthony Eden finally addressed the problem.[10]

Dawson noted the lack of response from Germany and Italy regarding guarantees of non-intervention in the

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[8] Times archive letter dated July 28, 1936, Kennedy to Dawson.

[9] The Times, "Collective Neutrality," August 10, 1936, 11.

[10] DBFP Second Series, XVII, 82, August 12, 1936.

conflict. The "task of translating principles into practice has so far baffled the urgent diplomatic efforts of both France and Great Britain." Dawson complained that part of the problem centered on France's own internal quarrels over fascism and communism.[11]

The next day came Eden and Barrington-Ward. Barrington-Ward declared that League power to enforce its own mandates did not exist. Anthony Eden wrote that because of the past failures of the League it was difficult to "contemplate with any measure of satisfaction" the circumstances or expectations of League gatherings.[12]

On August 25 Hitler doubled the length of military service. The next day The Times sought to play down the concerns of the public by arguing that while there remained some worry of Hitler involving Germany in the Spanish war, those fears had little grounds. Dawson thought that because of the recent Franco-Soviet Treaty, Hitler needed to uphold public confidence and morale.

Dawson believed that a strong Germany meant room for "a new agreement to take the place of the Rhine Pacts of Locarno." He agreed with Hitler that the "undertaking is logical." He argued that with "Britain, committed neither to the Right nor to the Left [it] will be ready for every

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[11] The Times "The Spanish Vortex," August 17, 1936, 11.

[12] The Times, "Geneva and Germany," August 18, 1936, 15; Ibid., "Future of the League," 14.

exertion to secure it." Fear was, therefore, unreasonable.[13]

During the first two weeks of September, the world watched and listened to a series of celebrations of German nationalism culminating in six days of speeches in Nuremberg Stadium. Both the European Left and Right recognized the significance of the Nuremberg rallies. The Times warned that the arena of Nuremberg offered the Germans an opportunity to reflect positively on their accomplishments and not on demagoguery that threatened the security of other nations. The Times leader cajoled softly knowing that a belligerent Hitler threatened more than just the emotions of the French. The British government knew that British public opinion also cared about Hitler's remonstrations and viewed Tory success with the level of German pacivity.

The Times offered that what

> would be inappropriate and undesirable in the present state of Europe is that German policy on questions vitally affecting the future of other peoples and races should be declared on such a stage and against such a background.[14]

Hitler maintained calm during most of the meetings. He saved his primary vitriolic for the Versailles restrictions and the Jews. The Times declared

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[13] The Times, "The Middle Way," August 26, 1936, 13.

[14] The Times, "Background of Nuremberg," September 7, 1936, 13.

the meetings a success and offered an olive branch to German calm and reason. The paper wanted a new League of Nations dedicated to peace with Germany.

Dawson argued that the new mission of Europe was to "lay the basis of a new peace treaty in Europe by giving Germany the fullest opportunity of acting upon the offers which have been formally, authoritatively, and repeatedly made in her name."[15]

Discounting appeasement, Anthony Eden observed that any "concessions given in fear are worse than useless, and merely encouraging an aggressor." Dawson had the luxury of pontification without knowledge or risk, Eden bore the diplomatic and civil burden of the Foreign Office. It was fine to envision peace; it was another thing to bring it to fruition given the demands of the Germans.[16]

Early in October Dawson's interest in the civil war took on larger and more ominous dimensions. On October 9 The Times reported Soviet involvement and the arrival of German air planes in Spain. The paper assumed the arrival of the Soviets due to the declining fortunes of the left wing factions. The paper gave little excuse for the German air planes. The Times reported that diplomatic discussions

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[15] The Times, "A Spontaneous Vote," September 25, 1936, 15.

[16] The Times, "Mr. Eden's Speech," September 29, 1936, 13.

in London with both German and Soviet missions developed into loud and accusatory dialogues.[17]

With empty bravado, The Times put forth the British position on foreign intervention.

> ...any act of aggression against any part of the British Empire or its communications, or in the neighboring part of Western Europe, will always be met by Great Britain with the full force of her arms resources, and elsewhere by participation in such common action as the circumstances of the occasion may dictate.[18]

The claim, and the threat, had no power. The Germans had an abiding interest in the existence of a Spanish fascist state. The Soviets saw Spain as the beginning of Communist expansion in western Europe. The British possessed no military mandate, and no real intention of intervening in Spain. Even if British public opinion favored action, which it did not, Baldwin had no means of delivering a military response that could provide a definitive outcome.

Considering how little public opinion stirred over the Rhineland incident, the possibility of incursion into Spain looked positively unable to inspire. The lower classes, largely sympathetic with left wing causes, would never have allowed themselves to work for a Tory government supporting

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[17] The Times, "No Intervention," October 9, 1936, 15.

[18] The Times, Italy and Germany," October 26, 1936, 15.

a right wing dictatorship. Over the events in Spain the British government experienced paralysis.

The military circumstances in England revealed barely any improvement at all. Liddell Hart told Dawson that the Ministry of Defence contained stark examples of

> contrasts between the satisfaction, verging on complacency, which is expressed to me by most of the heads of Departments there, and the increasing dissatisfaction, verging on despair, which is expressed by the younger officers, the lieutenant-colonels and majors, working in those departments.

Hart pointed out the "backwardness" of tank production and the preferential standards which existed for promotion which favored older, less active officers over more enthusiastic, younger men.[19]

In late October, the suppressed issue of Mrs. Wallis Simpson and the young King pushed itself to the fore. For over a year King Edward and Mrs. Simpson maintained a private, although not secret, personal relationship. The British press kept still about the subject for a couple of reasons. Because of the intention of the King to marry, the secrecy evaporated.

The American, Mrs. Simpson, had one divorce and a second estranged husband. She did not hide her affection for King Edward. Given his position, the King tried to keep

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[19] Times Archive, October 28, 1936, Liddell Hart to Dawson.

discreet about their affair, but British aristocracy knew most of the details.

British high society, which included most owners of British newspapers, did not wish to indulge in speculative pieces that might seem to be an intrusion into the young King's personal life. Most people who knew about the affair considered it tawdry and temporary. Media gossip in England in the 1930s was the stock of lower classes. Since most of the news generated from the higher classes, little information came available.

Another reason for the silence, at least Dawson's reasons, had to do with growing international tensions. Dawson had no interest in weakening the monarchy over what seemed a short-lived indiscretion. As a monarchist, Dawson believed in the importance of the office and the man as essential to the stability of the Realm. Surveying the potential problems lying in wait for England, Dawson believed that the monarchy held a certain power to inspire and lead the people. He did not wish to see Royal leadership compromised by rumors and personal attacks.

Unfortunately the affair was not short-lived. Dawson met "the celebrated Mrs. Simpson" in April of 1936. At a private luncheon given by Margot Asquith, Dawson found himself "in unguarded form but....not a victim to Mrs. S's strong American accent or to her charms. Still she seemed

pleasant, quiet, & servile."[20]

In his diary Dawson noted the "discreetly recorded" divorce of Mrs. Simpson at the end of October. The possibility of a crisis now loomed. Leo Amery noted the effect on the editor.

> Robin like everyone else is very much exercised about the King and he is rather inclined to think it his duty to come out publicly with a leading article before long. Meanwhile the unanimous self-imposed censorship of the Press is something amazing. R. has had an immense correspondence and has given at least on particularly well written to Alec Harding to show the King. In smoking room there was much discussion on the same subject, one theory being that, if the King really intended marriage, Parliament could stop it by passing a one clause act deeming Mrs. S. to be a Catholic![21]

The issue in the Simpson case, between those who thought the King's personal life on the same level as duty to the Throne, and those who thought the Throne to supercede personal desires, produced a great deal of in-fighting among the upper classes. People like Amery, Margot Asquith, and Churchill supported the King. Men like Dawson and Barrington-Ward saw nothing good about the situation. They believed that the responsibility to the Throne should

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[20] Dawson Diary, April 24, 1936.

[21] DD, October 27, 1936; J. Barnes and D. Nicholson eds., The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929-1945, (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 429, diary entry November 7, 1936. Amery's entry began with the notation (All Souls Gaudy), a sarcastic reference to Dawson's membership in All Souls Oxford. The use of the name Robin instead of Geoffrey was common among people who knew Dawson prior to his name change in 1917.

overshadow a man's personal desires.

Throughout November Dawson split his time between the possibility of world war and quietly discouraging the intentions of the King's marriage to Mrs. Simpson. Dawson wrote a series of leaders but did not publish them. He did not release them because of his own personal fear of being the one to break, unnecessarily, the truth about the king.

He also admitted his fears and warnings to Stanley Baldwin. The Prime Minister cautioned Dawson that in any upcoming debates on defense policy the outcome could depend on the support of the Windsors. Baldwin warned Dawson about failure of the government's position if the king were upset over any revelations from The Times.[22]

Dawson believed that Parliament should convince the king not to marry Mrs. Simpson. Dawson's friends were working very hard to stack the appropriate committees to ensure this outcome. How much influence Dawson actually had in making anyone in Parliament act remains questionable. Besides, many in Parliament were already of a mind to stop any marriage plans.

The king's marriage produced constitutional problems of ascension. The problem of Mrs. Simpson's nationality had little bearing on the issue of marriage. The problems arose because of her divorce. Any children produced by the

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[22] DD, November 12, 1936.

marriage could not ascend to the throne. Thus, the Windsor hold on the throne, and the stability of the line, would end. The institution of a new monarch created social and societal friction. Dawson, and others, saw no worse time for a conflict of that nature.

Because of his actions, Dawson had to fight off rumors of inappropriate involvement in Parliamentary affairs. He wrote that he had to defend himself against charges that he called the King obsessive, and recorded that some claimed that he publicly stated that "H M would not marry Mrs. S." In between Dawson's references to major world events, such as the conclusion of the treaty between Germany, Italy, and Japan, Dawson had to deal with the public interest storm over his involvement in the whole affair.[23]

Normally on a day of such world importance Dawson would make a note in his diary about the event. Instead on November 18 no such mention of the treaty appears. He did record that foreign journalists bombarded him with requests

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[23] DD, November 13 and 15, 1936. Dawson posthumously received a rather unfair amount of criticism for his efforts to intervene in the Kings marriage plans. Perhaps an indication of the scope of Dawson's fears may appear in a letter received by an American, Mr. G. W. Johnson, who wrote to Dawson concerning the way the scandal seemed to American eyes. Johnson wrote to Dawson that it was widely known in America of the direction The Times saw the affair. He noted, in an unflattering reference to the King, that the "clever gold digger" threatened the Monarchy. He referred to the King as the "irresponsible jazz-minded cocktail-shaker who [was] being led round by the nose..."; Dawson Archive Box 79 leaf 1, October 15, 1936.

for his inside information. He told them that he knew nothing. The rest of the diary entry notes the talks that occurred during the day with the prominent individuals in the scandal, and covers the extent of their knowledge.[24]

For the time being all other events took on secondary importance. Dawson described his meeting with "Margot by appt. in the late morning but she had nothing to say beyond praise of Mrs. S. good sense & good influence on HM! I did not enlighten her."

He met the next morning with secret contacts within the house-hold staff of the royal family. He recorded that the King planned to ask permission of the Parliament to marry. Dawson expressed some satisfaction that at least he was able to stay ahead of the rest of the world press.[25]

On December 2 Dawson reminded his readers of other dangers to England's safety. The Times noted the introduction of so called volunteers into the Spanish war. which included four-thousand Frenchmen and five-thousand Germans. Dawson could not get away with laying the blame on the French for the escalation. The addition of the German presence, combined with the Russian contingent, upped the stakes in the Civil War. Even with the issue of morganatic marriage threatening Dawson's world order, some events

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[24] DD, November 18, 1936.

[25] DD, November 25 and 26, 1936.

carried more significance.[26]

World events explained, Dawson returned to the king. This time Dawson's pronouncements became public. The time had arrived to explain the drastic events to the public. Dawson informed his readers that the Archbishop of Canterbury requested of the King that the "full significance of the Coronation rite should be understood." The Archbishop argued that in extreme circumstances there were times when the national good outweighed "that side of His Majesty's life which may justly be held to be private."

In a queer twist, Dawson characterized the role in the affair of "gossips" which sought to undue the Monarchy because of envy. He argued that Royalty entailed obligation, not privilege, and claimed "the sense that Kingship must be kept above public criticism." To the King he stressed the notion that

> What he cannot and will not afford - and what the nation and the Empire cannot afford - is that the influence of the great office which he holds should be weakened if ever private inclination were to come into open conflict with public duty and be allowed to prevail.

Dawson urged for the King a policy of "common self-restraint." The Times editor informed the nation, and told the King, that the "high office which His Majesty holds is no man's personal possession." Finally, he implored the

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[26] The Times "Volunteers in Spain," December 2, 1936.

King to remember the circumstance in which England stood in the world. Dawson wrote that at the very least "events in the world outside have imposed, as never before, upon the British Monarch the duty to stand as a rock to the world outside amidst the seething tides of Communism and Dictatorship."[27]

On the evening of December 3 in his diary Dawson lamented the fact that the King's affair inspired such lengthy debate bereft of the inside details possessed by himself. During the day Barrington-Ward and he prepared the definitive leading article for the fourth. This article, in plain terms and language, spelled out the issue for the nation.[28]

Dawson argued that the problems of a King bore no relation to the problems of a "commoner." Dawson stated that the issues relating to Mrs. Simpson revolved, in part, around

> two former husbands living, from whom in succession she has obtained a divorce, on the last occasion at a recent date and in circumstances which are matters of fairly common knowledge.

To this he added his belief that marriage to Mrs. Simpson threatened, not only the line of ascendancy but the national interest as well.

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[27] The Times, "King and Monarchy," December 3, 1936, 15.

[28] Dawson Diary, December 3, 1936.

> Day by day in Spain, and not much less urgently in other parts of Europe and elsewhere, events call for such vigilance, resolve, and influence as can only be at the disposal of a people whose organic unity suffers neither distraction nor division.[29]

Dawson saw the Empire's stability resting on a Monarchy which had little or no influence on political or social outcomes. He wrote publicly to force a decision upon Edward. That issue was whether Edward had a right to marry outside of traditional restrictions. Dawson's mention of Mrs. Simpson's previous marital circumstances had little relevance to the issue but heightened aristocratic outrage against the King.

Having established the relationship between upper-class outrage and a King's lack of responsibility, Dawson followed with another article on December 5. Dawson claimed "that the projected marriage would deeply offend and perplex large numbers of His Majesty's subjects in every part of the British Commonwealth of Nations." Further, the marriage would "do irretrievable damage to the British Monarchy, which is, after all, the greatest link between the different members of the Empire."[30]

Using the pages of The Times, Dawson put forth the dubious argument that the marriage of Edward to Mrs. Simpson

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[29] The Times, "A King's Marriage," December 4, 1936, 17.

[30] The Times, "King and Parliament," December 5, 1936, 13.

posed a threat to the existence of the Empire itself. He held the King up to public humiliation and inflated the importance of the King regarding his importance to the effectiveness of Parliament to lead the nation in time of crisis. He played the spokes-person for a group of elites within the Government who had personal careers to think of and thus muted their personal criticism of the King.[31]

The King, choosing love over duty, announced his abdication on December 10. The Empire was "saved." Dawson noted that the conflict existed, not between individuals, but "in the King's heart." Dawson failed to mention any other conflicts. He did manage to express thanks that the King did not choose to "jeopardize the very fabric of these great historic institutions."[32]

Dawson returned to the issues regarding Europe. In "The German Crisis" the paper proposed

> a resettlement of Europe upon the principle of mutual concessions and mutual tolerance. The British people are peculiarly well placed to put

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[31] The information regarding the Royal maneuvering in the Mrs. Simpson case remains a mystery. The information is contained in a sizable collection at Birmingham University. The material is marked secret and is unavailable for public inspection. This is not unusual in the case of British documents. It should be noted however, that after the normal fifty year period most documents are made available for scholarly work. The material should have come available in 1988 which coincidentally is the year of Mrs. Simpson's death, but at the request of the crown Birmingham has elected to keep them out of the public eye.

[32] The Times, "King Edward's Choice," December 11, 1936, 18.

> an impartial valuation upon the Franco-Soviet Pact and to understand and assess the economic claims which Germany is making upon the world.

Along with statements supporting Germany's right to irritation over the Franco-Soviet pact, The Times argued that the treaty itself constituted jealousy on the part of the French and Soviets. Dawson argued that the treaty could not have come into existence without the desire to keep Germany from attaining its rightful place in the world. For The Times that meant the "economic leadership of Eastern Europe in the future as in the past will be German."[33]

Geoffrey Dawson finished 1936 on a high note. England faced two crises in the summer and fall of the year and survived them without war or domestic chaos. The Times focused upon the Spanish Civil War as a moderate threat as long as other powers in Europe stayed out. Despite the fact that other powers would not stay out of the conflict, Dawson believed his influence helped keep England in the position of moral arbiter.

The second crisis in the fall of the year pitted a man against the Kingdom. Dawson believed that with the abdication of Edward VIII the Empire remained strong. A possible tribute to how little Dawson understood world events comes through in the manner in which he saw the disposition and importance of these two events.

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[33] The Times, "The German Choice," December 21, 1936, 13.

At the end of the year he pronounced England "peculiarly well placed" to take part in the future negotiations of European issues. These myopic words reflected a disastrous kind of irony, fully revealed in the next year's events.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

In the spring of 1937 the diplomatic situation in Europe eased. Attention focused on the Spanish Civil war. The Times, however, kept up the drive for agreements with Germany as the basis for lasting European peace.

Robin Barrington-Ward wrote that peace with Germany should be the major objective of British policy. He encouraged British policy to increase the level of effort to reach accord with the Nazis. He argued that peace was "within the grasp of human capacity and human perseverance here and now, and are not the wayward gifts of blind and fickle fate."[1]

For The Times, the opportunity to contribute to that peace took on new dimensions. With the help of Geoffrey Dawson, the Foreign Office developed a different tactic for dealing with the German position. Contrary to earlier remonstrations against The Times, officials within the Government decided to use the papers semi-official standing with the Germans as a means of disseminating proposed

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[1] The Times, "On the Threshold," January 1, 1937, 13.

policy.

From the British Mission in Germany, British Ambassador Sir Eric Phipps provided the rationale for this effort. Phipps counseled that the new German Foreign Secretary, Joachim von Ribbentrop, might provide certain useful options. Phipps stated that Ribbentrop "admits that he underestimated hostility of influential British circles to Nazi regime as well as power of British Government to mould public opinion when it so desires." Using this as a basis for the delineation of information, Phipps argued that the "Government can do what they like provided that they know beforehand what they want."[2]

Outside of general policies the government had no real plan to secure what it wanted. Uncertainty within the British government had increased from 1933, when Hitler came to power, to the present. No real strategy existed.

The exception was the plan to use The Times as an unofficial spreader of British diplomatic information. Why the British believed that the paper had a better opportunity to influence German activity than the Foreign Office speaks volumes to the lack of government confidence. Later when The Times attracted undue attention from the Germans, Dawson and the Foreign Office, had only themselves to blame.

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[2] Medlicott, Dankin, and Bennett eds., Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939: Second Series, XVIII (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office 1980), number 10, Eric Phipps to Anthony Eden, January 4, 1937.

Finally, notice by the Foreign Office to Dawson that his paper had an opportunity to affect policy within the German government backfired. When Chamberlain embarked on his crusade for peace, Dawson had every reason to believe that he had a right and obligation to take part.

Government claims that Dawson was not controlled by the Foreign Office remained true. Nevertheless they asked him for essays from a certain perspective. Most anti-appeasers in the government were against Dawson. His selection represented a change in the direction of Foreign Policy. The paper became the singular largest advocate of unilateral peace in Western Europe.

The government approached Dawson on January 6. On the same day the Editor exchanged information with key members of the government. Dawson had a "good talk w Anthony Eden at the F.O. in the afternoon - Spain, Germany, & Italy, the Turkish - French." Dawson noted that Eden "was full of ideas for making non-intervention in Spain effective, but was awaiting the German & Italian replies to his note."[3]

Two days later Dawson recorded the "cabinet sent word that attempting to keep King in Spain." Dawson opted to concentrate on affairs outside of the Spanish Civil War. Dawson did not consider the events in Spain critical to

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[3] DBFP Second Series, XVIII, 21, Minute by Sir Beverley Baxter, (Conservative MP 1935-38), January 6; Dawson Diary, Dawson Archive, Oxford England, January 6, 1937.

peace with Germany. He focused instead "on the assumptions that vision & delineation were required." The Spanish problems would work themselves out if the greater picture (relations with Germany) took shape first.[4]

Several days later The Times argued the desire, in fact the benefit, of peace with Germany. There was no mention of pan-European agreements. The issue centered on desired British action. "If there must be conflict, then democracy will prepare for it with the redoubled determination of those who know that everything which makes life worth living is at stake." The paper offered its readers a simple choice. "Butter or guns? Is it nobler to destroy life or to have it, as we can, more abundantly?"[5]

The argument of butter or guns represented the view of foreign policy issues espoused by Neville Chamberlain. The economic recovery of the nation was his primary motivating force for peace. If it meant a separate understanding with Germany need occur, then so be it. Churchill, Vansittart, and Eden claimed that domestic peace was a byproduct of international peace. The old guard in foreign policy was about to undergo replacement by a new generation.

Over the next two weeks Dawson kept in contact with Lord Lothian. A supporter of Hitler, and a veteran of

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[4] Dawson Diary, January 8, 1937.

[5] The Times, "British Foreign Policy," January 13, 1937, 13.

several visits with the dictator, Lothian represented one of the few British citizens to have high level personal relationships in Germany. Both Dawson and Lothian believed in a stronger approach to appeasement. Both men also shared the view that Anthony Eden did not present the best options available to the Foreign Office. They saw him as lacking aggressiveness and "too much of a protagonist" for multilateral agreements.[6]

On January 28 Dawson asserted that the German problem had little to do with a desire for aggression and had nothing to do with their rearmament. He claimed that his readers were

> under a special obligation not to take refuge in generalities about the Nazi mind, but to try to enter into the German view and conception of Europe, and above all to refrain from demanding this or that removal as a condition precedent to conference. Agreement between Germany, France, and Britain is, to begin with, indispensable for a new Concept of Europe.

This "Concept of Europe"

> cannot be founded except on realities. One of these is a demand which is part of the German heritage and has long dominated all others in the shaping of German policy. No Englishman in German shoes would consent to accept the commitments of a new treaty while the Franco-Soviet Pact and the Russian pact with Czechoslovakia were still in full force. They are incompatible with a free

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[6] DD, January 11, and January 25, 1937.

political settlement.[7]

The origin of the "Concept of Europe" remains unknown. With the changing political sentiments on the part of the British leadership, the idea represents a new and peculiar position. The paper argued that freely negotiated treaties on the part of Germany's neighbors were a threat to peace. Dawson ignored the developing relationship between Germany and Italy. The Times claimed that in order for Europe to achieve peace, neighbors protecting their interests must abandon those interests in the face of Nazi discomfort.

Dawson gained status as an inside influence on foreign policy. He reflected the desires and approaches of the new approach to British leadership. The level of his information expanded, as he noted that a "message from the P.M. took me to Downing st. & we had a long gossip." His insights into desired Anglo-German policy increased, and he entered into the realm of shaping governmental responses to German policy statements. Following "Hitler's Fourth Anniversary speech to the Reichestag," Dawson "lunched w the Eden's - no one else - & heard his reactions."[8]

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[7] The Times, "Across the Frontiers," January 28, 1937, 15.

[8] DD, January 26 and 31, 1937.

In an enquiring letter, Leo Kennedy responded to The Times new position. He noted that the issue of "German affairs is being rather damped down by the Times and elsewhere." Dawson responded that the "subject of relations w Germany is being damped down by The Times merely in the sense that there seems nothing to be gained at this moment by arguments at long range."[9]

The veteran foreign correspondents alarm foretold of the evolution of a government undergoing doctrinal change. Little indication within the population or the government suggested wide spread concerns. Soon changes in the make-up of official representation in Germany sounded similar fears among others.

Two clear examples exist of the Foreign Office use of The Times as a pre-negotiator of British policy. The first was a statement by Sir Eric Drummond, Secretary General of the League of Nations. He wrote to Anthony Eden and suggested that Eden "do what is possible to induce "Times" to print leader in general sense of para. 5 of your tel No. 105."[10]

The reference to "tel No. 105" was to Foreign Office document number 105, dated January 22, 1937. The basis of the document was a conversation between Eden and Colonel

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[9] The Times Archive, London England, February 15 and 16, 1937.

[10] DBFP, Second Series, XVIII, 220, February 26, 1937, Drummond to Eden.

Joseph Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister. The text of the document concerned the maintenance of the port of Danzig as a permanent Polish possession. On the same day as the conversation, The Times ran a leader entitled "Danzig Under the Nazis" which warned of the instability of Eastern Europe if Germany regained the port.[11]

Drummond's request related to present League and British policy about the conditions and autonomy of Czechoslovakia. Drummond wanted Eden to talk to Dawson about writing another leader that supported the present British-Czechoslovakian relationship. Prior to the February 26 exchange, two documents on the Czechoslovakian problem already received distribution in the Foreign Office. Drummond simply gave Eden a suggestion to get The Times to announce to Germany the Foreign Office's position supporting the content of those documents, President Benes, and to offer criticism of the pro-Nazi, Henlein.[12]

The Times criticized Henlein's positions and supported the Czech's plan to create a peaceful multi-cultural nation. The paper noted that a recent speech by Henlein "lacked the richness - the heartening swell - of the truly disciplined, truly authoritarian echo."

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[11] The Times, "Danzig Under the Nazis," January 22, 1937, 15.

[12] For the background to the nature of the request made to The Times see; DBFP, Second Series, XVIII nos., 160, Minute by Sir Or. Sargent on German-Czechoslovakian relations, February 9, 1937, and 184, Hadow to Foreign Office, February 16, 1937.

The leader of March 2 announced support for recent attempts by the Czech majority to reach an agreement with the German, or Sudeten, population.

> When the terms of the agreement were published a fortnight ago they were seen to be so scrupulously fair and so conciliatory that he [Henlein] feared (with some justification) that many of his followers might be tempted to forsake his policy, which so far has been one of non-cooperation with Prague.

Regarding the Henlein and German claim that the Sudeten Germans constituted a pro-Nazi block, The Times asserted that Henlein "would also find that any plan transferring populations to the districts which he thinks proper to them would be resisted as much by the non-Henlein Germans as by the Czechs." The Times then characterized the root of the doctrine espoused by Henlein.

> The particular problem which the Henlein party presents is this, to what extent do they reflect the views of a minority, and to what extent the views of the German Nazi extremists with their cry of "One Race One Reich" and with their recent despicable campaign against the Czechoslovak Government.

Finally The Times justified the Czech government by stating that the "German-speaking districts are now sharing fully in the economic revival and in the increasing employment throughout Czechoslovakia. As the recovery continues, Herr Henlein's extremist influence should

wane."[13]

Remarkably Dawson achieved access to both the British and German foreign policy positions. During this time he centered his leaders on issues relating to what he considered natural German desires and fears. He also repaid his diplomatic associates by supporting British policy. Certain members of the government provided Dawson with information relating to foreign policy interests, and Dawson responded with leaders reflecting those interests.

Dawson met von Ribbentrop for lunch on March 23 and "had a long spell of rather wooly protestation of German friendship & we talked of British defence." No doubt the protestations and concerns of the Germans focused on Dawson because he was available, powerful, and well connected to British Foreign Policy.[14]

With the expected announcement by Baldwin of an imminent change in the Prime Ministry, Dawson made sure to keep his political contacts. "I found Edward H in his office right before lunch reading. He had no regrets about changes in the Govn. I found the Bernard Shaws & Mary Pickford (the latter a strongly unprepossessing little kitchenmaid!)."[15]

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[13] The Times, "Czech and German," March 2, 1937, 17.

[14] DD, March 24, 1937

[15] Ibid.

While Dawson maintained his contacts in the government, the British authorities were curios about his foreign contacts in Berlin. Following a request for information, Norman Ebbutt notified the Foreign Office of his impressions of Germany.

Ebbutt informed the British of limited but heart-felt discord on the part of the military to Hitler's adventure in Spain. He assured the Foreign Office that the Nazi leader had an interest, both militarily and from the standpoint of raw materials, in momentarily reducing tension.

He also warned the British to look for "a `second Spain' stunt in Czechoslovakia." Concerning the military buildup in England, he told the British that "the most effective deterrent still is an unrelaxing British determination to carry the rearmament programme and all it means through."[16]

Saturday April 10, Stanley Baldwin announced his resignation. He resigned all Parliamentary and party positions. He thanked his cabinet and the people of his district. He laid aside the mantle of power for one reason. The "old vicar" was tired and out of energy. He was seventy years old. Of Baldwin, Charles Mowat noted, "Few reputations have faded as quickly as Baldwin's. There is

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[16] DBFP, Second Series, XVIII, 376, April 5, 1937. Extract from a letter from Mr. N. Ebbutt.

his final defence; that he was tolerated for so long."[17]

Neville Chamberlain told Hilda, his sister, about the consensus which existed for his move to the Prime Ministry. It included the offices in Printing House Square. "The Times has been splendid but Camrose and Kennedy have evidently been much upset and thought they haven't expressed all they think. It is difficult for them to express any approval."[18]

On April 28, Fascist planes nearly destroyed the Basque town of Guernica. The planes, German in manufacture, dropped ordinance showing German factory markings. The town had little military importance, and the event appeared to be a terror attack. Coincidentally, The Times correspondent to Spain was traveling with a unit near the area. His report sparked a new round of tension between England, which was trying very hard to stay neutral, and Germany.

In "The Tragedy of Guernica," The Times separated itself from other European nations involved in the war in Spain. The writer referred to England as the only "genuine neutral." The paper criticized the Germans for allowing their materials to be used by people who chose targets for shock, rather than military value. Although rather muted,

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[17] The Times, "The Member For Bewdley," April 12, 1937, 15; Charles L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars: 1918-1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 588.

[18] Chamberlain Archive, Birmingham England, April 25, 1937, Neville to Hilda, NC 18\1\1003.

the paper's criticism of Germany drew a strong negative reaction.[19]

Balancing the report on Guernica The Times also managed to hand the Nazis a sop. On the same day they criticized the Nazis for helping destabilize Europe, The Times congratulated the discipline and "steadying influence of the Reichswehr and professional diplomacy in Germany." The German officials paid too much attention to the article on Guernica. Had they paid more attention to the editorial, they would have realized that they had no real argument with the position of The Times.[20]

On April 30, Ambassador to Germany Eric Clerk relinquished his position to Sir Neville Henderson. It was the first of several key moves in the late spring and summer of 1937 that established Chamberlain's policies. Henderson argued later that Chamberlain instructed him to run his foreign policy apparatus in Berlin based on direct information received through Downing Street, and not the Foreign Office. The circumvention of the professionals, and Chamberlain's solo diplomatic effort had begun.[21]

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[19] The Times, "The Tragedy of Guernica," April 28, 1937, 17.

[20] The Times, "New Phase in Austria," April 28, 1937, 15.

[21] DBFP, Second Series, XVIII, 455n April 30, 1937, Eden to Henderson. For the watered down version of Henderson's dubious accomplishments see Neville Henderson, Failure of a Mission: Berlin 1937-1939 (New York: Putnams's Sons, 1940). Good reading but inaccurate at key moments, particularly moments which make Henderson look bad.

Early in May Leo Kennedy wrote Dawson. They had not shared correspondence since Kennedy's letter of concern to Dawson in the middle of February. He wrote this time to encourage Dawson, and to warn him. "I hope you're right about the salutary effects of the period of silences! It looks, seen from the outside, as if Germany were drawing steadily further away from us and nearer to Italy."

The point of encouragement made, the point of warning followed.

> My point is that the process of indoctrination now going on in Germany is taking them steadily, day by day, further away from us. The poison of Mein Kamph is fouling the atmosphere. What Hitler teaches at home and professes abroad are two different things. That's while I feel no agreement is worth the paper it's written on because Hitler alters the tone of his general propaganda. I regard it as the most important & the most dangerous book in Europe.[22]

The German irritation with The Times' account of the Guernica incident appeared in the German press on 4 May. The Times covered the press comments in the May 5 edition. The article entitled "'The Times' Bombs Guernica" blamed Dawson's papers inadequate reporting as the real crime. The Germans cited "chimerical accusations, intemperately made" and questioned whether British foreign policy really intended to remain neutral or favor the Left.[23]

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[22] The Times archive, May 4, 1937, Kennedy to Dawson.

[23] The Times, "'The Times' Bombs Guernica," May 5, 1937, 17.

In the face of German accusations Dawson remained silent. The Germans, no doubt recognizing the silence of The Times, went after the other papers which continued the story. Neville Henderson noted to Anthony Eden that "the Daily Herald and the News Chronicle are particularly attacked on this account. In the other newspapers the agitation seems to be dying down."[24]

The confusion over German antagonism toward The Times covering of a news event, without direct criticism of the Nazis puzzled Dawson. In three exchanges, two to his Geneva correspondent H. G. Daniels, and one to Lord Lothian, his frustration and intent are clear. To Daniels he complained

> I do not quite know why there is all this excitement about Guernica, but the Dictators seem to be very touchy. But personally I am, and always have been, most anxious that we should "explore every avenue" in the search for a reasonable understanding with Germany. I do not believe that this (withdrawal from colonies) is what Germany really needs most, and in any case I should regard it as no more than an item for reasonable discussion as part of a comprehensive settlement.[25]

In his next correspondence with Daniels, Dawson laid his strategy, and method in dealing with the Germans.

> But it really would interest me to know precisely what it is in The Times that has produced this new

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[24] DBFP, Second Series, XVIII, 469, May 7, 1937, Henderson to Eden.

[25] Dawson Archive, Box 79 leaf 129-30, Dawson to Daniels, May 11, 1937.

> antagonism in Germany. I do my utmost, night after night, to keep out of the paper anything that has been printed now for many months past to which they could possibly take exception as unfair comment. No doubt they were annoyed by Steer's first story of the bombing of Guernica, but its essential accuracy has never been disputed, and there has not been any attempt here to rub it in or to harp on it.[26]

Dawson was right about the paper's lack of aggressive reporting concerning the Germans. Quite to the contrary The Times only mentioned Guernica in letters to the editor, and wrote stories only on the level of destruction in the town. Recrimination toward the Germans simply did not appear after the first reporting.

On the same night as the May 23 letter to Daniels, Dawson wrote Lord Lothian using much the same language.

> I should like to get going with the Germans. I simply cannot understand why they should apparently be so much annoyed with The Times at this moment. I spend my nights in taking out anything which I think will hurt their susceptibilities and in dropping little things which are intended to soothe them.[27]

Contrary to his later claims, Dawson admitted he censored his paper to placate German discomfort. He also later denied, but admitted in his personal correspondence, that he placed information in the paper, outside of critical

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[26] Dawson Archive, Box 79, leaf 131, Dawson to Daniels, 23 May 1937.

[27] Martin Gilbert, Winston Churchill: Volume V 1922-1939 The Prophet of Truth, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), 850.

pieces to serve as a balm to Hitler. The Times, the newspaper of record in England, falsified information, and left information out that had a critical role in the development of public opinion. For Dawson the distinction between newspaper man and diplomat no longer existed.

Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister on May 28. The May 31 leader extolled the nature, lineage, and maturity of a man made for the moment. The paper cited Chamberlain's "capacity for `getting things done' when once he has made up his mind that they are necessary." The paper noted that

> At the very root of his character are certain Roman virtues which democracy needs greatly at this present time, though they have to be wisely commended to it. One of these is a constant and unblinking realism which will not allow him to wrap himself in the rosy mist of romance.[28]

By the summer of 1937 certain important things had taken place. Geoffrey Dawson and The Times were silent partners with the Chamberlain government. Dawson became a conscious agent for the British government. The new Ambassador to Berlin was a pro-German holding instructions from the new Prime Minister to ignore the diplomatic apparatus and to gather information and direction directly from the Prime Minister alone. Finally, The Times behind its Editor, undertook a private censorship of information, coupled with the planting of positive bits of information

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[28] The Times, "The New Leader," May 31, 1937, 15.

designed to influence opinion at home and abroad. The Times became Chamberlain's Ministry of Propaganda.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EXTENSION OF THE CHAMBERLAIN PLAN

In early June, preparation for a diplomatic visit by the German Foreign Minister, Baron Constantin von Neurath, occupied Dawson's interests. On June 8 Dawson visited the "new P.M. who evidently wanted to establish contact & talked over the impending conference (sic), the new govn and relation w Germans etc. etc." He followed that visit up with one to "Anthony E at F. O. to hear about von Neurath's upcoming visit to London."[1]

About the von Neurath visit, there is little substance on the nature of Dawson's conversation with Chamberlain. His conversation with Eden, however is quite clear. During his visit with Eden, Dawson revealed that a series of articles by Lord Lothian supporting von Neurath and Anglo-German relations were set to appear in the pages of The Times. Eden made his objections blunt and to the point.

He told Dawson that "my views are emphatically against publication at this juncture before the Neurath visit has taken place and I very much hope that you will find it

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[1] Dawson Diary, Oxford, England, June 8 and 15, 1937.

possible to agree to postpone it."

Eden warned of "misconceptions" arising over the visit. He expressed concern that it should remain clear that the meeting was not about "questions of negotiation but only conversations." Eden closed his note to Dawson arguing that for Lord Lothian's articles to appear in the pages of The Times at a moment of diplomatic importance, might give the impression that the paper reflected "His Majesty's Government."[2]

Dawson noted in his diary that Anthony Eden's letter underestimated the ability of the Editor to decide what constituted safe and important information. He wrote of "Anthony E. begging us to postpone Philip's articles (which he hadn't seen yet)." Dawson had no intention of backing away from their publication.[3]

Reflecting the gravity of the issue, Eden followed up his letter of June 16 with another two days later. This note had a much clearer and personal perspective. Eden warned Dawson that the

> influence of "The Times" is immense abroad, indeed it has probably never been greater, and, as you know yourself, in spite of all statements that may be made to the contrary, it is regarded as representing very closely the views of His Majesty's Government. In these circumstances I am bound to say that I am convinced that the

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[2] Dawson Archive, Oxford, England, Box 79 leaf 133-36, Anthony Eden to Geoffrey Dawson and Philip Lothian, June 16, 1937.

[3] DD, June 17, 1937.

> publication of these articles just now would have an unfortunate effect and might in fact jeopardize the good results which we hope to achieve from the Neurath visit.[4]

The problem of the von Neurath visit became moot when the Germans withdrew the invitation. The problem, from the German side, came from the Spanish Left's attempt to sink the Leipzig, a German ship on patrol in the Mediterranean. Dawson noted the "European situation getting tense over a sudden German scare that an attempt had been made by the "Reds" to interfere through Leipzig."

The incident threatened to quash European peace, but it did not interfere with Dawson's social life. He noted that despite the Leipzig incident "I was glad to have got off an acceptance of Ribbentrop invitation to meet him at dinner on Thursday." If formal diplomacy suffered under the weight of crisis, Dawson could, at least, continue his private service to the Realm.[5]

In Germany, Neville Henderson, the new Ambassador to Berlin worked his particular version of representing British diplomatic opinion. The content of his early work, and the developing consternation on the part of key players within the Foreign Office, foretold of the new order in official Britain. Henderson's pro-Nazi views, coupled with his

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[4] DA, Box 79 leaf 143, Anthony Eden to Dawson, re., Lothian letters, June 18, 1937.

[5] DD, June 21, 1937.

opinion of men like Eden and Vansittart, reflected the course of the new strategy characterized by Neville Chamberlain's diplomacy.

The American Ambassador to Berlin, William Dodd, expressed his concern to Eric Phipps, his concern of Henderson's interpretation of German political and social goals. Dodd found Henderson's interpretation more slanted to the German side than past British pronouncement. Phipps forwarded the content of his discussion with Dodd to Robert Vansittart. Vansittart expressed embarrassment, and noted that it was a "melancholy reflection that we shd. have to spend any time in thinking how to protect ourselves against our own Ambassador."[6]

It was not just the ideas of the old diplomatic corps which came under attack, but their perspectives as well. In a note to Eden, Henderson criticized his superior at the Foreign Office for a speech given on July 5. Henderson argued that Eden needed to increase his sensitivity to German claims. He notified Eden that the Germans viewed his speech on the involvement of Germans and Italians in the Spanish Civil War as accusations.[7]

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[6] Medlicott, Dakin, and Bennett, eds., Documents on British Foreign Policy: 1919-1939, Second Series, XIX (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1982), number 8n, Dodd to Phipps, July 1, 1937.

[7] DBFP, Second Series, XIX, 22, Henderson to Eden, July 7, 1937.

On July 23, Henderson turned his attention to Vansittart. In a memo attached to a communique, Henderson pointed out the appropriate position Britain needed to secure peace with Germany. He did so by pointing out the massive gulf that existed between the views of himself and the Permanent Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office. His memo, added one more nail to the coffin of Vansittart's position.[8]

Perhaps in response to the prodding of his Ambassador, or perhaps just by his own designs, Neville Chamberlain began writing his own diplomatic materials. He did so in a letter to Mussolini on July 27. In that letter he argued that it appeared necessary to put aside the problems caused the British-Italian relationship by the Abyssinian Crisis. He noted in his diary that he sent the letter without showing it to the "Foreign Secretary, for I had the feeling that he would object to it."[9]

After a couple of months of Dawson's editorial "silences" the paper resumed its pro-German perspective on the state of the European political environment. The Times argued on 4 August that the issue before Western European democracies was "not to make the world safe for democracy,

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[8] DBFP, Second Series, XIX, memo attached to number 53, Memo by Henderson on British Policy Towards Germany, July 23, 1937.

[9] DBFP, Second Series, XIX, 65, Letter from Chamberlain to Mussolini, July 23, 1937; and Keith Feiling, The Life of Neville Chamberlain (London: Macmillan and Company, 1946), 330.

but to make the coexistence of democracies and dictatorship safe for the world." Dawson also assaulted British adherence to the League of Nations Charter as "the limited scope within which Great Britain now regards her armed intervention as an automatic obligation."[10]

In between the ninth and seventeenth of August Dawson had a problem thrust upon him that struck the fundamental basis of his profession. The issue was the freedom of his reporters. The case of the expulsion of Norman Ebbutt was, at the time, merely a matter of German retaliation. In fact, the story has a much deeper, painful, and for Dawson, reveling truth.

Leo Kennedy told Dawson on August 9, that the Germans were in the midst of plans to expel Ebbutt. Dawson learned about the problem two days earlier, when he received notice from the British Consulate in Berlin. The notice of Ebbutt's impending expulsion caused Dawson to halt his normal reporting of German news.[11]

On August 9 Dawson wrote to his friend H. G. Daniels to inform him concerning his feelings on the Ebbutt affair, and continued attempts at closer contacts with the Germans.

> But I must tell your before I go that there must of course be an end to any arrangements that you

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[10] The Times, August 4, 1937, 13.

[11] DD, August 9, 1937; DBFP, Second Series, XIX, nos.88, 89, and 97; and D.A., Box 79 leaf 147, August 9, 1937, Dawson to Frederick Deakin.

> have made in this direction in view of the threat to turn Ebbutt out of Berlin by way of reprisal for the extrusion of German journalists from this country. It is quite clear that, while this attitude continues, The Times cannot accept overtures made in other directions, and I think you should tell your friends at once that there is nothing more to be done in present circumstances.[12]

The reference to German journalists was the basis of the problem at the Home Office. The Germans placed individuals with questionable credentials in foreign countries for the purpose of political activity. The Home Office refused the credentials of three such men, and the move to expel Ebbutt appeared as a reprisal.

Actually the selection of Ebbutt had more meaning than just an equal trade. Ebbutt reported everything he saw in Germany, and much of what he saw and wrote did not appeal to the Germans. His credibility gave the Germans as much trouble as the content of his reports. His reputation as a foreign correspondent was one of international stature.

During an earlier posting to Germany in 1933 the Germans tried to get him recalled by accusing him of drunkenness. He kept up a series of reports on the abuse of the Church at the hands of the Nazis. That issue alone represented one of their primary complaints. Aside from church reporting though, Ebbutt watched and reported on all elements of Germany's activity. That was what made him so

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[12] DA, Box 79 leaf 48, August 9, 1937, Dawson to Daniels.

good a target for the Germans.[13]

The Germans did not fully appreciate just how far Dawson had gone with the suppression of Ebbutt's reports. Dawson and Barrington-Ward printed Ebbutt's dispatches on the abuse of church leaders in Germany, in part, because they were both strong supporters of religion. On the other hand urgent reports on the German political scene sent by Ebbutt ended up edited to death by Dawson and Barrington-Ward, and seldom found public viewing.[14]

Ebbutt argued to Vansittart that the pressures exerted on him by Dawson to refrain from truthful reporting of the Germans eventually broke his health. It was common knowledge at The Times that the most sensitive material sent to London ended up on the cutting room floor. While the dispatches did not often appear in the papers, they did appear on the desk of the Prime Minister.[15]

The first public response on the Ebbutt affair came on August 11. The paper stated that Ebbutt's expulsion

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[13] Christopher Sykes, Nancy: The Life of Lady Astor (Chicago: Academy Publishers, 1972), 415.

[14] William Manchester, The Last Lion, Winston Spencer Churchill: Alone 1932-1940 (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1988), 311; Keith Middlemas, Diplomacy of Illusion: The British Government and Germany 1937-1939 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), 288.

[15] Robert G. Vansittart, THe Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart (London: Hutchinson of London, 1958), 507; Iverach McDonald, The History of the Times: Struggles in War and Peace (London: Time Books,1984), 465-66; Manchester, The Last Lion, 275.

occurred "because he keeps his reader abreast of the truth." Once "his voice has been silenced, opinion abroad will be kept ignorant of all that they want to hide." The Times did not tell their readers that the policy of the paper already included the silencing of information from Ebbutt that Dawson did not want his readers to know.[16]

Ebbutt left Germany on August 21. The Times leader on that day reflected Dawson's irritation at the occasional "nervous spasms which so often seem to baffle hopes of a steadier outlook in Europe." Nevertheless, the leader did not tell the entire truth of German suspicions about Ebbutt, and Times collusion to omit what was the real difficulty with his work. Instead the paper argued

> But it is permissible, perhaps, to remind these well-drilled German newspapers that The Times has stood rather conspicuously for an attitude towards their country which is by no means universal in England.... There is too much reason to believe that Mr. Ebbutt's main offence has been his repeated exposure of the persecutions of religion which are the worst feature of the Nazi regime and which are bound to be a perpetual stumbling-block in the path of international friendship.[17]

Dawson's anger and criticism of the Germans extended only to the point that he feared a weakening in the British attempt at establishing friendship with them. His own

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[16] The Times, "Nazis and The Times Foreign Comment: Independence and Truth," August 11, 1937, 14.

[17] The Times, "Germany and the Press," August 17, 1937, 14.

problem with Ebbutt was the same problem the Germans had with him. Ebbutt was persona non grata, because he had too much independence for the Germans or Dawson. If the Germans could have appreciated what Dawson at The Times was trying to do for them they might have had sufficient sensitivity to allow Ebbutt to stay. In reality, their expulsion of Ebbutt proved to have almost no repercussions from the paper. Perhaps they did appreciate what was happening at The Times.

Dawson vacationed between mid-August and the first week of September. His activity at the paper remained limited for the remainder of September. Part of the inconvienient nature of Dawson's character was his need for frequent, long vacations. His extended vacations took him out of London at critical times. His partner, Barrington-Ward hardly ever left Printing House Square. During early September Dawson spoke with Neville Henderson about the Ebbutt affair, but little else about his activity appears in his diary or elsewhere.[18]

Near the end of October, Dawson spent a weekend at the Buckinghamshire country home of Lord and Lady Astor. Cliveden, the setting of insider meetings, became on this weekend, the opportunity to hatch a plot. The plot did not include the Astor's, but did include Neville Henderson, Lord Lothian, Lord Londonderry, the Aga Khan, and Geoffrey

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[18] DD, September 2, 1937.

Dawson. The reason for the gathering was to involve, at least by insinuation, the Foreign Office. Present, but not aware of the nature of the gathering, was Anthony Eden.

Dawson set up Eden through his leader of October 22. In the article Dawson used the words of Chamberlain under the heading of an article about the position of Anthony Eden. The area of discussion was the future of the League of Nations. The leader explained that the League "as at present constituted, was palpably no guarantor against aggression, and that the pursuit of peace under existing conditions meant the discovery of some practical means of restoring it." About the need to alter the League, The Times noted that the speech presented a "commonsense conclusion to an unreal debate."[19]

The events of the weekend of October 23 and 24 were about the conclusions reached by Chamberlain. The subject of the weekend was the impending visit of Lord Halifax to Berlin. The visit was ostensibly, and publicly, unofficial and casual. In fact the information Halifax was to relay to Hitler was that the British Government would not oppose any German intrusion into Eastern Europe.

Eden needed to be there so that if the idea were to reach public knowledge, Chamberlain could say that he knew nothing about it, and the blame would fall to the Foreign

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[19] The Times, "Mr. Eden's Review," October 22, 1937, 17.

Office. Absent at the meeting was Edward Halifax, but Sir Alexander Cadogan, the intended replacement for Eden did attend. Dawson noted that he spent the evening "talking and listening to foreign affairs from 5 o'clock to bedtime."[20]

On Tuesday October 26, Dawson met with Henderson over lunch to discuss matters of German colonial interests and political attitudes. Dawson, as always, found Henderson "very sound." The next day Dawson, "finished off a leader on the German claim to colonies..." The results of the previous weekend, and the meeting with Henderson appeared on October 28.[21]

The leader of October 28 was Dawson's most controversial to date. In it he stated that the

> British public opinion is probably far ahead of the government in its conviction that a clear understanding with Germany would have consequences more profound and more conducive to a stable peace than any other single object of our foreign policy. Let us at least be clear at what point a stand should be made, and let us make a supreme effort, so far as Great Britain is concerned to do what is possible for appeasement before that point is reached.

Dawson finished the leader noting that Britain bore the blame for forcing the Germans to use "methods which are creditable neither to herself nor to the rest of the

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[20] Sykes, Lady Astor, 430; DD, October 23, 1937.

[21] DD, October 26, 1937; DD, October 27, 1937.

world."[22]

The reception in England of the leader exceeded Dawson's expectations. "My leader produced a good deal of attention & approval." He wrote that "the PM asked me to come and see him. He might tell me what he at any rate had been trying to do." At that meeting "he told me some extraordinarily interesting things about the Aga's short talk w Hitler and the proposal of Edward going to Berlin."[23]

The Foreign Office did not share the same excitement felt by Dawson. George Ogilvie-Forbes, the Charge d'Affaires in Berlin, told Eden that the "general line taken is that with the appearance of the article on the Colonial question is ripe for discussion, through the D[eutsche] A[llgemeine] notices the passage where His Majesty's Government is describe as lagging behind the public opinion."

Ogilvie-Forbes went on to complain about

> Another "Times" suggestion to which exception is taken is that the Colonial question is not one for Great Britain alone. England, says the Berliner Tageblatt, was principally responsible at Versailles...The same paper also observes that according to Herr Hitler "there can be no doubt that we can only contemplate as the fulfillment of our demands in this field the complete reversal of

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[22] The Times, "The Claim to Colonies," October 28, 1937.

[23] DD, October 28, 1937.

the wrong done us.[24]

Ogilvie-Forbes, obviously out of Chamberlain's plans for British diplomacy, "condemned the attitude of the British press severely." He believed that the British government had been "stabbed in the back" and argued that the press should not have been "permitted to discuss the subject at all."[25]

What Ogilvie-Forbes did not know was that the plan, design, and implementation originated with the government. The diplomats who remained in Germany and who did not support Chamberlain's idea of appeasement, no longer had any control over matters. Men like Dawson, the Aga Khan, and Halifax had the inside view of the situation, and took over the lead in dictating the level of Chamberlain's plan.

Dawson lunched with Halifax and "heard his own projected conversation" concerning his mission to Hitler. In the same week he followed up with "the Aga Khan, who gave me a note of his visit to Hitler & Goering." While he gathered information for his press activities, rumors circulated in diplomatic circles that Dawson's efforts reflected a "carefully prearranged plan concerted with someone in the Nazi party." The writer insisted that "from

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[24] DBFP, Second Series, XIX, 275, Ogilvie-Forbes to Eden October 29, 1937.

[25] Quoted in, Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, The Appeasers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), 72.

what Ebbutt said to me in June that a pro-German campaign was planned for the summer."[26]

In the days leading up to Halifax' "unofficial" visit The Times regaled its readership with appeals to the Deity, an alarming characterization of opponents to appeasement, and information from a questionable public opinion poll. Readers in Britain and elsewhere learned that "intercession for peace means something more than hoping for it and embodying those hopes in petition to the Almighty." They also learned the British opposition "credibly converted as it is to the necessity of rearmament is as light hearted as ever in its readiness to see the world divided into armed camps." They also found out that in England that regarding appeasement "nine-tenths of the adult population desire that this should happen." Information about who constituted that nine-tenths did not appear.[27]

Halifax left for Berlin on November 16. Chamberlain noted that the "Halifax visit has gone well." He told his sister that "one way or another we are passing through the easier waters just now." The plans, following the return of Halifax, were to follow up on proposals on the colonial question. The questions of colonies hinged on the positive

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[26] DD, November 2, 1937; DBFP, Second Series, XIX, 290, November 3, 1937, Law to Sargent.

[27] The Times, "Towards Peace," November 11, 1937, 16; The Times, "Mr. Chamberlain's Speech," November 15, 1937, 15; The Times, "A New Beginning," November 13, 1937, 13.

reception of Halifax, and that seemed accomplished.[28]

Halifax viewed appeasement with a certain amount of secrecy. For Chamberlain's purpose, Halifax's taste for secrecy made him valuable. Halifax believed that appeasement needed to take place away from the public. He argued that the government needed some protection from the public to do what that public ultimately wanted done. If that meant that the government needed to insulate itself from the people by withholding information, then that was what it should do.[29]

Dawson missed the chance to see Halifax the day of his return. He caught him the next day and found him "on the whole well satisfied w his visit." Halifax provided Dawson with "A special report provided Radcliff w material for his leader & Hore-Belisha gave Liddell Hart approval for more new Territorial reforms." The ghastly image of government officials providing Dawson's reporters with stories, had become standard procedure.[30]

The Times proclaimed that the new environment in Europe called for a simple recognition of basic facts. The paper noted that the "tension of 1937 arises chiefly out of a

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[28] Chamberlain Archive, November 21, 1937, Chamberlain to Hilda, nc 18\1\1029.

[29] Alan Johnson, Viscount Halifax: A Biography (New York: Ives Washburn Inc., 1941), 12, 442-43.

[30] DD, November 22, 1937; DD, November 23, 1937.

passionate demand for the recognition of German equality - a demand which is well understood in London and, given reason and patience all round, is clearly the bounds of negotiation." It was the nature of the recognition, and the meaning of German equality, of which the public understood little. Those two issues to Britain meant the Eastward expansion of German territorial and colonial aims.[31]

Chamberlain discussed those aims with his sister Ida. He wrote that the visit created an "atmosphere in which it was possible to discuss with Germany the practical questions involved in a European Settlement." The settlement only required "assurances that you won't use force to deal with the Austrian, Czecho-Slovakian rowe with some assurances that we won't uses force to oppose changes...if you can get them by peaceful means."[32]

What the Germans said to Chamberlain about his generous offer does not appear in any documentation. On the other hand they did indirectly offer their thanks to Dawson. Henderson told Halifax that the "Germans pleased w Times" and their work "added to their growing belief that we mean to be realistic." The growing excitement at The Times, and in other locations in the government did not extend to Robert Vansittart. He referred to Dawson as a member of the

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[31] The Times, "The Way of Appeasement," November 25, 1937, 15.

[32] Chamberlain Archive, Chamberlain to Ida, nc 18\1\1030. See also Feiling, 333.

"funk-brigade." Vansittart had little time left.[33]

On December 12 Mussolini ended speculation about Italy's standing in the League of Nations. Duce noted that the League was "manoeuvered by fools, turbid occult forces, enemies of our Italy and of our revolution." Not everyone in Britain lamented the loss of Italy. Ingram wrote "I can't help feeling glad that it rained."[34]

Despite Dawson's public support for the League, The Times reflected the growing belief by the people in charge in England. Chamberlain's general angle toward the Germans had to do more with bilateral approaches than comprehensive settlements. The Russians reacted to The Times attitude to appeasement calling it "an insidious attempt, all the more dangerous for its lip-service to the League." The Russians feared ending up on the outside of any European treaties, and feared that the League was on its way to becoming "a purely consultative body for the benefit of the Aggressor powers."[35]

On the last day of December Robert Vansittart changed jobs. The change was not his choice. He became the Chief Diplomatic Advisor to Chamberlain. Actually he lost access

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[33] Halifax Papers, December 2, 1937, A4.41032. Henderson to Halifax; and DBFP, Second Series v XIX, Number 363n, memo from Vansittart, December 2, 1937.

[34] The Times, "Italy and The League," December 13, 1937, 13; DBFP, Second Series, XIX, 387n, Ingram memo, December 12, 1937.

[35] DBFP, Second Series, XIX, 404, December 28, 1937.

to the daily events in the government, and his impressive influence in the Foreign Office could only find expression to Chamberlain himself. Chamberlain brilliantly handled the move, waiting until Parliament was in recess.

Alexander Codagan took Vansittart's position at the Foreign Office. Chamberlain removed a man who "was an alarmist, that he hampered all attempts of the Government to make friendly contact with the dictator states and that his influence over Anthony Eden was very great." With Vansittart effectively silenced, only Eden seemed fit to put up a challenge to Chamberlain. His removal was just a matter of careful planning.[36]

Neville Chamberlain seized control of the governmental machinery in May of 1937. By the end of the year he had in place the men and method for dealing with Hitler. One of those men was Geoffrey Dawson.

Dawson extended his efforts in putting forward the position of the Chamberlain administration. He kept information out of the paper that harmed Nazi "sensibilities," and used his paper and position to direct the information arm of the Chamberlain administration. With a new year ahead, Dawson prepared to launch a definitive appeal to German demands. 1938 would see Dawson move from helpful participant to independent leader of the appeasement movement.

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[36] Gilbert and Gott, The Appeasers, 69.

CHAPTER IX

PRELUDE TO MUNICH

In 1938 Neville Chamberlain put German policy together. In the Foreign Office only Anthony Eden remained and his power diminished daily. In Berlin, Neville Henderson smoothed German remonstrations, and soothed their concerns about the pliability of Neville Chamberlain's positions. Chamberlain's Cabinet contained men with little foreign policy experience. This granted the Prime Minister only slightly limited obstruction in his pursuit of reproachment with Germany.

At The Times Geoffrey Dawson labored to produce positive, uplifting editorials in order to increase the potential of appeasement. He knew that Hitler was on the verge of deciding the "internal German problem," in Austria. Dawson desired to write material in line with the Prime Ministers position. To insure the nature of that position he met with Chamberlain on January 25. He found that Chamberlain "stood pat on appeasement with Germany - not, he

said, getting much constructive help from the F.O."[1]

On February 5 Hitler shuffled his government ministers, and military command structure. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he replace a likeable and sincere von Neurath with the obsequious von Ribbentrop. Hitler made himself the head of the War Ministry and Commander of the Air Force. A variety of hesitant Generals stepped down or accepted transfers, and the more militant took their places.

While the Foreign Office reacted sharply to the changes, the appeasers did not. To the appeasers von Neurath seemed too deliberative. Chamberlain and Dawson, and most appeasers, liked von Ribbentrop. During his service in London, he became a must on guest lists for parties and weekend hunts. His elevation in Germany gave hope to Chamberlain. Dawson made sure that The Times reporting of the event took a positive spin. He gave the assignment for the leader to a new man on his staff then provided "a good deal of revision" to ensure its quality.[2]

Dawson looked in on Anthony Eden to find out the tone at the Foreign Office. He discussed Egypt, and the scheduled upcoming talks with Count Dino Grandi, the Italian

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[1] W. Medlicott, Douglas Dakin, Gillian Bennett, eds., Documents on British Foreign Policy: 1919-1939, Second Series, Volume XIX (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1982), 454, January 20, 1938; and Dawson Diary, January 25, 1938, Oxford, England.

[2] DD, February 6, 1938.

Ambassador to London. Eden's conversation was "thick with sermons of unrest in Germany." Eden again pressed Dawson to exercise restraint, noting that foreign powers "regarded "The Times" as reflecting the views of H. M. Government."[3]

Eden did not realize how little influence he had left. Chamberlain left him out of planning for foreign affairs. Henderson in Berlin consistently gave information to the Germans in violation of his instructions from the Foreign Office. The diplomatic apparatus in Berlin reflected Chamberlain's view. Henderson no longer felt the need to "speak as instructed" by Eden.[4]

By mid-February the friendly visit to Germany by Halifax in November received new interpretation. It was not new in the private sense, but the public's understanding of the visit took on a different meaning. Dawson told his readers something he had known for some time. In fact, he suppressed information from his German correspondent that played down the visit. The meeting in Germany "was more than a passing affair of courtesy, It was a friendly reconnaissance expressly designed to lead to action."[5]

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[3] DD, February 10, 1938.

[4] DBFP, Second Series, XIX, 511, Henderson to Eden, February 12, 1938.

[5] The Times, "Herr Hitler's Move," February 14, 1938, 13; Richard Cockett, Twilight of Truth: Chamberlain, Appeasement and the Manipulation of the Press (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 39.

The friendly reconnaissance assured German rulers that peaceful expansion of German authority to nations like Austria and the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia would meet little resistance if handled legally through plebiscite. Dawson agreed with the merger of Germany and Austria noting that a "close understanding between the two German States is the most natural thing possible." Henderson chided Eden about taking a strong view of German activity in Austria and feared the Foreign Office displayed to much "subservience to France."[6]

Eden had little time left in office to take a strong view about anything. Dawson knew that the Cabinet met in Emergency session but he did not know why. He believed the unusual meeting related to Chamberlain's intended reproachment with Italy. Actually the issue of Italy was on the table for discussion but so was the future of Anthony Eden.[7]

Eden told Chamberlain of his intended resignation from the Foreign Office. Chamberlain's policy of better relations with Italy was the issue. Eden believed that full British recognition of Italy constituted an endorsement of their Abyssinian claims. He thought that recognition created the problem of arguing against further German claims

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[6] The Times, "Austria and the Germans," February 17, 1938, 15; DBFP, Second Series, XIX, 552, February 18, 1938.

[7] DD, February 19, 1938.

without the basis of a consistent policy.

Eden felt he had no choice. He resigned on February 20. Halifax told Dawson that the "actual point at issue is a comparatively small one." Henderson noted that Eden's "attitude is that of the rejected lover." From Paris, Eric Phipps disagreed with both Halifax and Henderson. He considered Eden's departure "a victory for Germany and Italy."[8]

Eden presented his reasons for resigning to the House of Commons, on February 21. Eden and his assistant Lord Cranborne both presented their rationale before a packed gallery. Dawson listened while "Anthony Eden and Bobbetty (Lord Cranborne)" explained their belief that British policy was close to supporting the dictators over peaceful sovereign nations. Dawson noted that he "didn't think any of them very good and felt that I could have made a better case for Anthony....It seemed an unnecessary quarrel."[9]

Dawson assured his readers that "nothing fundamental to British aims will be changed by Mr. Eden's resignation." He ridiculed Eden's argument against Chamberlain. Dawson wrote that if Eden were right and appeasement ended, British diplomacy faced a choice "between toadying feebly to

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[8] DD, February 20, 1938; DBFP, Second Series, XIX, 567, Henderson to Foreign Office, February 20 ; DBFP, Second Series, XIX, 570, Phipps to Halifax, February 21, 1938.

[9] DD, February 21, 1938.

overbearing powers or waiting virtuously for the next war." He rejected the claim by Eden's supporters "that Mr. Eden had been sacrificed to Herr Hitler's displeasure." Finally he insisted that Chamberlain's policy had hope despite the

> Labour war-dance or by Mr. Churchill's weighty and mournful dialectic, or by the less effective railing of Mr. Lloyd George, appearing once more in welcome and untrammelled vigour as the statesman without a past.[10]

After the war, suggestions by investigators surfaced concerning an attempt to force Eden's resignation. Evidence suggests a "secret link" between Chamberlain's close assistant Major Joseph Ball, and Count Grandi. The evidence suggests that Chamberlain wanted to place Eden in a position he could not morally abide.

Because Chamberlain circumvented Eden and the Foreign Office professionals, he was able to accomplish two tasks important to his plan. He secretly reached agreement with the Italians to remove their forces from Spain, and he kept this information from Eden. Finally, because he knew Eden would not meet with the Italians without such an agreement, he forced Eden to act. Chamberlain finally had the opportunity to replace the head of the Foreign Office, the

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[10] The Times, "Mr. Eden Resigns," February 21, 1938, 15; The Times, "Mr. Eden's Speech," February 22, 1938, 15; The Times, "A Sense of Proportion," February 23, 1938, 15.

sole remaining obstacle to his plans.[11]

Dawson ended, at least from the perspective of The Times, the Anthony Eden affair. His editorial of February 28 showed the seldom seen vindictive side of the Editor. He dropped veiled hints at Eden's "unbalanced and hostile motives" which Dawson claimed led to his resignation. Dawson told his readers that he did not want to indulge in any "pedantic inquisition into the details of his differences with his former colleagues." Dawson did not wish to "cloud the atmosphere" by contending Eden had other reasons for giving his resignation.[12]

On Thursday March 9, Kurt von Schuschnigg, Chancellor of Austria, announced a plebiscite scheduled for Sunday March 12. The subject of the plebiscite required a simple yes or no answer. Schuschnigg offered his people the right to vote for continued sovereignty, or inclusion into Hitler's Reich. He did not schedule it to prevent Hitler from attacking Austria. He did it to impress upon his other European allies that, despite claims to the contrary, Austria wanted to remain free.

Dawson rallied to support "the plebescite as the opportunity for the free vote of a free and independent

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[11] Anthony Eden, The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, Eden Earl of Avon: Facing the Dictators (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), Appendix D.

[12] The Times, "Wise Restraint," February 28, 1938, 15.

people." Dawson accepted the common belief, as did most appeasers, that the Austrians wanted reunification with Germany. Hitler labored under no such allusion. On Saturday, March 11, Hitler invaded Austria.[13]

On the evening of March 11 Dawson visited the Foreign Office. At the Foreign Office, he saw information about German atrocities. Back at The Times, he noted to his assistants his irritation with Germany's "bloodless annexation." On Sunday The Times appealed for calm and lamented the invasion. The papers concern had less to do with the destruction of a sovereign nation and more to do with the "blow to the policy of appeasement."[14]

On March 14 The Times criticized the Germans as "not practicing apostles of self-determination except where scattered Nazis are concerned." The paper complained of the "undisguised exhibition of arbitrary force." Speaking to the depression of the appeasers and his view on Austria, Dawson offered hope. He supported "the view, which has been common to most thoughtful Englishmen, that she [Austria] was destined sooner or later to find herself in close association with the German Reich." Dawson later wrote that if elections could have occurred "the result would probably

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[13] The Times, "A Plebiscite in Austria," March 10, 1938, 15.

[14] DD, March 11, 1938; The Times, "A Blow to Europe," March 12, 1938, 13.

have been a majority in favor of the Anschluss."[15]

Dawson turned a major foreign policy disaster into an inevitability. Faced with the predicament of Hitler's rash actions Dawson provided an alternative interpretation. He wrote of the positive inexorable movement of history. He described the "frenzied public joy and acclamation" enjoyed by the Nazi occupiers. Dawson, the optimist, "had a rather desperate evening keeping rubbish out of the paper in favor of wild measures against the Dictators."[16]

With the assumption of Austria complete, the problem of Czechoslovakia became paramount to the appeasers. Hitler's position on Czechoslovakia was the same as his stand on Austria. He assured the British that he had no intention of causing problems for the Czechs so long as the German minority there did not demand independence. The Czechs worked hard at avoiding any impression of aggressiveness. Foreign Minister, Kamill Krofta told his ambassadors "to avoid all unnecessary criticism, and to make every effort to avoid being involved."[17]

In this case Dawson actually knew something about the situation in Czechoslovakia. Leo Kennedy wrote Dawson from

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[15] The Times, "A March and the Moral," March 14, 1938, 15; The Times, "Greater Germany," April 11, 1938, 13.

[16] The Times, "The Ends and the Means," March 15, 1938, 15; DD, 15, March 1938.

[17] V.F. Kochko and N.I. Kostyunin, eds., New Documents on the History of Munich (Prague: Orbis, 1958), 17.

Czechoslovakia concerning meetings he had with President Benes. About "the Sudetendeutsche there is really no problem about it. They are certainly one of the best treated minorities in Europe now." This word reflected a similar comment by French Foreign Minister Edouard Daladier. He claimed that the Czechs "had done more for the minorities within their borders than any other European state."[18]

From the diplomatic side, Neville Henderson had little interest in the needs of "those blasted Czechs." Henderson shared the view of the Germans which held that "There is no such thing as Czechoslovakia." Unfortunately for the Czechs Neville Chamberlain agreed. He "could not help Czecho-Slovakia that would simply be a pretext for going to war with Germany."[19]

At the end of April, Konrad Henlein, Chairman of the Sudeten German Party, released a list of demands for the "removal of injustices inflicted" by Czechoslovakia. Those demands included financial reparation and the "union of all Germans to form a Great Germany." Henlein timed his demands in order to receive the maximum discussion at the scheduled Anglo-French Conversations.[20]

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[18] Times Archive, March 18, 1938; DBFP, Third Series, I, 164, Record of Anglo-French Conversations, April 28-29, 1938.

[19] Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, The Appeasers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), 106; Chamberlain Archive, Neville to Ida, nc 18\1\1042.

[20] The Times, "Herr Henlein's Demands," April 25, 1938, 15.

The meetings lasted for two days. By the end of the last day Chamberlain believed that he could not count upon the French as an ally. Chamberlain told his sister that by Friday afternoon, the talks "reached a deadlock." Based on the meeting Chamberlain acknowledged that it was "up to us alone to ask the Germans what they want in Czecho-Slovakia."[21]

Regardless of what The Times wrote about the right of Czechoslovakian independence, Chamberlain believed that Czechoslovakia's future rested in German hands. The editorial on May 4 claiming Czech sovereignty rested upon the assumption that the Prime Minister of England wished it so. Once Dawson knew Chamberlain's plans he adapted his editorials to reflect the proper stance.[22]

Dawson met Chamberlain on May 10 to "talk w the P.M. about his impending changes." Those changes appeared in Dawson's leader of May 16. The paper switched its position on the Czechoslovakian rights of sovereignty and the suppression of its minorities. Dawson demanded "the maximum of concessions" and claimed the Sudetens would leave the country to join Germany if given the freedom to do so. The paper also noted that the "other minorities....would vote themselves out of the country" if the Czechs permitted a

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[21] Chamberlain Archive, May 1, 1938, Neville to Ida, nc 18\1\1049.

[22] The Times, "Dictators Meet," May 4, 1938, 15.

plebiscite. None of these claims had any basis in fact. What created the alteration in The Times position related to the change in Chamberlain's position.[23]

On the weekend of May 21 a German mechanized unit travelled along the Czech border. The size of the movement startled the Czech military, and the government ordered the mobilization of reserve units. In reality the movement of the unit was for simple routine maintenance. The Germans moved units along the border all the time. Under normal circumstances the movement would not have caused a problem; however, these were not normal times. The result of the troop movement created a military and diplomatic crisis.

The Foreign Office notified Chamberlain who was away on his normal weekend. Mustering as much emotion as possible for him, Chamberlain noted that those "d - d Germans have spoiled another week end for me." He returned to London where he found himself in "the non-familiar atmosphere of a week end crisis." For Chamberlain, the week-end crisis was about to become the standard operational situation.[24]

The crisis pointed out how wrong the appeasers were about the minority problems in Czechoslovakia. One-hundred thousand troops massed on the border to repulse a German

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[23] DD, May 10, 1938; The Times, "Europe and the Czechs," May 16, 1938, 15.

[24] Chamberlain Archive, May 22, 1938, Neville to Hilda, nc \18\1\1053.

invasion. Since the flash point was the Sudeten area, most of the troops came from the German minority. Dawson noted the number of troops called up but did not try to explain why so many people who wanted German citizenship took up positions to resist their liberators.[25]

Halifax hoped for an internal settlement to the Henlein demands. He approached Henlein and Benes and proposed arbitration. Dawson damaged that proposal on June 3. The leader proposed a plebiscite followed by a transfer of territory. Leo Amery noted that British "efforts to promote an internal settlement might be seriously compromised since it would scarcely be possible for Henlein to accept a solution less favourable than thought reasonable by The Times." Halifax argued with Dawson about the leader but "did not add what was true, that this amounted to an informal voicing of the British position."[26]

Halifax communicated as much to his diplomats. He said

> I fear that yesterday's leading article in "The Times" may be misinterpreted by the Czechoslovakian Government as representing a change of policy on the part of His Majesty's Government and the abandonment of their effort to bring about an agreed settlement between the Czechoslovak Government and Herr Hitler on the basis of regional self-administration with the framework of the

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[25] The Times, "Anxious Moments," May 23, 1938, 15.

[26] Barnes and Nicholson, eds., The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929-1940 (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 476; The Times, "Problem for Settlement," June 3, 1938, 15.

Czechoslovak State.[27]

The leader drew an unexpected comment from John Walter the normally silent manager of the paper. He expressed shock to find Dawson advocating "the cause of the wolf against the lamb, on the grounds of justice." Dawson considered the irritation misplaced. He knew that the policy The Times advocated was the same policy expressed to him by Chamberlain as early as March.[28]

Former Prime Minister Lloyd George added his voice to the controversy. He criticized The Times, Chamberlain, and the appeasers in general of "cringing before the Dictators." He argued that the system of appeasement practiced by Chamberlain searched for ways to absolve Europe of guilt for the punishment of the Germans after the war.

Dawson responded calling Lloyd George as a "disgruntled critic." He added that to accept George's argument meant war. Dawson complained that appeasement had a rationale for wanting peace at all costs. He explained that the "common people of their own and other countries have to pay in blood and misery for their (anti-appeasers) detestable

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[27] DBFP, Third Series, I, 374, June 4, 1938, Halifax to Basil Newton.

[28] The History of The Times: The 150 Anniversary and Beyond, 1912-1948 Part II Chapters XIII-XXIV with Appendices and Index (London: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1952), 21; and Larry Fuchser, Neville Chamberlain and Appeasement: A Study in the Politics of History (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1982), 127.

miscalculations."[29]

The controversy over the June 3 leader finally forced Dawson to clarify the paper's role. He stated that papers

> may sometimes render a public service by publishing opinions or suggestions which those actually engaged in negotiating may not find it convenient to express, even if they share it. Immature and partially informed controversy has often prejudiced international transactions....Compromise may not be logical or very noble but it is a recognition that virtue may reside in views other than our own, and as a method it gives practical results.[30]

Geoffrey Dawson finally got something right. He intended his words to expose the positive elements of appeasement. Unfortunately the substance of his words pointed out the exact problem of The Times view of appeasement. It did not matter to him that Edward Halifax disagreed with the timing of his words. Dawson was not interested in the subtle aspects of diplomacy. He knew Halifax agreed with the content of his words and that was all that mattered.

By mid-summer of 1938 Hitler stood poised to enact his plan to take over Czechoslovakia. He had time, and a well trained military on his side. He had the British Foreign Office, and British diplomats arguing his position against Czechoslovakia, one of only two operating democracies on the

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[29] The Times, "An Old Fellows Queer Speech," June 8, 1938, 13.

[30] The Times, "Policy and Public Opinion," June 22, 1938, 18.

European continent. He had a British Prime Minister more afraid of war than the cost of peace. Finally he had the editor of the most important paper of its time searching for ways to help him. From Adolph Hitler's position, the future looked bright.

CHAPTER X

MUNICH: THE DUBIOUS SUCCESS OF APPEASEMENT

On July 4, Neville Chamberlain stated his position regarding appeasement. He declared he would "pursue a policy of appeasement up to but not beyond the point when it might involve the sacrifice of British liberty or the general substitution of the rule of force for the rule of law." From the Czechoslovakian perspective they must have wondered if Chamberlain believed any force used by the Germans violated the Prime Minister's rule of law.[1]

In an ironic statement, Geoffrey Dawson recorded his thoughts on the eve of a speech by Samual Hoare. He noted that Hoare kept redrafting the speech "looking for a moral tone of our foreign policy." The issue of morality constituted the primary problem with the government's policy in the first place.[2]

Chamberlain decided to give, at least, the appearance of resolving the Czech problem. To that end, and to ease tension and provide common ground for negotiations between

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[1] The Times, "Mr. Chamberlain's Review," July 4, 1938, 15.

[2] Dawson Diary, Oxford, England, July 14, 1938.

the Czechs and Germans, the British secretly considered the possibility of a mediator. The subject of mediation was of so sensitive a matter that the Foreign Office provided "no inkling" of the decision to the Germans.[3]

The Foreign Office sought candidates for the position, but no name submitted met with approval. In early July Halifax put forth the name of Sir Walter Runciman, former President of the Board of Trade. Chamberlain accepted Runciman for the job but no announcement appeared.

Runciman accepted the mission but believed he had no chance of success. He did not believe that the Czechs stood in the way. He believed the problems originated with Chamberlain. Runciman thought Chamberlain had no intention of accepting any kind of agreement emanating from Prague. He told a friend that Chamberlain "had put him out in a dinghy in mid-Atlantic." He believed he was working without the blessing of the Government and had no chance to succeed.[4]

Dawson kept up the pressure on the Czech government and British public opinion. On July 20 he warned, "it is, in fact, an open secret that the British Government are waiting for a Czechoslovak settlement in order to improve the

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[3] Woodward, E. L., ed. Documents on British Foreign Policy: Third Series, Volume I, (London: His Majesties Stationary Office, 1949), 461, Eric Phipps to Edward Halifax, July 1, 1938.

[4] R. J. Minney, The Private Papers of Hore-Belisha (London: Collins, 1960), 137.

prospects of a resumption of the Anglo-German negotiations." Dawson not only regarded the Czechs a threat to the security of Europe. He also considered them a threat to the ability of the British to conduct peaceful negotiations with the Germans.[5]

Dawson elevated the level of his criticism of Czechoslovakian resistance. He had enough inside information to focus accurately on Foreign Office issues in the pages of his paper. Unfortunately for the Foreign Office, when Dawson thought the pressure from Whitehall insufficient, he took it upon himself to release information of great sensitivity. Such was the case with his dramatic disclosure on July 23.

Dawson wrote that "lacking a Czechoslovak settlement for the [Anglo-German] agreement, negotiations must remain uneasy and shifting." He then described the Runciman mission noting that it had the opportunity to "make pliable the Czech position." The first problem was that Runciman was not going to Czechoslovakia to lay blame at the feet of the Czechs. Runciman went with little support from Chamberlain. Chamberlain's closest friends knew that the Prime Minister hoped the mission would fail. The second problem was that until Dawson informed the world of the

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[5] The Times, "Moving Towards Agreement," July 20, 1938, 14.

mission, the Germans did not know it existed.[6]

The Times leader discussing the Runciman mission prompted a great deal of consternation in London. The German Ambassador to London, Herbert von Dirksen, did not hear of the mission until July 24. The editorial force Halifax to visit him and explain The Times article. Dawson gave the impression in the leader that the Germans instigated the idea of mediator von Dirksen's response was irritation. Halifax told von Dirksen that he would fix the problem but Dawson never printed a retraction.[7]

Before leaving for Prague, Runciman visited with Dawson about the mission. Dawson regarded the mission as a means to further distance Britain from the League of Nations. Dawson told his readers that the

> truth is that events have disproved the too facile assumption that the League was the best instrument for the function of diplomacy. So long as the desired results are peacefully attained, procedure is a matter of relatively small importance. Respect for an ideal must never make people blind to the immediate issue.[8]

The ideal was Czechoslovakian sovereignty and democracy.

Dawson's position on appeasement did not receive

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[6] The Times, "Peace Initiative," July 23, 1938, 12.

[7] Documents and Materials Relating to the Eve of the Second World War, Vol. II, Dirksen Papers 1938-1939 (New York: International Publishers, 1948), 156.

[8] Dawson Diary, August 1, 1938; The Times, "Idealism in Practice," August 4, 1938, 11.

complete support from his staff. Noted military writer Basil Liddell Hart tendered his resignation on August 10. He complained that his freedom to write, hindered by editorial cutting, watered down his views and gave the wrong impression to The Times readers.

In his letter of resignation he wrote

> If I were to keep my position, and write mere half-truths I should be more guilty of misleading the public that those who lack the knowledge I have acquired. Whenever I have written about the subject in an article nothing has been published, Naturally this provokes since most people I meet tend to ask my view of the situation, and when I give it they want to know why it has not been set forth in this paper. Now a disturbing suppression is extended to the discussion of disturbing facts in the immediate sphere of defence.[9]

Dawson responded to the resignation by advising Robin Barrington-Ward that release of the information "would give the wrong impression if it were published." The right impression was that The Times possessed a united front in its support of appeasement. Information to the contrary, particularly coming from Liddell Hart, stood to damage Dawson's position and his aims.[10]

On August 29 Dawson and Barrington-Ward wrote companion editorials. They wrote that the future harbored great

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[9] Dawson Archive, The Times, London, August 10, 1938.

[10] Dawson Archive, August 17, 1938.

uncertainty as long as Czechoslovakia resisted the way of peace. The Times demanded that the government of Czechoslovakia produce "real sacrifices" and contribute to the "true and constructive resources of civilization." Dawson reminded his readers, including the Germans that the "conception of strategic security must be illusory if it is itself undermined by disaffection from national groups which have been given too little to lose from the disruption of the commonwealth."[11]

Halifax expressed concern about the aggressive nature of Dawson's editorials. Dawson agreed with Halifax' comments. Dawson gave his word that he would hold off on any more "helpful" editorials until they appeared more natural and uninvited by the British Government. Halifax understood that the negotiation with the Czech's could not appear to the Germans as a farce. Unfortunately the Germans already believed that they were, and The Times leaders only made that suspicion more vivid.[12]

The problem Halifax had with The Times had less to do with his personal desires than the pending success of the Runciman mission. Despite little chance for success Runciman appeared very close to convincing the Czech

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[11] The Times, "Briton's Purpose," August 24, 1938, 13; Ibid., "Solutions," August 24, 1939, 13.

[12] Franklin Gannon, The British Press and Germany: 1936-1939 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 70 and 75.

government to accept Conrad Henlein's demands. Because of information Halifax had from the Germans, he believed that if Runciman succeeded, the crisis could still be diffused without violence. His belief seemed about to come true.

Through the last week of August and the first week of September, Runciman reported a softening of the Czech position on Sudeten independence. The Sudeten Party, while fairly confident of the pliability of British diplomacy, remained unsure about the official position of the British government. Henlein agreed to accept peaceful partition if the Czech government went with his demands. Halifax wanted the situation resolved. He had little regard for the Runciman mission but needed some diplomatic success with which to bargain with the Nazis.

On this point he and Dawson disagreed. Dawson wanted an immediate involvement of German diplomacy. He thought a temporary settlement the same thing as no settlement at all. He and Chamberlain wanted Czechoslovakia dismantled because they saw the issue of peace in terms of justice to German colonial aims. Number 10 Downing Street, nor Printing House Square supported the viability of the Czechoslovakian state.

On September 6 Dawson after an extended vacation, returned to the paper. At his office Dawson discovered Leo Kennedy working on a leader for the next days edition.

Dawson believed Kennedy's piece expressed "rather crudely the idea which we had relied upon of a secession of the Sudeten fringe in Germany." Dawson re-wrote the leader himself. The leader of September 7 became Dawson's ultimate contribution to the appeasement debacle.[13]

Dawson's words, and perceived private position, ruined any potential success in Czechoslovakia. Kennedy later noted that the ideas for the article came from a private letter from Halifax in August. The writer's content expressed hope for a quick failure of the Runciman mission. Dawson had not printed the content of the letter but it received wide distribution in the editorial offices. He hoped his editorial would quicken the pace of Runciman's defeat.

The leader said

> If the Sudetens now ask for more than the Czech Government are ready to give.... it can only be inferred that the Germans are going beyond the mere removal of disabilities for those who do not find themselves at ease within the Czechoslovak Republic. In that case it might be worth while for the Czechoslovak Government to consider whether they should exclude altogether the project, which has found favour in some quarters, of making Czechoslovakia a more homogeneous state by the cession of that fringe of alien populations who are contiguous to the nation to which they are

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[13] DD, September 6, 1938.

united by race.[14]

The effect of Dawson's leader produced discussion in every European capital involved in the crisis. The Russians told the British Embassy that The Times editorial produced the "worst possible effect." The Czechoslovakian Embassy in London demanded an explanation. The Foreign Office assured the Czech's that The Times spoke of it's own intentions and not the government's. The Czechs responded that the "knowledge of the above mentioned newspaper's independence in not shared by a very large section of the population abroad." In Paris, Eric Phipps told Halifax that the French wanted to know if The Times represented the final view of "his Majesty's Government." From Prague, Runciman blasted the paper and told Halifax to "caution them against adventurous speculations." He noted that the "last paragraph of article is a recommendation of an Anschluss."[15]

Czech Foreign Minister to London, Jan Masaryk, held two emotional meetings with Halifax before the Foreign Secretary would disavow the content of the leader. Masaryk warned Halifax that the term "certain circles" in Dawson's leader indicated to Europeans that the leader had the backing of

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[14] The Times, "The Issue," September 7, 1938, 15.

[15] DBFP, Third Series, II, Number 808n, September 8, 1938.

the British Cabinet. From Berlin, Von Ribbentrop made no comment to Halifax, but he believed that it did too.[16]

Dawson shrugged off comments from men like Claude Cockburn of The Week, who stated that the leader "was submitted for the supreme approval of the German Embassy before it was finally shipped off on approval to the Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Geoffrey Dawson." Dawson noted the "volley of abuse of "the Times." He added that issue of the "revision of frontiers in Cz. shd not be ruled out of discussion - a mild suggestion often made before."[17]

Halifax related to friends that he told "that little defeatist Dawson" about the "untimely and unfortunate nature" of the article. Dawson's diary tells a different story. He noted the "hubbub" over the leader and that the "F.O. went through the roof. Not so from the Foreign Secretary who came and lunched w me." Of his meeting with Halifax, he wrote that the leader "had disturbed his office, though he did not seem to dissent from it himself." The lunch ended with Halifax giving Dawson some "Diplomatic notes to wh. we appended some refreshingly convenient

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[16] Johann Bruegel, Czechoslovakia Before Munich: The German Minority Problem and British Appeasement Policy (Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, 1973), 251-252; Hubert Ripka, Munich: Before and After (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 68.

[17] Dawson Archive, box 80 leaf 38, September 8, 1938; DD, September 8, 1938.

extracts fr. "the Times" on the subject of Sudeten secession."[18]

Dawson's leader of September 7, represented the basic problem with the British understanding of Europe in general. The appeasers reflected an "ignorance of the geography, history and both the ethnic diversity and range of political persuasions of the people living in the shadow of the Sudeten Mountains." The appeaser's position was not only unacceptable to President Benes. It remained unacceptable to "that large number of Sudeten Germans for whom union with Germany would mean the loss of all liberty, swift imprisonment, forced labour, and death."[19]

On September 8, Halifax told Basil Newton in Prague that the Sudeten's planned to break off negotiations with the Czech government. Newton responded to Halifax that the Sudeten's desired to weigh their demands with the statements contained in the September 7 edition of The Times. The success of Walter Runciman in late August and early September came apart. The Czechs found themselves removed

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[18] Cockett, Twilight of Truth, 73; DD, September 7, 1938; Dawson Archive, Box 80 Leaf 24-25, September 7, 1938.

[19] William Manchester, The Last Lion, Winston Spencer Churchill: Alone 1932-1940 (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1988), 432; Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill: Volume V 1922-1939, The Prophet of Truth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1977), 979.

from the negotiations and The Times set the stage for Chamberlain's massive failure.[20]

Maintaining the image of negotiation, Hitler invited Chamberlain to Berchtesgarden on September 14. Dawson received the news from Halifax "under seal of secrecy till released but it enabled me to prepare for it, writing headlines and diplomatic notes and getting a leader started." Dawson noted that the visit "was a very great relief to every country in the world."[21]

On September 15 Neville Chamberlain went to Heston air strip for the first flight of his life. Chamberlain had an array of talented and sophisticated individuals with whom to gather information for this meeting he traveled to the airport with only one man. The man Chamberlain chose to go with him however, was not an accomplished diplomat. One of his most trusted advisors on the events in Europe, Geoffrey Dawson accompanied the Prime Minister. "It must have been comforting to be accompanied by a friend who would console you with reasonable answers to unreasonable doubts, someone who understood you, someone you could trust."[22]

Chamberlain returned to London after a brief and

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[20] DBFP, Third Series, II, 799 and 803, September 8, 1938.

[21] DD, September 14, 1938.

[22] Manchester, The Last Lion, 337.

insignificant two day meeting with Hitler. Their meeting, at least from the standpoint of the Prime Minister, could best be described as a listening session. At the meeting Chamberlain agreed to the annexation of the Sudeten territory. The Cabinet met on September 17 and decided to stop any contact with Czechoslovakia that might give the appearance of further negotiation. Unfortunately for the British, the Czechs were not willing to go quietly.

On September 20, Dawson blandly understated the Czech attitude to the proposal agreed to by Chamberlain at Berchtesgarden. He noted that the agreement "could not, in the nature of things, be expected to make a strong prima facie appeal to the Czech Government, and least of all to President Benes." On September 20 the Czech government agreed. They notified Chamberlain that they had not intention of allowing the annexation of their sovereign territory.[23]

Chamberlain notified Hitler of the need for further conversations. Hitler relented and Chamberlain left for Godesberg. Chamberlain departed England on September 22. He made the trip to the airport again with Dawson at his side. He departed for Germany with an awareness that the

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[23] The Times, "Prague and the Plan," September 20, 1938, 15; DBFP, Third Series, II, 978.

next few days meant the difference between war and peace.

On September 22 Dawson argued that despite growing criticism of appeasement by some members of Parliament that Chamberlain offered to Czechoslovakia "such assurances and safeguards it has never had from Great Britain before. That is certainly not betrayal. He has made a surrender, not to Herr hitler, but to justice - and that is not dishonourable." On September 23 Dawson turned his ire to Czechoslovakia. He offered his readers an intimate look at the true failings of the Czech nation. He wrote that Chamberlain went to Hitler to avoid for Czechoslovakia the "destruction by war or of disintegration without it. No pressure could have had that result upon a truly and naturally cohesive country."[24]

At Godesberg Hitler, and the conditions of the discussion, reflected an ominous change. Chamberlain found Hitler unprepared or uninterested in negotiation the Czech situation any longer. Chamberlain had no ability, in more than one sense of the word, to press the issue. Chamberlain left Godesberg on September 24.

The Prime Minister returned to a series of confused and panic stricken meetings with the Cabinet. Chamberlain's

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[24] The Times, "The Second Visit," September 22, 1938, 12; The Times, "Mr. Chamberlain's Mission," September 23, 1938, 13.

primary concern in the meetings were not to insure the sovereignty of the Czech government. Chamberlain hoped to convince France not to intervene if Hitler used force. Dawson knew of Chamberlain's concern over the French. He told a friend of his that the French were "squealing to be saved by any means from their obligations to the Czechs. (You should see some of their telegrams to our Government)."[25]

In the evening on September 27 Neville Chamberlain addressed the nation by radio. The time to make peace no longer existed. He said "How horrible, incredible, it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing." Chamberlain knew who the Czechs were. Since reaching the Prime Ministry over a year earlier, he worked constantly to do away with them.[26]

At eleven-thirty on September 28 Chamberlain wrote a personal note to Hitler. It said

> I am ready to come to Berlin myself at once to discuss arrangements for transfer with you and representatives of the Czechoslovak Government together with representatives of France and Italy, if you desire, I feel convinced we could reach

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[25] DBFP, Third Series, II, 978, Record of Anglo-French Conversation held at No. 10 Downing Street, September 25, 1938; Gannon, The British Press and Germany, 190.

[26] Gilbert and Gott, The Appeasers, 170.

agreement in a week.[27]

Hitler responded that he would hold the deadline for the invasion for only one more day. The Foreign Office received the message and passed it to a courier to deliver to Chamberlain.

Chamberlain attended Parliament at two-thirty on the afternoon of September 28. The reason for the debate was the Anglo-French plan carving up Czechoslovakia. Half way through Chamberlain's speech John Simon handed the note to the Prime Minister. Chamberlain announced the nature of the note and told the House that he would accept Hitler's final invitation. The timing of the note, and the chaos which ensued, ended the debate on the Anglo-French plan virtually assuring its implementation.

Questions about the timing of the message before Parliament appeared later. When members of Parliament reviewed the event they questioned why the note took so long to reach Chamberlain. It appeared first to Halifax in the Peers Gallery and then by the Government Benches and finally the front Bench. A note of such urgency should have been passed directly to Chamberlain.

In reality the invitation from Hitler arrived at the

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[27] DBFP, Third Series, II, 1158, Halifax to Henderson, September 28, 1938.

German Embassy at twelve o'clock. The decoded message arrived at Number 10 prior to Chamberlain's speech to the House of Commons. Chamberlain used the dramatic terror of impending war to accomplish two things. He appeared to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat, and he closed debate on the Anglo-French conversation concerning the disposition of Czechoslovakia.[28]

Dawson argued that the "speech and White Paper together are worthy to take an honourable place in the archives of British Diplomacy." He could not have been less accurate. Chamberlain managed to avoid a painful and perhaps conclusive, defeat of his plans by maneuvering around the process. He handled Parliament with the same strategy he handled his own Foreign Office, he avoided the salient issues and went on his own.[29]

In Munich, Chamberlain, threatened and cajoled, reached agreement with Hitler. In the end he gave into Hitler's original demands. The Czech delegation was not able to attend the meeting. Their presence was not required. The Czechs trusted the British and French to protect their interests and nation. In so doing they assumed that giving ground in good faith to the threat of force would offer them

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[28] Gilbert and Gott, The Appeasers, 173-175.

[29] The Times, "On the Munich," September 26, 1938, 13.

some benefit. President Benes found himself consigned to history books "remembered as the man who tried to survive by being reasonable and plausible in an age when reason had ceased to count."[30]

On Chamberlain's return, Dawson heaped honor upon the Prime Minister. Dawson declared that the settlement "was agreed by every Government represented at Munich that there was to be a separation of the races in Czechoslovakia and that the Sudeten's should join the Reich." The settlement "has been achieved altogether without force." Dawson's praise did not mention that the agreement came with the real threat of force, and that in the end the country that suffered because of that threat no longer existed.[31]

Chamberlain's final disgrace came as a result of his limited perception of what he had created. Standing on the balcony of Number 10 Downing Street, Chamberlain went to the window and offered the crowd his estimation of events. "My friends, this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street, peace with honor. I believe it is peace for our time." When Benjamin Disraeli said those words in 1878 they were true. The

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[30] Lewis Namier, In the Nazi Era (London: Macmillan and Company, 1952), 135.

[31] The Times, "Agreement at Munich," September 30, 1938, 13.

problem for Chamberlain was that he most certainly was not Disraeli.[32]

Dawson summarized the events of recent days and heaped praise upon Neville Chamberlain. The loss of the Sudetenland to the Germans proved "unavoidable, nor was it desirable that it should be avoided." To Chamberlain, he said, "No conqueror returning from a victory on the battlefield has come home adorned with nobler laurels than Mr. Chamberlain from Munich yesterday." Neither the Czechs nor the Germans accepted that analysis.[33]

Not everyone in England shared Dawson's confidence in the outcome of the crisis.

> Amid all the praise of Mr. Chamberlain I searched your paper today in vain for any word of gratitude to the gallant Czech nation which has sacrificed territory, rich resources and a frontier which has stood for 1000 years in order to save the world from bloodshed. Mr. Chamberlain and Herr Hitler have stated in their declaration that "We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other question that may concern our two countries...." Dr. Benes may well wonder whether the sacrifices forced upon his country by 2,000,000 armed Germans and the repeated pressure of his former friends can offer much hope that the method of consultation will be

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[32] Quoted in Telford Taylor, Munich: The Price of Peace (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1979), 64-65.

[33] The Times, "A New Dawn," October 1, 1938, 13.

extended also the victim.[34]

The disgust also extended to members of Chamberlain's Cabinet. On October 3, Alfred "Duff" Cooper, First Lord of the Admiralty, resigned. Dawson expressed indignation for the resignation, and Anthony Winn, The Times Lobby Correspondent, wrote the story. The version which appeared in the paper the next day was an edited, and somewhat sarcastic, re-write by Dawson. That same day Anthony Winn resigned telling Dawson of his "distaste for what I frankly regard as a silly and dangerous policy." He criticized Dawson for writing "two thinly veiled sneers at a man who was abandoning his career for his principles." Another of Dawson's correspondents, Colin Coote, threatened to resign over Dawson's policies as well. Winston Churchill persuaded him to stay "as a friend in the enemy's camp."[35]

The difference in perspective concerning the outcome of the crisis occupied two extreme polls. Dawson believed "that only a people prepared to face the worst can, through their leaders, cause peace to prevail in a crisis." A friend of Duff Cooper framed the other view. "The world is

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[34] Dawson Archive, box 80 leaf 60, October 1, 1938, Nigel Law to Dawson.

[35] Times Archive, October 4, 1938; D.A., box 80 leaf 67-69, October 4, 1938; Cockett, Twilight of Truth, 97.

changing. Values have improved. Two thousand years ago a man could reckon on receiving thirty pieces of silver if he went in for betrayal."[36]

The power and weight of the appeasement movement came unhinged following the Munich Crisis. The pretence of political victory lasted only a few days. The same was true in the private offices of The Times. Dawson and Barrington-Ward grew more aware that within the paper they had opposition. In the next few months, sobering reality took the place of real political support. For Dawson 1938 capped a five year attempt to secure peace for Britain. Without realizing it Dawson helped reduce the diplomatic power and moral right of the British.

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[36] The Times, "New Dawn," October 10, 1938, 13; Cato, Guilty Men (New York: Frederick Stokes Company, 1940), 72.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

Almost any book written on British appeasement in the 1930s includes some mention of Geoffrey Dawson. These were generally represented as minor. His contributions to significant events have seldom received serious consideration. Dawson's role, until now, has never undergone the same rigorous study of the primary characters in British government and society.

Part of the reason Dawson has escaped scrutiny is the number of major public figures with sizable reputations who managed the role of appeasement in full view. Dawson did his work quietly, behind the scenes. When accusations arose following the Second World War, there were plenty of prominent individuals to blame. Ultimately, members of the government occupied the first level of blame. From a certain standpoint that is understandable. The government made the decisions.

Working with the issues in Germany Dawson and his associates worked against men and ideas foreign to traditional British diplomacy. Revel says "It may seem to casually cruel to lampoon intelligent, patriotic men whose

only fault was a shortage of ideas they needed to understand what was, to them at least, a new phenomenon: totalitarianism." They simply could not believe that a man like Hitler, possessing a relevant, fair argument could possibly own ulterior motives.[1]

Dawson's basic fault was that he saw himself as a statesman, rather than a journalist. He campaigned against the Treaty of Versailles since 1919. His agreement with Hitler stemmed from his repudiation of Versailles. Dawson was not alone. The belief that Versailles placed too much blame on Germany was one many British politicians shared. Dawson believed Versailles laid a dangerous seed-bed for political convulsion. To that end, he used The Times and his social connections to end the suffocating power of the treaty.

His outlet through The Times received extra muscle and credibility because of his relationship with high elected officials in the British government. He so mirrored their attitudes that his work lent itself to criticism of political pamphleteering. While he protested the notion of government collusion, a protest still commonly heard, his work and own words betray him.

The Times received acceptance in foreign capitals as official because Europeans understood the political nature

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[1] Jean-Francois Revel, How Democracies Perish (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 219.

of the press. The American idea of even-handedness and fairness in reporting was not a creed in Europe. That Dawson knew so many important people in the British Conservative party added to the formidable political importance of Dawson and The Times.

Dawson's talent for anticipating and reporting Conservative positions did not mean that he did not have a secret relationship with powerful individuals in the government, and that this relationship provided him with information he should not have had. His long time friendship with Edward Halifax, and his social relationship with Neville Chamberlain provided Dawson with a unique position. Using that position he privately and willingly communicated the style and substance of diplomacy wanted by the appeasers. His diaries show the proportion and sensitivity of his access to secret information. He used that information to influence public opinion.

His reputation as a leader in the appeasement movement did not have significance only to continental Europeans. He had a wealth of British detractors as well. Critics charged that the "greatest propagandist in this town is Mr. Geoffrey Dawson, editor of The Times." Through his paper, and with the blessing of Chamberlain and Halifax, the Germans received better information about policy making than the

Foreign Office.[2]

Dawson utilized the Prime Ministry of Stanley Baldwin to argue for the hope vested in the League of Nations. Later, he helped Neville Chamberlain focus on the single issue of unilateral agreements. In so doing he aborted his earlier position which was a campaign for justice. His record reflects an evolution away from support of the League of Nations, Czechoslovakian independence, and economic sanctions against aggressors.

He later expressed open hostility to any negotiation programs normally accepted by standard diplomatic organizations. He became the scribe of unilateral acquiescence to the demands of Adolph Hitler. His change was a direct result of his relationship with the government.

The government apparatus which produced Dawson's license was the diplomatic ignorance of the Chamberlain administration. Chamberlain recognized the great changes in Europe. His error was in thinking that those changes, once in place, Chamberlain could control them by the surrender of principal to expediency. Chamberlain once told his sister that as "Chancellor of the Ex. I could hardly have moved a pebble; now I have only to raise a finger and the whole face of Europe in changed!" He did change the face of Europe,

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[2] Times Archive, Cutting Book, excerpt from Evening Standard, May 24, 1939; Richard Cockett, Twilight of Truth: Chamberlain, Appeasement and the Manipulation of the Press (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1989), 74.

but not the way he or the appeasers hoped.[3]

At the root of Dawson's campaign was the dread of another war. He believed that his insider role afforded him an obligation to contribute to peace. His primary motivation was the remembrance of the British experience in the Great War. His fear overcame his requirements of honest reporting and created in The Times a monolith of censorship and deception. He presented a myopic version of events, that at the height of his personal success, produced defections from his own staff. He exhibited the need "to cover that pest in democratic society, the individual who seeks to control public thought by private censorship."[4]

A common argument in support of appeasement was that England lagged behind Germany militarily. Another was the common assertion of public opinion regarding war with Germany. These excuses reflect some truth, but not for the reasons generally argued. There were many people, in and out of the government, who understood the nature of the Nazi regime. They were not silent, nor were they a radical fringe. The public support which Chamberlain and the pro-appeasement argument fell following the Munich disaster. That fall displays the prominence and numbers of critics of

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[3] Chamberlain Archive, University of Birmingham, Chamberlain to Ida, August 8, 1937, nc\18\1\1015.

[4] Cato, Guilty Men (New York, Frederick Stokes Company, 1940), xii.

the appeasers.

Men like Winston Churchill, Robert Vansittart, Anthony Eden, and Duff Cooper all suffered dismissal and criticism at the hands of the appeasers. The Labour Party campaigned against Hitler as early as the mid-1920s. Papers like the Evening Standard and the News Chronicle printed the stories Dawson refused to acknowledge. The British military leaked information about the lackadaisical attitude of British rearmament. Dawson suppressed the opinions of all of them. He helped Chamberlain circumvent the diplomatic process because he thought that he understood the German question better than they.

The British were not prepared for war because of the failure of their political leadership, and lies from their most influential newspaper. Many tried to raise the pertinent issues in Parliamentary debates but found themselves outmaneuvered by Chamberlain's control of the House of Commons and important elements in the press. "The point remains that the British government consciously and deliberately took chances with national defense in the hope that the Germans would behave." Chamberlain promised peace but did not prepare his people for war.[5]

Geoffrey Dawson did not start the problems arising out of the Treaty of Versailles. He did not create the problems

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[5] Williamson Murray, "Munich at Fifty," Commentary 86 (July 1988), 25-30.

of impotence that belied the words of the League of Nations. He did not enact the policies of Chamberlain, nor place the people in important positions who did. Because he is not directly responsible for the major events which led to the Second World War it is hard for some to place serious blame at his feet.

Geoffrey Dawson played one of the most dangerous of roles in the appeasement movement. He fashioned the intellectual tenets which undergirded the policies of the appeasers. Without his voice the British public, nor the heads of European countries, could not have relied so heavily on the activity of a handful of foolish political entities.

Without The Times the open debate in England, and the diplomatic activity in the various European capitals, would have had more control over events. The Times, not the elected government, became the vehicle for the transmission of the appeasement movement. Without an authorized secret voice for Chamberlain to communicate to the dictators, he could not have successfully avoided the obligations of democratic government.

Geoffrey Dawson died in 1944. He did not see the end to the war he helped start. He did not see the results of the restructuring of Europe by the Soviet Union made possible by the appeasers encouragement to Hitler to do as he pleased. His greatest fears of a divided Europe came to

pass. The fifty years after the war produced a new kind of conflict, dividing not only Europe, but the world into two armed camps. The place those events began are at Munich, the finest achievement of the appeasement movement, the apex of the career of Geoffrey Dawson.

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