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# The 'British War Party' in the Interwar Period

By FRANCIS NEILSON

A GENERAL ELECTION held in England soon after the First World War came to an end completed the disaster that was already besetting the Liberal Party. Lloyd George became Prime Minister and his cabinet was a mottled one. Its members showed traces of the scars inflicted upon both parties during the struggle. The mixture of Tory, Conservative and Liberal-Unionist with the National Liberals and one or two members of the Labor Party seemed to change the character and composition of the House, as it had been known before August 1914. At that time, no one thought it possible for Bonar Law or Stanley Baldwin to become important ministers of the government.

The decimated Liberals were a lorn lot when those who had opposed Grey's policy joined the Labor Party. After nearly four years, the national government disappeared and Lloyd George retired from the ministerial scene, and became a private member. He was feeling the strain of the exertions of his war years and, no doubt, was glad of the rest afforded by freedom from cabinet work.

There was no one, then, of outstanding ability in any party who was fighting for a seat in Parliament. Indeed, one of the leading London papers spoke of the dearth of men available to put the country on its feet again. The pre-war parliamentarians were an aging lot, it was said, and little could be expected from them after their sore trials of fighting the war from the camp in Downing Street. But at the election of 1922, a rather new type of man under the Labor label was elected. Attlee won a seat; so did Emanuel Shinwell. Herbert Morrison joined them the following year. And ten years later Arthur Greenwood and Stafford Cripps were elected members.

## The Old and the New

BEFORE THE WAR, Ramsay MacDonald's Independent Labor Party had been looked at askance by members of the old party, for it contained some men who were not classed as bona fide toilers. The distinction was a curious one. Men who had worked at the face of the coal, served on railways, and in factories were prone to look upon the white-collar workers as of another order. Yet, they had no compunction in welcoming the Liberals who severed their connection with that party when the war began.

I do not remember knowing a single man in the Labor Party who had

been to a public school or a university, as Ponsonby and Trevelyan had. And although some people took pleasure in scoffing at the old-school tie, Ramsay MacDonald and Snowden were very glad to welcome such men as Philip Morel, Noel Buxton, and other dissentient Liberals who had been to public schools and universities.

After the sensational election of 1922, a new element entered the ranks of the Labor Party. Gentlemen of the legal profession doffed their wigs and gowns and took to the political platforms of the constituencies. With them appeared white-collar workers who had been interested in the work of local communities, such as Attlee and Herbert Morrison. There were one or two schoolmasters, and an accession of strength came to the party when Sir William Jowitt left the Liberals to become a Labor member. Several of these men reached high positions. But when the European war pot began to boil in the autumn of 1937, a caustic critic (Josiah Wedgwood) remarked that there was not one who knew as much about Europe as members of the House of Commons had known in July 1914.

I had a long chat with Wedgwood before the Second World War about the position the Labor Party would take up if war seemed possible. He was convinced that it would start a campaign for peace. The situation was curious in that year—1937.

A banquet was given to me in the House of Commons by Lord Queensborough and his friends. The leader of the Conservative Party, Lord Salisbury, was present. The two commoners at the table were Clement Attlee and Josiah Wedgwood. There were more than twelve peers of the realm, most of whom I knew well when I was a member of the House. The conversation after the meal was general, and when I took leave of them, I remarked to Wedgwood that I had not heard a single word about the inevitable war.

When I left America that year to visit England, rumors of war were heard in many quarters. Later, in October, Roosevelt delivered his quarantine speech in Chicago. The contrast between no-war feeling in England and the belligerent propaganda of certain sections of the community in the United States was puzzling, to say the least. In Paris that year I was informed by a correspondent of a London paper that there was not the slightest evidence of a coming war disturbing the minds of the people. The "invulnerability" of the Maginot Line was assurance against attack, the French thought.

However, two problems, among others, denoted severe frictions which called for grave consideration by the powers. One was Danzig and the Polish Corridor; the other, the fate of the minorities in Czechoslovakia.

Still, these were not new ones to harass the minds of British statesmen. For seventeen years the League of Nations had received petition after petition from the Germans of Danzig and from the four minority groups in Czechoslovakia to right their wrongs, but no heed was given to a single one.

In spite of the statement made by the well-known editor of *The Observer*, J. L. Garvin, in his article contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the chief delegates to the League of Nations still held to the preposterous idea that Germany was a guilty nation. Garvin said that Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles had no moral weight and no judicial validity. Further on he says: "To speak of 'guilt' in connection with the rival forces, inspired by irreconcilable ideas of justification, is an extreme triviality."<sup>1</sup>

This statement goes far to corroborate what Harold Nicolson wrote in his life of his father, Lord Carnock (Sir Arthur Nicolson, Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs):

. . . I cannot understand it. You cannot impose a moral judgment on a whole people. . . . I think some people *were* more responsible than others . . . but not a whole nation.<sup>2</sup>

There was no reason why Lord Robert Cecil and his friends at Geneva should have been ignorant of these statements and many others from British minds which are like them. But once propaganda supplanted truth in the mind of such a person as Lord Robert Cecil, only an intellectual earthquake can remove it.

#### Germany and England before World War II

HOW STRANGE IT WAS in Germany during the first three or four years of the Hitlerian regime. After Hindenburg stepped down, the Führer lost no time in setting Germany on her feet again. Some twelve or thirteen years had been wasted by different governments striving to make headway against the pressure of occupying forces.

I spent months in Germany in the year 1921 and visited the country several times before Hitler came to the fore. I knew it from Hamburg to Munich and from Vienna to Cologne. Everywhere I went I saw an industrious people striving against formidable odds. But in all my travels I never met a single Englishman. Americans were there in crowds; indeed, in the summer of 1921 one Berlin paper remarked that they had taken possession of the capital, for they were the only people who kept the shopkeepers in food and lodging.

<sup>1</sup> See Montgomery, *Belgium, Victors' Justice*, Hinsdale, Illinois, Regnery, 1949, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Arthur Nicolson, *First Lord Carnock*, London, Constable, 1937, p. 433.

In Germany there was enough and more of hunger and sorrow throughout the land to make the people ready to follow any leader who would promise the bare necessities of existence.

Now what was the position in England? Stanley Baldwin was Prime Minister of England when George V died. It was the fourth time that he had occupied that office, although some of his tenures were brief. Indeed, since October 1922 there had been eight governments, all of short duration. There had never been a period in English parliamentary history when the electors had gone to the polling booths so often. Churchill had found a safe seat in the Woodford Division of Essex, but he had been out of office for eight years, and it is not difficult to imagine his thoughts about the position that he occupied. As one of his critics said, he was neither here nor there, for he was not on the Treasury Bench nor was he the leader of the opposition—a strange position for a Member of Parliament who had occupied so many cabinet posts. No one seemed to want him. The feeling in the Conservative Party had been clearly expressed by Bonar Law, as Lloyd George describes it in his memoirs.

He had been busy writing, however. Two of the books the historian will read with deep interest are: *Great Contemporaries* (1937) and *Step by Step* (1939). Another one is *While England Slept* (1938). These seem to have been by-products of his long work upon the First World War. Still, they are important, for he reveals in them the burden of his mind and his ideas on European reconstruction.

He had lived to see all his notions of wiping Germany off the map of Europe go to rack and ruin. He was disconsolate, for he had no friends in the House when Hitler became the head of the German Reich. No Conservative, no Liberal, no Labor man (after Lloyd George gave up office) had a good word to say for him as a politician. He had had "no luck," as Sir Philip Gibbs said. At the end of the war he had seen men of only ordinary ability succeed where he had failed. Bonar Law, Stanley Baldwin, Ramsay MacDonald, Neville Chamberlain and others had formed governments and enjoyed the plums of office. Whether in or out of cabinets, they were news for the journals, so long as they remained in Parliament. It was a sad lot for a man of "fertile brain," to quote Lloyd George's opinion of his imagination.

Yet, there was not a man in the House who had a keener appreciation of the wonders that had been wrought by Adolf Hitler, after he set to work. The lavish praise Churchill rendered to the Führer in *Great Contemporaries* and *Step by Step* exceeded anything of that order that had been given by an Englishman to a European statesman.

After Stanley Baldwin resigned at the accession of George VI, Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister. That was in 1937. Another merchant from the Midlands had become First Lord of the Treasury. Baldwin had succeeded in forcing the eldest son of George V to abdicate—but not because he was determined to marry an American divorcee. The real reason went much deeper than that, but few knew it. It concerned the coronation service. In this matter, Churchill committed another of his blunders by giving his support to the Prince and by opposing Baldwin's efforts.

#### The Pre-War Role of Winston Churchill

THE TIMES were out of joint. The conditions all around Germany looked drab. There were grave troubles in Poland and in Czechoslovakia. Things were not going well for France, and Mussolini's expeditions in Africa were not turning out well. Russia under Stalin had suffered purge after purge, and if rumor had it aright, the proletariat were none too pleased with the dictatorship.

No one imagined that Neville Chamberlain was the man for the job. Only a Hitler, as Churchill regarded him, would have been equal to the occasion. No doubt, Churchill considered himself especially fitted to solve these problems, but what can a man do without cabinet prestige, in a House in which he has no party to support him? It was then, in the autumn of 1937, that he determined to make his presence felt by forming a party to challenge the government of Neville Chamberlain.

There is no difficulty in tracing the course of his ideas because in his book, *While England Slept*, there are more than forty speeches which show clearly his strategic plan. In the spring of the previous year he had spoken on the increase in the German air force, the occupation of the Rhineland, and the rearmament of Germany.

Mr. Churchill wrote a letter to himself on May 1, 1936, which will be found in his book, *Step by Step*. This is entitled "How Germany is Arming," and in it he says: "I give my warnings, as I have given some before. I do not deal in vague statements. I offer facts and figures which I believe to be true."

He then asks the question: "How much is the Hitler regime spending upon armaments?" His reply to his own question is: "I declared several months ago that Germany spent upwards of £800,000,000 sterling on warlike preparation in the calendar year 1935 alone."<sup>3</sup>

It seems incredible that any intelligent man could make such a prepos-

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 13.

terous statement in a book or in a speech. He does not tell us where he got the figures, and we know that he could not speak German, could not read a German document, and that at one time he had vowed he "wouldn't learn their beastly language." There was only one source from which they could emanate, and that was from the Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir Robert Vansittart. I know of no book, from any source, that supports the statements made by Churchill upon aircraft, military armament, tanks, or any of the equipment and ammunition for an army. Those who have suggested that Vansittart was the source of Churchill's information are not far wrong.

#### Strength of Germany's Armed Forces

ONE OF THE WORKS to which the student must turn for first-hand information of what was taking place in Germany during the early years of Hitler's rule is *The House that Hitler Built*, written by Professor Stephen H. Roberts, of the University of Sydney, Australia. He spent nearly two years in Germany making investigations. He states that the authorities hid nothing of importance from him and were glad to give him the information he sought. In his book he gives facts concerning the military condition of the State when he was there. Here is an excerpt:

Their [the General Staff's] problem was a difficult one—to change a specialized army of 100,000 men enlisted for twelve years into a national force of 600,000 conscripts forced to serve for a year or two. The necessary *cadres* could not be built up in a moment, and, even when the organization was provided, there was a shortage of everything—arms, equipment, officers, barracks. The greatest difficulty was the shortage of instructors, especially in the new aerial and mechanized units. At one stage, aeroplanes were lying idle for lack of trained pilots, because, despite Göring's efforts, Germany had been so poverty-stricken for years that there were few civilian pilots on whom to draw.

It became obvious, then, that it would take years to give practical effect to the law of March 16th. The thirty-six divisions did not exist even on paper when Hitler issued his decree on May 21st, and it was not until the misty morning of November 7th, 1935, almost eight months after Hitler's first announcement, that the first conscripts were called up and the new Nazi war-flag hoisted for the first time. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Churchill's figures were for the year 1935. How can this enormous sum be reconciled with the military condition that Roberts deals with?

A staff study prepared for the U. S. Secretary of the Army, in 1948, and made under the direction of Major-General C. F. Robinson takes "serious issue with some of Winston Churchill's contentions."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.*, New York and London, Harper, 1938, pp. 124-5.

<sup>5</sup> *New York Times*, May 9, 1948, report by Hanson W. Baldwin.

Now let us look at other reports we have comparing Germany's forces with the armies of the Little Entente countries. According to the League of Nations *Armaments Year Book* for the year 1936, the total German war strength was 3,650,000; the Little Entente potential, including Rumania, Poland, Jugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia—all pledged by treaty—amounted to 7,000,000 men, and to this enormous war strength of the Little Entente should be added 6,900,000 for France.

Cesare Santoro, in *Hitler Germany*, first published in Berlin in 1937 and translated into English in 1939, gives an account of the reconstruction of the Wehrmacht. He says:

A few days after the announcement of Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations in October, 1933, the Reich Government proposed in a Memorandum that Germany should be authorised to maintain an Army of 300,000 men. On the basis of a British Memorandum of January 22, 1934, which was presented simultaneously in Berlin, Paris, Rome, Brussels, and Warsaw, direct negotiations in view of an agreement concerning armaments took place repeatedly. *The British Memorandum welcomed Hitler's proposals on the ground that they not only dealt with technical questions of disarmament, but also with the question of political guarantee against aggression.* (Italics mine)<sup>6</sup>

If the reader wishes a fuller report upon these questions raised by Churchill's estimate of expenditures on armaments, he will find it in my book, *The Makers of War*,<sup>7</sup> which was published in 1950, but written some time before that date.

It is now held by some British soldiers of high rank that Vansittart was Churchill's informant. It is scarcely believable that an intelligent man could accept such figures, when he knew that Hitler was negotiating with the powers to hold a conference, for the purpose of agreeing to a disarmament policy. Surely it does not make sense, for there was no ban against an Englishman or any other foreigner entering Germany. Indeed, several of Churchill's countrymen spent many months there viewing the great achievements that Churchill praised, and writing enlightening books about the conditions there. I could mention many. One of great interest to the student is by Charles W. Domville-Fife, *This is Germany*.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the best unbiased report is the article which Lloyd George wrote to the *Daily Express* after his visit in 1936:

I have spoken to the German Führer and have also seen something of the great change which he had wrought. Whatever one may think about

<sup>6</sup> *Loc. cit.*, 3rd ed., Berlin, Internationaler Verlag, 1939, p. 151.

<sup>7</sup> Appleton, Wisconsin, Nelson, esp. ch. IX.

<sup>8</sup> London, Seeley Service, 1939.



his methods, which are assuredly not the methods of Parliamentary countries, there can be no doubt that he has achieved an extraordinary transformation of the spirit inspiring the Germans, of their mutual relations, and of their social and economic views. Hitler rightly claimed in Nuremburg that the movement initiated by him had created a new Germany within the space of four years. . . .

Hitler is Germany's George Washington, the man who has achieved her independence in the teeth of all her oppressors. . . .

What Hitler said in Nuremburg is true: 'the Germans will resist to the uttermost any attempt to invade their country. But they have no longer themselves any desire to invade any other country.' . . .<sup>9</sup>

This occupies several pages in Santoro's book. It is a pity it cannot be published in full and copies sent to every college and university department of history.

There is also the article in *The Nineteenth Century* for October 1936, by Sir Arnold Wilson, M.P. There is no dearth of literature, and no excuse whatever for any man to remain under the delusions of war propaganda. This is not a matter of whether you like or dislike the form of government set up by Hitler. It is not a question of whether it was according to parliamentary rule; a "nobody," an "upstart" is qualified to occupy the position of Chancellor of Germany. The real matter to be decided is: Who was responsible for wringing from Chamberlain the pledge to aid Poland, which is now held to have cocked the triggers of war? We shall now see how Churchill and his friends went to work to assure Hitler that he would have to fight.

#### Lord Halifax

IT WAS NO SURPRISE to politicians who kept abreast of affairs to find that Neville Chamberlain had no place in his cabinet for Churchill. But when it was formed, in May 1937, Anthony Eden became Foreign Secretary, and Duff Cooper became First Lord of the Admiralty. With these two men a nucleus was formed for a War Party.

The phrase "British War Party" was coined by Sir John Hammerton and may be found in *Europe's Fight for Freedom*.<sup>10</sup> It refers particularly to the group that opposed Neville Chamberlain's efforts for peace before World War II. The chief members of the party were Conservatives and Labor men.

In this cabinet Lord Halifax was given the position of Lord President. He had been a German hater since the days when, as Captain Wood, he

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in C. Santoro, *Hitler Germany*, pp. 415-6.

<sup>10</sup> Twelve weekly parts, ed. by Sir John Hammerton, London, The Amalgamated Press, 1938.

had joined Kennedy Jones in gathering names for the infamous Round Robin, urging that Germany be treated with severity after the First World War. The story has been told by John Middleton Murry in his book, *The Betrayal of Christ by the Churches*.<sup>11</sup>

There is no mystery about it now; Lloyd George knew all about it, and so did John Maynard Keynes. The sole purpose of this shocking affair was to thwart the British Prime Minister's intention of making peace with Germany that would avert a second war.

How active Halifax was during the period when he was Lord President, in 1937, is hard to say. In his book recently published, *Fullness of Days*,<sup>12</sup> he studiously avoids revealing any information of a character derogatory to himself. Indeed, his story about his interview with Hitler in November 1937 is now exposed as quite false, and the Russian publication of German documents is cited against his version of the exchange.<sup>13</sup>

Whether or not Halifax should be included at that time as a member of the War Party in its inception, he may be reckoned, at any rate as a sympathizer with the aims of Churchill.

For the first time in the history of cabinet making, a Prime Minister had designated three men to hold high office, who were not in sympathy with his foreign policy. They were to have no truck with Hitler, and that meant war. The Prime Minister, however, had a keen sense of the mind of the general public, which he divined as one of downright opposition to any policy that would endanger the peace.

#### Labor Party Leaders of 1937

NOW LET US TAKE a glimpse at some of the leaders of the Labor Party. The first time that Attlee made his presence felt was at a meeting of the Union of Democratic Control in 1920. He confessed:

When we entered this war we were too credulous—we believed the Government. We should have been wiser if we had listened to the Union of Democratic Control, and less to the other voices. I am proud today, as a man who has fought in the war, to stand on a Union of Democratic Control platform with those who always protested against the war and told us we were deceived. They were right and we were wrong.<sup>14</sup>

Herbert Morrison was the author of the famous "Never Again" pamphlet, in which he said:

<sup>11</sup> For further particulars, see Francis Neilson, *The Churchill Legend*, Appleton, Wisconsin, Nelson, 1954, pp. 255–6.

<sup>12</sup> London, Collins, 1957.

<sup>13</sup> Halifax, *op. cit.*, pp. 184–91.

<sup>14</sup> Kingsway Hall meeting, Nov. 11, 1920. See *Foreign Affairs* (London), II, No. 6, December 1920, p. 91.

All the governments of all the warring nations deliberately deceived their citizens and their fighting men. They founded propaganda departments for this special purpose, paying men out of public funds to deceive their fellows by the spoken and written word. The government suppressed truth, newspapers, books, and organizations, and imprisoned good men and true.

Never again shall leaders of labor or their rank and file be so ill-informed and so lacking in a sense of responsibility as to accept without critical analysis the statements of governments (of whatever party) who desire to lead the country into war.<sup>15</sup>

Arthur Greenwood had become a schoolmaster. Before joining the Labor Party, he would have been accepted by Liberals of the old school. Like so many others of this type, the milk of human kindness in him prevailed over the vinegar of cautious skepticism. He jumped over facts to conclusions that were based upon newspaper reports. No one accused him of being a student of foreign affairs of the period in which he lived or of having a knowledge of the political history of Europe. He was mild, kind, approachable, but very sure of his opinions and decisions. I had known many men like that in the House before World War I. Mandell Creighton referred to that type in his remark about the dogooders: "as good as gold and fit for heaven, but of no earthly use."

#### The Munich Agreement, 1938

THE RESIGNATION of Anthony Eden took place in February, 1938. His policy of taking sanctions against Italy over the Abyssinian campaign did not suit Chamberlain. The British public regarded the matter of sanctions as a preliminary step to war. When Eden gave up his place on the Treasury Bench and took a back seat, Halifax was nominated to fill his position. This really meant that war had been declared against the government by Churchill and his supporters. It was evident that they did not consider they had lost a position in the cabinet, for Halifax was undoubtedly a pupil of Vansittart.

On September 27, 1938 Duff Cooper mobilized the fleet, thirty-six hours after Neville Chamberlain took the plane to confer with Hitler, Mussolini and Daladier at Munich. This was the first direct threat made by the British Government; but according to all reports of the reception given to Chamberlain and the interviews that took place before and after Munich, Hitler did not even mention the action of Duff Cooper. And certainly the photographs taken then do not show his face wearing a look of despair, although he had, about that time, named Duff Cooper a "warmonger" along with others.

<sup>15</sup> Foreign Affairs, I, No. 8, February 1920, p. 14.

The return of Chamberlain to England with the Munich Agreement was marked by an ovation not only at the airport but in the provinces. His reception in the House of Commons was extraordinary. There have been some contradictory reports made about the scene in the House. Some have said it was for the Prime Minister personally, and others have said that it was a demonstration of relief that war had been averted. William Gallacher, the Communist member for West Fife, wrote as recently as July 21, 1957 to the *Sunday Express* (London) stating what took place in the House. From it we gather that the whole House, with the exception of himself and Churchill, cheered.

Gallacher writes that, before the Munich meeting: "In a packed and tense House the Prime Minister read out the copy of a letter he had sent to Hitler. In this, he suggested a further meeting, and told Hitler that if he agreed to this he could get all he wanted, without war and without delay."

Duff Cooper resigned on October 1st, and in his explanation to the House he said:

. . . I had thought that this was the kind of language which would be easier for Herr Hitler to understand than the guarded language of diplomacy or the conditional clauses of the Civil Service. I had urged that something in that direction might be done at the end of August and before the Prime Minister went to Berchtesgaden.

Herr Hitler said that he had got to have some settlement about colonies, but he said that this will never be a question of war. The Prime Minister attaches considerable importance to those words, but what do they mean? Do they mean that Herr Hitler will take "No" for an answer. He has never taken it yet. Or do they mean that he believes that he will get away with this, as he has got away with everything else, without fighting, by well-timed bluff, bluster and blackmail? . . .<sup>16</sup>

So Churchill lost another of his lieutenants and a staunch government man took his place. Foreign affairs were not going well for the War Party, and something drastic had to be done to keep up their spirits. This was no easy business for them, for after the Munich Agreement, the minorities in Czechoslovakia by their withdrawal caused the downfall of the Prague Government. Prime Minister Beneš resigned. Soon there was a state of chaos, and Dr. Hacha, bewildered at the rapid deterioration of government, hastened by rail to Berlin to see Hitler and lay before him the conditions prevailing in Bohemia. The fairest account of this affair is to be found in Alan Bullock's book, *Hitler, A Study of Tyranny*.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Francis Neilson, *The Tragedy of Europe*, Appleton, Wisconsin, Nelson, 5 vols., 1940-46, Vol. I, pp. 294-5.

<sup>17</sup> London, Oldhams, 1952, pp. 441-7.

## Eden's Visit to the United States

IT WAS SOON EVIDENT to the War Party that they were not making progress. Churchill gathered few adherents. No doubt he had banked on some of the leaders of the Labor Party coming to his aid. He knew that certain of them were "after Chamberlain's scalp," as it was remarked at the time. Perhaps the restraining influence of George Lansbury prevented any show of sympathy with Churchill's aims. But something had to be done to give them confidence.

For a few weeks after the resignation of Duff Cooper, the War Party seemed to be in the doldrums. However, a breeze sprang up in December 1938, and Anthony Eden sailed for America. It is an almost unbelievable story that is told of his invitation from the National Association of Manufacturers to address a meeting in New York. He was a British politician, and now a private member of Parliament. No one seemed to understand why he was chosen by hard-headed business men for a speech. What could he tell them? He had invented no machine; he had not built up a great merchandising house, and he was not known as a great financier. Those who took a keen interest in the ostensible moves upon the political and diplomatic board at that time were mystified.

After a short stay in this country, it was whispered that he had paid a visit to Roosevelt in Washington. What took place at the interview no one knows, but Senator William E. Borah, the head of the Foreign Relations Committee, told Chesly Manly of the *Chicago Tribune* that "he had information which made him believe that Roosevelt gave Eden a war commitment."

. . . He said he was advised that Roosevelt told Eden to go back home and tell Chamberlain to stand up to Hitler. Roosevelt, it was said, told Eden that if resistance to Hitler should result in war, the United States would not permit the defeat of Britain by Germany.<sup>18</sup>

Roosevelt was then brooding upon the chances of a third term as president, but there were eleven million unemployed, and such a host of dissatisfied men and women might vote for a change in government. In the quarantine speech of October 5, 1937 he had released a *ballon d'essai*. It met with no response. But it is not unreasonable to think that Churchill and his friends took notice of it and thought it worth while to send Eden to the White House to learn if Roosevelt meant business.

It has never been clearly understood, even by our keenest investigators, what had been happening in the way of molding public opinion since 1933, when Samuel Untermyer started his campaign for a "holy war."

<sup>18</sup> Chesly Manly, *The Twenty-Year Revolution*, Chicago, Regnery, 1954, p. 77.

The reader has only to refer to my books, *The Makers of War* and *The Churchill Legend*, to inform himself of the nature of a campaign that simplified the solving of such problems as unemployment and financial disabilities.

After Eden returned to England, the War Party set to work again with a vigor that surprised many members of the House. The public, as usual, took no notice, for when they were not busy trying to make a living, their minds were given to sport.

#### Labor Support of the War Party

THE DEBATE that followed the Munich settlement had so encouraged Churchill that he had reason to expect to gather recruits from Attlee's supporters. Clement Attlee's speech was a rhetorical cocktail for him. When I read Attlee's speech, I became conscious of the deterioration that had taken place since the end of the First World War. Such an oration, when I was a member, would have emptied the House. It never rose above the level of a small-town debating society effort. If there was one man in the House who ought to have known the root of the trouble, it was Clement Attlee, for he was a member of the Union of Democratic Control, and I have no doubt that he read regularly the paper of the organization, called *Foreign Affairs*, in which the whole minority problems of Czechoslovakia are fully discussed. He tried to set this aside, as not being the main crisis Chamberlain and Hitler had to deal with at Munich, and for a debating point he brought forward the propaganda yarn of Hitler's desire to dominate Europe. He said:

I want to turn now to the cause of the crisis which we have undergone. The cause was not the existence of minorities in Czechoslovakia: it was not that the position of the Sudeten Germans had become intolerable. It was not the wonderful principle of self-determination. It was because Herr Hitler had decided that the time was ripe for another step forward in his design to dominate Europe. . . .<sup>19</sup>

There is no evidence in *Mein Kampf* nor in Hitler's speeches of such a design. No leading politician in the history of Europe ever stated his purpose in such plain terms as Hitler did. There is no "soft-pedaling," no vague notion in any of his declarations. All the overtures that he made for peace and disarmament, rejected by the British and French Governments, should have been known to Attlee. If he placed no faith in them, he should have denounced them as unworthy of consideration.

It is hard to believe that Attlee meant what he was saying, for he could

<sup>19</sup> *Europe's Fight for Freedom*, No. 11, p. 438.

not have forgotten the confession that he made in 1920,<sup>20</sup> at the meeting of the Union of Democratic Control. Of course he was then the Mayor of Stepney; now he was one of the leaders of the opposition in the House.

For sheer balderdash, the following statement from Attlee is unique:

. . . Herr Hitler has successfully asserted the law of the jungle. He has claimed to do what he will by force and in doing so has struck at the roots of the life of civilized peoples. In doing this to one nation he threatens all, and if he does this, and he has with impunity, there is no longer any peace in the world even although there may be a pause in actual warfare. . . .<sup>21</sup>

I wonder what George Lansbury thought about such a statement. He certainly knew what Attlee and Morrison had said about the First World War. They all knew of Churchill's starvation policy, when he was Minister of War (1918-21), and the revulsion of British troops in the occupied territory at the sight of starving women and their babes. They also knew what General Plumer commanding the forces thought about the business. The "law of the jungle"—how could any man use this opprobrious term about another country, who knew the history of British aggressive imperialism in Africa, India, and other parts of the world? Who could find fault with Hitler's chief desire to bring the Germans, who had been wrested from their homeland by pernicious treaties, back into their country?

When the Second World War was over, I had a long discussion with Lord Queensborough at his country place. Lord Hamilton was his guest at that time. They had been reading *The Tragedy of Europe*, and asked different questions about the Sudeten crisis and Munich. This gave me the opportunity of asking Queensborough if he thought anyone in the House of Commons, at the time of the Munich debate, had any information of the true state of affairs in the minority sections of Czechoslovakia. He had to admit that, as he did not know, he could not imagine how anyone else in Parliament would be likely to know. And, yet, there were books at that time printed in England which gave sufficient information of the conditions under Beneš to enlighten any intelligent man. If the statement of Attlee is to be accepted, what becomes of the declarations written by Churchill, Lloyd George and others who visited Hitler? Were they hypnotized, or did they delude themselves consciously?

But the real absurdity of Attlee's notions of what was going on is evident in his mistaken notions of what the statesmen in the countries bordering

<sup>20</sup> *Cit. supra.*

<sup>21</sup> *Europe's Fight for Freedom*, No. 11, p. 438.

on Germany thought about the actions of Hitler. What protest was made? One would expect that France, the country that was responsible for setting up the Little Entente, would at least have held a debate in the Chamber of Deputies, if the government did not take military action. France did not even move a soldier against Hitler's march into the Rhineland.

The "law of the jungle"—what a phrase! In this case, before Poland, Mr. Attlee's tiger used neither claw nor fang. Indeed, the prey as in Austria and the Rhineland was only too glad to be captured.

The prop that Attlee leaned upon in the debate was not as staunch as he thought it was. His references to Churchill's suggestions about submitting the problems to the League of Nations and his urgent demands for more airplanes and greater military strength had been whittled down, in some cases, and rejected in others by Churchill himself.

In the autumn of 1938, the position of the War Party, headed by Churchill and supported by some of the leading members of the Labor Party was undetermined, for they seemed to be conscious that the electorate was in no mood for war. Rumors flew about in London and Paris as to Hitler's warlike intentions, without making much change in the public mind. Some of the stories published in the leading papers of the two capitals were so "freakish," lacking even the worn phrase "from a reliable authority," that readers paid little or no attention to them. It is now known that some of them were inspired, but who set them going has not been determined. In the British documents we learn that the one about Hitler invading the Low Countries was set in motion by a Communist faction in Paris.

This was a state of affairs that was intolerable to Churchill and his supporters. The tactics of Mr. Attlee and the belligerent members of his party made it possible for Churchill to hold on tenaciously to his policy of "smashing Germany," as he told General Wood. Without the adherence of the Labor Party, he would have had only Anthony Eden and Duff Cooper to aid him in the House of Commons. One of the curious examples of wrong tactics of a party in Parliament, which went unnoticed by the gentlemen of Fleet Street at the time, was the seeming ignorance of Mr. Attlee's party that Churchill was merely making use of them.

When things looked desperate for Churchill's policy, the trouble in Czechoslovakia came to a head, and it acted like a powerful stimulant upon all those who had flocked to Churchill's standard. As the winter wore on, they used it as a weapon against Chamberlain's government. The latter's position became so weakened that in the spring the War



Party was able to win from him the pledge to aid Poland, which made war inevitable. Ten years ago, in *The Makers of War*, I wrote as follows:

The Pledge of aid to Poland was a green light for the warmongers to go ahead. It was a signal to Josef Beck and to Field Marshal Smigly-Rydz to "turn on the heat," as one journalist put it, and make things uncomfortable for the people of Danzig. I do not know when a statesman had such a precipitous fall in so short a time as did Mr. Chamberlain. The pledge was like a white flag of surrender. It was announced on March 31, 1939, which will ever be remembered by the peoples of Europe as the day when their lives and fortunes were sacrificed on the altar of Moloch.

The Bullitt-Mandel combination in Paris, acting with the British warmongers, dragged him from his pinnacle and turned the temporary triumph he had achieved at Munich to a sordid defeat. He was powerless after that day to prevent a European catastrophe. He, who had been scourged for his policy of appeasement, was now a prisoner of those who were exerting every effort to appease Stalin. And so little did they know what the consequences of their acts would be, that they did not dream of the possibility of Stalin deciding to join forces with Hitler. They did not even know the reason why he did so. . . .<sup>22</sup>

It is now conceded by many of the impartial thinkers of France and Great Britain that the pledge was the greatest blunder ever made in foreign policy.

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<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 196.

*Truth and falsity, indeed understanding, is not something purely intellectual, remote from feelings and attitudes. In many (cases) the most important thing is not the statement but the whole position, a man's attitude toward the thing itself. It is in the total conduct of men rather than in their statements that truth or falsehood lives, more in what a man does, in his real reaction to other men and to things, in his will to do them justice, to live at one with them. Here lies the inner connection between truth and justice.*

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