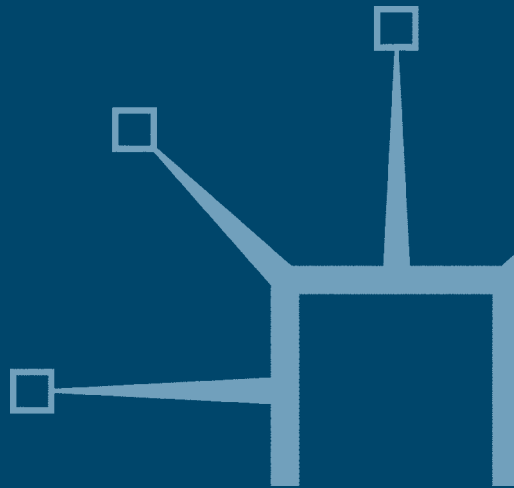


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Our Man in Berlin

The Diary of Sir Eric Phipps, 1933–1937

Edited by
Gaynor Johnson



Our Man in Berlin

Also by Gaynor Johnson

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(*Editor*)

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*This book is dedicated to the memory
of Richard Morgan Williams,
13 March 1903–21 March 2003*

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All of the photographs are from the Phipps papers, Churchill College Archive Centre, Cambridge.

Preface

The Phipps papers survive in the Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge in some 30 boxes. They include royal, private and public correspondence; photographs; papers; speeches and memoirs. Yet the highlight must be the unpublished Berlin diaries. They are not much to look at. Two slightly frayed grey ring binders containing flimsy typescript sheets. Yet they form a remarkable personal testament, recording Phipps' close interaction with the Nazi leadership during those pivotal years in which Hitler consolidated his power base at home, and began his expansion abroad.

The diaries include accounts of Sir Eric's audiences with Hitler, from first meeting to farewell tea. The former took place against the backdrop of the German walkout from the Geneva disarmament conference. By the time of the latter, three-and-a-half-years later, Germany had re-occupied the Rhineland and was playing an active role in the Spanish Civil War. The real theme of this work is the attempt and ultimate failure of Britain to keep Germany engaged and contained within the post-Versailles international system.

It is surprising that the publication of the diaries should have taken so long. It has long been the desire of Sir Eric's family to see them in print. Now the voice of our man in Berlin can be heard alongside the voices of his Whitehall and Westminster colleagues and counterparts, among them Churchill, Eden, Cadogan, Hankey and Vansittart, who have long since had their memoirs or diaries placed in the public domain.

Like all historical sources, the diaries must be assessed critically. The volumes are not true diaries in the sense that they were produced just after the events they describe, albeit from contemporary notes and despatches. They were also clearly produced with an eye for publication. They represent not only Phipps' impressions of events, but also his interpretations of those events. This edition, through its comprehensive introduction and extensive footnotes, establishes the historical framework for the diaries and their author.

This publication of the diaries of Sir Eric Phipps does not seek to answer all the questions about Anglo-German diplomacy in the 1930's. Yet it does provide a unique insight into the complex and colourful personalities and processes that shaped relations during a period which has tended, with hindsight, to be viewed in very black and white terms.

ALLEN PACKWOOD,
December 2006.
Churchill College,
Cambridge.

Acknowledgements

Editing the Berlin diary of Sir Eric Phipps has been a very enjoyable experience. It offered all of the delights of historical research while presenting few of the pitfalls, such as indecipherable handwriting or impenetrable use of abbreviations. I have also been very fortunate in being supported and assisted by a number of people who have shared my appreciation of Phipps the man, and Phipps the diplomat. In particular, I would like to thank Phipps' daughters, Mrs Margaret Roberts and Mrs Mary Sykes, for encouraging me to publish their father's diary. My task as editor has also been greatly assisted by Mr Allen Packwood, Acting Keeper of the Archives at Churchill College Archive Centre, University of Cambridge, and by his staff. They provided me with a photocopy of the diary and offered advice on the photographs, as well as taking an on-going interest in the project. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to Professor David Dutton for his advice on diary editing, to Dr Peter Jackson for material relating to André François-Poncet and to Mrs Rosalind Fergusson for her linguistic skills and for helping me track down some of the references to French literature.

Select Biographies

Aretas Akers-Douglas, Viscount Chilston (1876–1947). Foreign Office Attaché 1898; Third Secretary Madrid, Constantinople and Athens 1898–1905; Consul-General Sofia 1907; Chargé d’Affaires Montenegro 1911, 1913; in Rumania 1912, 1914; Secretary at Vienna 1909–1914; Diplomatic Secretary to the Foreign Secretary 1919; Minister at Vienna 1921–1917; at Budapest 1928–1933; Ambassador to Moscow 1933–1938.

Reginald Clifford Allen (1889–1939). Created Lord Allen of Hurtwood in 1932. Director of the *Daily Herald*, 1925–1930; Chairman of the Independent Labour Party 1922–1926; Member of the Executive Committee of the League of Nations Union.

Pompeo Aloisi (1875–1949). Italian Minister in Rumania, Albania and ambassador to Tokyo and Ankara 1923–1932; Head of Italian Delegation to the League of Nations 1932–1936; Member of Italian Senate 1939–1945.

Wilfred William Ashley, First Baron Mount Temple (1867–1939). Under-Secretary for War 1923–1924; Minister of Transport 1924–1929; President of the Anglo-German Fellowship in the 1930s.

Bernado Attolico (1880–1942). Italian ambassador to Brazil 1927–1930; to Moscow 1930–1935; to Germany 1935–1940; to the Vatican 1940–1942.

Stanley Baldwin (1867–1947). British Prime Minister 1923–1929, 1935–1937; Lord President of the Council 1931–1935.

Louis Barthou (1862–1934). French President of Inter-Allied Reparation Commission 1922–1926; Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1934; assassinated in Marseilles with King Alexander of Yugoslavia.

Józef Beck (1894–1944). Military Attaché in Paris 1922–1923; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1932–1939.

Eduard Beneš (1884–1948). Czech Minister for Foreign Affairs 1918–1935, President of Czechoslovakia 1936–1938; 1939–1945 head of provisional Czech government in exile; resigned presidency 1947.

Henri Béraud (1885–1958). Journalist and satirist, known for his Anglophobic articles in *Gringoire*.

Otto von Bismarck (1897–1976). Counsellor in the German embassy in London, 1926–1937 and grandson of Otto von Bismarck.

Werner von Blomberg (1878–1946). Adjutant general of the Reichswehr 1927–1929; appointed commander of *Wehrkreis I* at Königsberg 1929;

Minister of Defence 1933–1935; War Minister and Commander in Chief of the German Army, 1935–1938; present at the Hossbach conference 1937.

Leon Blum (1872–1950). Entered Chamber of Deputies 1919; leader of Socialist Party 1924; with Daladier, Thorez, Herriot and Mayer formed the Popular Front 1935; French Prime Minister 1936, 1938.

Major-General Ferdinand von Bredow (1884–1934). Stellvertretender Reichswehr Minister in the Schleicher Cabinet 1932–1933. One of those murdered on 30 June 1934.

Aristide Briand (1862–1932). Secretary of French Socialist Party 1901; Elected Deputy 1902; Foreign Minister 1915–1917; 1921–1922; 1926–1932; awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 1926.

Louis Brodsky (1857–1947). Poet and opponent of Hitler. He made a speech in Washington in September 1935 denouncing Nazi rule and had been the magistrate in the *Bremen* case.

Heinrich Brüning (1885–1970). Served in Prussian Ministry of Health 1919–1921; adviser to German Christian Trade Union Movement 1922–1929; Centre Party Member of Reichstag 1924–1933; Chancellor of Reich 1930–1932; emigrated to the United States 1934; Lecturer in government at Harvard University 1937–1939; Professor of Political Science at the University of Cologne 1951–1955.

Duke of Brunswick, Ernst August (b. 1887). Duke of Brunswick 1913–1918.

Duchess of Brunswick, Viktoria Luise (b. 1892). daughter of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Edward Hallett Carr (1892–1982). Joined the Foreign office 1916; Director of Foreign Publicity at the Ministry of Information 1918; Wilson Professor of International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth 1936–1947; Director of Foreign Publicity 1939–1940; Assistant editor of *The Times* 1941–1946; Master of Balliol College Oxford 1953–1955.

Robert Cecil (1893–1972). Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office 1935–1938. Viscount Cranborne, 1903–1947; became fifth Marquess of Salisbury 1947.

Vittorio Cerruti. Italian ambassador to Berlin, 1932–1935.

Austen Chamberlain (1863–1937). Conservative MP 1892–1937; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1903–1905; Secretary of State for India 1915–1917; Minister without Portfolio 1918–1919; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1919–1921; Lord Privy Seal 1921–1922; Foreign Secretary 1924–1929; First Lord of the Admiralty 1931.

Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940). Lord Mayor of Birmingham 1915–1916; Director-General of National Service 1916–1917; Conservative MP 1918–1940; Minister for Health 1923, 1924–1929, 1931; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1923–1924, 1931–1937; Prime Minister 1937–1940; Lord President of the Council 1940.

Winston Churchill (1874–1965). Chancellor of the Exchequer 1924–1929; First Lord of the Admiralty 1939–1940; Prime Minister 1940–1945 and 1951–1955.

Count Galeazzo Ciano (1903–1944). Italian fascist leader, son-in-law of Mussolini; foreign minister 1936–1943.

Countess Edda Ciano (1910–1995). Daughter of Mussolini and wife of Count Galeazzo Ciano.

Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929). Mayor of Montmartre 1870–1871; Member of Chamber of Deputies 1876–1893; founder of *La Justice* 1880; Senator 1902–1920; Minister of the Interior 1906; Prime Minister 1906–1909; Prime Minister and Minister for War 1917–1920.

George Clerk (1874–1951). British ambassador to Turkey 1926–1933; at Brussels 1933–1934; Paris 1934–1937.

T. Philip Conwell-Evans (1891–1968). Lecturer in History at Königsberg University 1932–1934; Joint Secretary of the Anglo-German Society 1934–1939. He acted as interpreter for Lloyd George during his visit to Berlin in 1936.

André Charles Corbin. French ambassador to London, 1933–1940.

Father Charles E. Coughlan (1891–1979). American priest famous for weekly radio sermons after 1926 advocating social justice and critical of political repression.

Robert Craigie (1883–1959). Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the British Foreign Office, 1934–1937; Ambassador to Japan, 1937–1941; British representative to the United Nations War Crimes Commission 1945–1948.

Édouard Daladier (1884–1970). Minister of War 1933; Minister of Foreign Affairs 1934; Minister of Defence 1936; President of the Council 1938–1940, also Minister of War and Defence.

Richard-Walther Darré (1895–1953). Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture 1933–1945; Head of Reich Food Estate 1939–1942; member of the Reichstag from 1933 and Chief of the SS Central Office for Race and Resettlement.

Yvon Delbos (1885–1956). French Minister of Justice and Vice President, 1936; Foreign Minister 1936–1938; Minister of Education 1939–1940.

Hans-Heinrich Dieckhoff. Political Director of Department III in the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs; Ambassador to Washington 1937–1941.

Georgi Dimitroff (or Dimitrov), (1882–1949), Bulgarian Communist. Along with Blagoi, Popov and Tanev, accused of setting the *Reichstag* fire on 27 February 1933 but was acquitted. Appointed General Secretary of the Communist International in Moscow 1935; leader of Bulgarian Communists after 1944; President of Bulgaria 1946–1949.

William E. Dodd (1869–1940), American ambassador to Berlin 1933–1937.

Englebert Dollfuss (1892–1934). Austrian Federal Chancellor 1932–1934; also held the posts of Foreign Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Forestry during this period; short periods as Minister for Public Security and of Defence in 1933 and 1934; founded Fatherland Front 1933.

Francis Percival Don (1886–1964). British Air Attaché Berlin 1934–1937; Head of Mission to French Air Forces 1939; British Air Forces in France 1940; North Region Civil Defence 1943–1945.

Gaston Doumergue (1863–1937). Elected to the Chamber of Deputies 1893; Minister for Colonies 1895–1909; leader of trade mission to Russia 1917; French Prime Minister 1913–1914, 1934; President of the French Republic 1924–1931.

Eric Drummond (1876–1951). British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference 1919; Secretary-General to the League of Nations, 1919–1933; British ambassador to Rome, 1933–1939. Became 16th Earl of Perth, 1937.

Friedrich Ebert (1871–1925). President of the Weimar Republic 1919–1925.

Anthony Eden (1897–1977). Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1931–1933; Lord Privy Seal 1934–1935; Minister for the League of Nations 1935; Foreign Secretary 1935–1938, 1940–1945, 1951–1955; Knight of the Garter 1954; Prime Minister 1955–1957.

Edward VIII (1894–1972). King of Great Britain and Emperor of India 1936; abdicated 1936.

Ex-Crown Prince of Germany (Frederick). William von Hohenzollern, (1882–1951). Regimental commander Death's Head Hussars 1911–1914; commanded the 5th army 1914–1916; the southern army (Western Front) 1916–1918; in exile in Holland 1918–1923; paraded in Nazi uniform in 1933 but played no political role.

Ex-Crown Princess of Germany Cecilie, Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, (1886–1954). The wife of Frederick William von Hohenzollern.

Ferdinand I (1861–1948). King of Bulgaria, forced to abdicate, 1918.

Sir William Fisher (1875–1937). Chief of Staff of the Mediterranean Fleet 1919–1922; Atlantic Fleet 1922–1924; Fourth Sea Lord 1927–1928; Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff 1928–1930; Commander in Chief of the Navy 1932–1936.

Pierre Étienne Flandin (1889–1958). French Deputy 1914–1940; French Prime Minister 1934–1935; Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1936; chairman of *Républicains de Gauche* 1936; voted in favour of Pétain 1940; Vichy Foreign Minister 1940.

Aimé Joseph de Fleuriau (1870–1938). Ambassador to London 1924–1933.

Francisco Franco (1892–1975). Appointed Spanish Chief of the General Staff 1935; leader of nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939; fascist dictator of Spain 1939–1975.

André François-Poncet (1887–1978). Served as a Deputy infantry officer on the Western Front 1914–1916; Republican Deputy 1924–1931; Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1928–1931; Ambassador to Berlin, September 1931–October 1938; High Commissioner in Germany 1949–1955; Ambassador to Bonn 1955.

Werner Freiherr von Fritsch (1880–1939). Chief of German Army Command from 1934–1938.

Friedrich Gaus. Director of the Legal Department of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, 1923–1943.

Virginio Gayda. editor of *Giornale d'Italia*, a pro-fascist newspaper.

George II, King of the Hellenes (1890–1947). King of Greece 1922–1924, 1935–1941.

George V (1865–1936). King of Great Britain and Emperor of India 1910–1936.

Dr Josef Göbbels (1897–1945). German Minister for Propaganda 1933–1945. Phipps' usual spelling was Göbbels.

Julius Gömbös (1886–1936). Hungarian Minister of War under Bethlen, 1921–1931, and again under Julius Károlyi, 1931–1932, becoming Premier in 1932.

Hermann Göring (1893–1946). President of the Reichstag 1932–1933; Prime Minister of Prussia 1933; Commander-in-Chief of the German Air Force 1933–1945; Air Chief Marshal 1935; Commissioner for the Four Year Plan 1936; Field Marshal 1938; President of the General Council for the War Economy 1940.

Dino Grandi (1895–1988). Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs 1925, 1929–1932; Ambassador to London, 1932–1939; Minister of Justice 1939–1943.

Franz Gürtner (1881–1941). German Nationalist Party 1922–1932; Minister of Justice 1932–1941.

Sigmund Gustloff (1895–1936). Leading NSDAP leader in Switzerland, assassinated by David Frankfurter, a Jewish student, in Davos 1936.

Sydney Harmsworth (1868–1940). Proprietor of the *Daily Mirror*, 1914–1931, the *Daily Mail* and *Evening Standard*, 1922–1940. Created Viscount Rothermere, 1919.

Ulrich von Hassel (1881–1944). German Ambassador to the Vatican 1932–1938; Sentenced to death for his part in the July plot to kill Hitler.

Edmund Heines (1897–1934). Appointed SA Obergruppenführer in Silesia and commissioner of police at Breslau 1933.

Nevile Henderson (1882–1942). British Ambassador to Buenos Aires 1935–1937; Ambassador to Berlin 1937–39.

Konrad Henlein (1898–1945). Leader of Czech Sudeten German Youth Movement 1923–1933; Leader of the Sudeten German Homeland Front in

1933 to replace the Sudeten German National Socialist Party which had been dissolved in 1932; *Gauleiter* for the Sudetenland 1938–1939; commissioner for Bohemia 1939–1945.

Edouard Herriot (1872–1957). French President of the Chamber 1936–1940; interned in Germany 1944–1945; President of the National Assembly 1947–1954.

Rudolf Hess (1894–1987). Reich Minister. Joined National Socialist Party 1920; deputy party leader, 1933.

Konstantin Hierl. German Secretary of State for the Interior; head of the Nazi Labour organisation.

Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945). Served as a naval ensign 1918; head of the SS 1929–1945; and of the Federal German Police Force 1936–1945; Minister of the Interior 1943–1945; Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army 1944.

Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934). President of Germany 1925–1934.

Adolf Hitler (1889–1945). Chancellor of the German Reich 1933–1945; Head of State 1934–1945.

Sir Samuel Hoare (1890–1959). British Secretary of State for India 1931; Foreign Secretary 1935; First Lord of the Admiralty 1936; Home Secretary 1937–1939; Secretary of State for Air 1940; special ambassador to Spain 1940–1944.

Leopold von Hoesch (1881–1936). German ambassador to Paris 1924–1932; Ambassador to London 1932–1936.

Elliot Hotblack (1887–1979). Major First Rhine Brigade 1921; General Staff Office War Office 1927; Instructor Staff College Camberley 1932–1935; Military Attaché Berlin 1935–1937; General Staff Office 1937–1939; ADC to the King 1939.

Alfred Hugenberg (1865–1951). German President of the Nationalist Party 1928; Minister of Agriculture and Economics 1933.

Henry de Jouvenal, editor-in-chief of *Le Matin*, former French ambassador to Italy.

Wilhelm Keppler (1882–1960). Commissioner for Economic Affairs in the *Reichschancellor*, he advised Göring on the Four Year Plans 1936; Reich Commissioner in Vienna 1938; Ministry for Foreign Affairs 1939–1945.

Duchess of Kent. Marina, Princess of Greece (1906–1968). Duchess of Kent 1934–1942.

Duke of Kent. George Edward Alexander Edmund Windsor (1902–1942), son of George V.

Count de Kerchove de Denterghem. Belgian Minister to Berlin during Phipps' embassy.

Philip Kerr, Eleventh Marquess of Lothian (1882–1940). Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 1931; Ambassador to Washington 1939–1940.

Baron Manfred von Killinger (1886–1944). *Reichskommissar* for Saxony 1933; German ambassador to Slovakia 1940; and then to Rumania 1941–1944.

Erich von Klausener (1885–1934). Appointed Minister Director for Welfare 1924; Prussian Ministry of the Interior 1926–1933; Leader of Catholic Action organisation 1928–1933; a critic of Nazism especially after the Röhm purge 1934.

Clemens Krauss (1893–1954). Austrian conductor. Director Vienna Staatsoper 1929–1935; Berlin 1935–1937; Munich 1937–1944.

Pierre Laval (1883–1945). French Prime Minister 1931–1932; 1935–1936; Minister for Colonies 1934; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1934–1935; joined Pétain's Vichy government 1940–1942.

Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924). Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars from October 1917–1924.

Leopold III (1901–1983). King of Belgium 1934–1951; surrendered to Germans during the Second World War leading to hostility on his return in 1945; forced to abdicate in favour of his son, Boudouin.

Robert Ley (1890–1945). *Gauleiter* for Cologne-Aachen 1928–1933; Leader of the German Labour Front 1933–1945.

Józef Lipski (1894–1958). Polish ambassador to Germany 1933–1939; General Secretary of the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the Polish government in exile 1941–1945; emigrated to the United States 1947.

Maxim Maximovich Litvinov (1876–1951). Russian commissar for foreign affairs 1930; deputy commissar for foreign affairs 1939; Ambassador to the United States 1941–1943.

Marinus van der Lubbe (Löbe) (1910–1934). claimed to be the sole perpetrator of the Reichstag fire of 27 February 1933 and was executed in Leipzig jail, 10 January 1934.

Ramsay MacDonald (1866–1937). Labour Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary 1924, Prime Minister 1929–1935; Lord President of the Council 1935–1937.

August von Mackensen (1849–1945). Joined the Death's Head Hussars 1869; served as a regimental officer during the Franco-Prussian War 1870–1971; commanded the 9th Army on the Eastern Front 1914–1915; commanded the German-Austrian 11th Army in Galicia 1915; Field-Marshal 1915; interned by the French 1919. Retired from the Army 1920.

Georges Mandel (1885–1944). Real name Louis Georges Rothschild, journalist of *L'Aurore* and cabinet minister under Clemenceau. Urged French rearmament and as Minister of the Interior, organised the arrest of Nazi sympathisers; opposed Pétain's policy of collaboration and killed by a Vichy militia 1944.

Constantin de Masirevich. Hungarian Minister in Berlin during Phipps' embassy.

Erhard Milch, (1892–1972). Director of finance Lufthansa 1926–1933; State Secretary and head of armaments production Air Ministry 1933; *Generaloberst* in the *Luftwaffe* 1938; commander of *Luftflotte V* 1939–1940; General Field Marshal 1940; *Luftzeugmeister* 1941–1944; sentenced to life imprisonment at Nuremberg 1946, released 1954.

Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov (1890–1986). Chairman of the Peoples' Commissars of the Soviet Union; Soviet Prime Minister 1930–1941; foreign minister 1939–1949, 1953–1956.

Oswald Mosley (1896–1980). Formed British Union of Fascists 1933; imprisoned 1940.

Gerald Charles Muirhead-Gould (1889–1945). Lieutenant Commander 1918; Naval Attaché Berlin 1933–1936; Commander of the *Devonshire* 1936–1937; emigrated to Australia 1940; served with Australian Navy 1940–1945.

Reichsbishop Ludwig Müller (1883–1945). Head of the German Protestant Church 1933–1945.

Count Kintomo Mushakoji. Japanese ambassador to Berlin, signed the Anti-Comintern Pact on behalf of the Japanese government, 1936.

Benito Mussolini (1883–1945). Italian President of the Council of Ministers 1922–1926; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1924–1929 and 1932–1936; Head of State and Prime Minister 1926–1943, Minister of War 1926–1929 and 1933–1943.

Rudolf Nadolny (1873–1953). State Secretary to President of the Republic 1919; Ambassador to Turkey; leader of the German delegation to the Geneva Disarmament Conference 1933; Ambassador to the Soviet Union 1933.

Constantin Freiherr von Neurath (1873–1956). Entered the German Diplomatic Service as Vice-Consul in London 1903; Ambassador to Rome 1922; in London 1930–1932; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1932–1938; Reich Protector for Bohemia and Moravia 1939–1941; Senior SS Group Leader 1943.

Sir Basil Newton (1889–1965). Counsellor British embassy in Berlin 1930–1935; Minister 1935–1937; Minister to Prague 1937–1939; Ambassador to Baghdad 1939–1941.

Cesare Orsenigo (1873–1946). Appointed Papal Nuncio to the Hague 1922–1925; to Hungary 1925–1930; to Berlin 1930–1945.

Franz von Papen (1879–1969). Military Attaché Washington 1914–1916; German Chancellor 1932; member of Hitler's Cabinet 1933–1934; Ambassador to Vienna 1934–1938.

Victor Perowne (1897–1951). British Embassy in Copenhagen 1929–1931; Foreign Office 1931–1936; Paris 1936–1938; Foreign Office 1938–1947.

Philippe Pétain (1856–1951). Commanded an Infantry Regiment 1914; an Army Corps 1914; the 2nd Army 1915; Chief of General Staff 1917; Commander-in Chief 1917–1918; Vice-President of Supreme War Council 1920–1930; War Minister 1934; Ambassador to Madrid 1939–1940; Prime Minister 1940; Chief of State 1940–1944.

Nicolai Petrescu-Commène (1881–1938). Rumanian Minister in Berlin; Rumanian Foreign Minister 1938.

Joseph Pilsudski (1867–1935). Chief of Polish State 1918–1922; Chief of General Staff 1923; Minister of War 1926–1935; Prime Minister 1927–1928 and 1930.

Prince Philip of Hesse (b. 1896). Hitler's envoy to Rome in March 1938 regarding the Anschluss with Austria.

Erich Raeder (1876–1960). *Oberbefehlshaber der Kriegsmarine* 1933–1943; awarded the National Socialist *Goldenes Parteiabzeichen* 1937.

Walther Rathenau (1867–1922). German Minister for Reconstruction 1921–1922; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1922.

Walther von Reichenau (1884–1942). Chief of Staff to Blomberg, 1933; General, 1935, Commander Seventh Army Corps 1935, Commander Army Group IV, 1938; Field Marshal 1940.

Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893–1978). German Ambassador to London 1936–1938; SS *Gruppenführer* 1936; Foreign Minister 1938–1945.

Ernst Röhm (1887–1934). Member of National Socialist Party 1919; involved in the Beer Hall *Putsch* 1923; SA Chief of Staff and Reichs Minister without Portfolio 1930–1934.

Franklin Roosevelt (1882–1945). Democrat President of the United States of American for four terms, 1933–1945.

Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946). Elected a member of the *Reichstag* 1930; Director of the National Socialist Party Foreign Bureau; Supervisor of Youth Education 1940–1941; Minister for the Occupied Territory 1941–1945.

Sir Horace Rumbold (1869–1941). Ambassador to Constantinople 1920–1924; Madrid 1924–1928; Berlin 1928–1933; Vice-Chairman of the Royal Commission on Palestine 1936–1937.

Sir Orme Sargent (1884–1962). Head of the Central Department at the Foreign Office, 1928–1933; Assistant Under-Secretary of State, 1933–1939.

Albert Sarraut (1872–1962). Radical Socialist Senator; President of the French Council of Ministers 1933, 1936; Minister of the Navy 1933–1934; Minister of the Interior from 1934.

Duke of Saxe-Coburg, Carl Eduard (1884–1954). Duke of Saxe-Coburg 1900–1918. Cousin of Wilhelm II.

Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, Feodore (1890–1972). Also Duchess of Saxe-Weimar.

Hjalmar Schacht (1877–1970). Assistant Manager Dresdener Bank 1908–1915; Managing Partner National Bank of Germany 1915–1922; Reich Currency Commissioner 1923; President of the *Reichsbank* 1924–1930, reappointed 1933 by Hitler; Minister of Economics 1934–1937.

Baldur von Schirach (1907–1974). Appointed head of Nationalist Socialist German Students' League 1929; Leader of the Hitler Youth 1933; Gauleiter of Vienna 1941.

Kurt von Schleicher (1882–1934). German Defence Minister 1932; Chancellor of the Reich 1932–1933.

Paul Schmid, (1899–1970). Head of Secretariat and chief interpreter in the German Foreign Ministry 1924–1945; official interpreter at the Munich conference of 29–30 September 1938.

Kurt Schmitt (1886–1950). Reich Minister of Economics 1932–1935.

August Schneidhuber. Head of the Munich Police; became *Obergruppenführer* in SA 1934; one of those murdered on the Night of the Long Knives.

Kurt von Schuschnigg (1897–1977). Austrian Minister of Justice 1932–4; Minister of Education 1933–1934; Federal Chancellor and Minister for National Defence 1934–1938.

Countess Schwerin von Krosigk. The wife of Lutz Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, (1887–1952) Finance Minister 1932–1945.

Hans von Seeckt (1866–1936). Chief of the German Army Command 1920–1926; head of the German Military Mission in China 1934–5.

Carl Severing (1875–1952). Editor of *Volkswacht* Social Democratic newspaper 1912–1919; elected to Prussian Assembly 1919; Prussian Minister of Interior 1920; German Minister of the Interior 1928; Prussian Minister of Interior 1930.

King of Siam. Prajodhipok (1893–1941), King of Siam, 1925–1935.

Queen of Siam. Rambhai Barni (1905–1984).

Sir John Simon (1873–1954), Liberal Home Secretary 1915–1916 and 1935–1937; Liberal National MP 1931–1940; Foreign Secretary 1931–1935;

Home Secretary 1935–1937; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1937–1940; Lord Chancellor 1940–1945.

Emmy Sonnemann (1893–1973). An actress who became Hermann Göring's second wife in 1935.

Joseph Stalin (1879–1953). Joined Bolsheviks under Lenin 1903; commissar for nationalities 1921; General Secretary of the Communist Party 1922; after elimination of rivals assumes complete power 1929–1953.

James Richard Stanhope (1880–1967). Seventh Earl Stanhope. Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty 1931; Under-Secretary of State for War 1931–1934; Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs 1934–1936; President of the Board of Education 1937–1938; First Lord of the Admiralty 1938–1939; Lord President of the Council 1939–1940; Leader of the House of Lords 1938–1940.

William Strang, later first Baron Strang (1893–1978). Head of the League of Nations Section of the Foreign Office, 1933–1937; Head of the Central Department at the Foreign Office 1937–1939.

Richard Strauss (1864–1949). German composer much influenced by Wagner.

Gustav Stresemann (1878–1929). German Chancellor and Foreign Minister 1923; Foreign Minister 1923–1929.

Fulvio Suvich (1887–1936). Under-Secretary of State Italian Foreign Ministry 1932–1936.

Pierre Tardieu (1876–1945). French High Commissioner to the United States 1917; French Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1932, Minister without Portfolio, 1934.

Hans Thomsen. Official of the Reichschancellery, German Chargé d'affaires in the United States during the Second World War.

Andrew Thorne (1885–1970). Military Attaché Berlin 1932–1935; Major-General Commanding the Brigade of Guards 1938–9; served with the Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1950–1951.

Fritz Thyssen (1873–1951). German industrialist, chairman of the board of directors, *Vereinigte Stahlwerke* AG 1928; German National Socialist Workers Party 1932; resigned from Prussian Council of State 1938; emigrated to Switzerland 1939.

Ernst Torgler (1893–1963). Served in the German Army 1914–1918; joined the German Communist Party 1920; member of the *Reichstag* 1924–1933; expelled from Communist Party 1935.

Sir Robert Vansittart (1881–1957). Principal Private Secretary to Ramsay MacDonald 1928–1930; Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the Foreign Office 1938–1941.

Count Johannes von Welczeck. German Ambassador at Madrid; later ambassador to Paris.

Arthur von Weinberg (1860–1943). Field service as a Major in First World War; removed from post as curator at Goethe University 1933; dismissed from board of IG Farben 1937; deported to Theresienstadt 1942.

Friedrich Karl Werner, Count von der Schulenberg (1876–1961). Member of the Reichstag 1911–1918 and 1924–1928; Speaker of the Hesse Parliament 1932–1933; Prime Minister of Hesse 1933; German ambassador to Moscow.

General Maxime Weygand (1867–1965). French General Inspector of the Army 1931–1935; Minister of National Defence 1940; Governor-General Algeria 1941; imprisoned by Germans 1942–1945.

Ralph Follet Wigram (1890–1936). Third Secretary at the Foreign Office 1919; Second Secretary 1920; First Secretary Paris 1924–1933; Foreign Office 1933–1936.

Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924). 28th President of the United States 1912–1921; Nobel Peace Prize 1920.

Paul van Zeeland (1893–1973). Belgian Prime Minister 1935–1937; escaped to Britain 1940; *Commissaire aux Repatriés* 1944; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1949–1955.

Introduction

The diarist and the diary

Sir Eric Clare Edmund Phipps was born in Madrid in 1875, the only child of Sir Edmund Phipps, a career diplomatist. Phipps was further descended from the Mulgrave and Normanby families, who had a long and distinguished tradition of naval and diplomatic service. His great grandfather, Henry Phipps, First Earl of Mulgrave had been Foreign Secretary 1805–1806, while his great uncle, Constantine Phipps, First Marquess of Normanby, had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and ambassador to Paris. An earlier forebear had been imprisoned by the Parliamentarians in 1643, while another great uncle had been a captain in the Royal Navy, who had explored and charted the Arctic Ocean in the 1790s. Phipps' father, Sir Edmund, had been a Minister in Brussels and Envoy to Rio de Janeiro in the early years of the twentieth century. He retired from the Diplomatic Service as Minister Plenipotentiary in Paris in 1906. Unlike many of his social background, Phipps was not educated at a British public school but received a private education in Dresden, Vienna and Paris. This gave him a knowledge and appreciation of the continental European diplomatic perspective that many of his contemporaries in the Diplomatic Service lacked. In particular, it left him with a life-long love of all things French. He completed his education by studying for a year at King's College, Cambridge, finally obtaining his degree from the University of Paris.

Phipps entered the Diplomatic Service in 1899. His first appointment was as third secretary at the Paris embassy from 1899–1904, from where he moved to Constantinople as second secretary for nine months in 1905. Three-years at the Foreign Office, led Phipps to return to Paris as the private secretary to the then British ambassador, Sir Francis Bertie in 1909. In April 1912, as first secretary, Phipps was dispatched to the British ministry legation in St Petersburg, where he remained until October of the following year, from where he was transferred to Madrid before returning to Paris in the spring of 1916. During the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Phipps worked

closely with the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Maurice Hankey, as part of the British delegation. But it was his, now extensive experience, of French affairs that further fuelled his ambition to become ambassador to Paris when between 1922 and 1928, he was Minister Plenipotentiary during the Marquess of Crewe's embassy. Phipps then took up the post as Minister in Vienna, where he remained until he was appointed to what was his first ambassadorial post in Berlin in August 1933, although his appointment had been announced in May. He remained as ambassador to Berlin until 24 April 1937.

Phipps was short and stocky, and he habitually wore a monocle in his right eye. The habitually stern expression revealed in photographs belied a man with a keen sense of humour and a well-developed sense of the absurd. One observer described him as 'rather un-English in appearance, ... a man of great charm and intelligence, clever, amusing, cynical, [and] proficient in his job'.¹ In the Foreign Office, Phipps' dispatches from Berlin became famous for their wit and insight. At the time, praise was heaped on him, particularly by his brother-in-law, Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, and by Sir Orme Sargent, head of the Central European Department.² However, the events of the late 1930s and the war years persuaded Vansittart to revise his opinion, and led him to agree with the comment attributed to Baldwin that Phipps' Berlin dispatches 'contained too much wit and not enough warning'.³ More recently, Nicholas Rostow has suggested that Phipps resorted to wit because he was given so few firm instructions by the Foreign Office.⁴ This edition of Phipps' diary, and the recent work by the German historian, Matthias Jarocho, suggest that this assessment is harsh.⁵ Scholars have tended to focus on the apparently flawed judgement of those who favoured appeasing Hitler. With the exception of Winston Churchill, much less has been written about those who warned against the folly of adopting such a policy than those who did not. Had Churchill not gone on to lead the British part of the Allied coalition to victory in 1945, he too would probably have been accused of saying or doing too little to prevent the outbreak of war. But it is necessary to ask whether any individual, even an intelligent and experienced diplomat with direct access to Hitler, could have predicted the outcome of the game of diplomatic bluff between Germany, Britain and France in 1938 and 1939, or the terrible levels of death and destruction that the Second World War would bring. The answer is almost certainly, no. Recent thinking on the Treaty of Versailles has suggested that those who drew up the peace treaties at the end of the First World War should not be condemned, because it is doubtful whether any settlement would have been worked because of the enormity of the task.⁶ Phipps' diary makes a similar case for the MacDonald and Baldwin administrations between 1933 and 1937. They did their best and acted with the noblest of intentions, but the diplomatic dice were always loaded against them, both in relation to Britain's friends as well as her former enemies.

Phipps and his peers

During his Berlin embassy, the ambassadors with whom he worked most closely were William E. Dodd, American ambassador to Berlin for a year longer than Phipps, remaining in the German capital until 1938, and their French opposite number, André François-Poncet. Although on good terms with both men, the three never enjoyed an intimate social relationship. The diary reveals that Phipps had a great affinity with his French counterpart, especially when he was on the receiving end of one of Hitler's tirades. At one point in the diary, Phipps quotes a note from Dodd in its entirety, although within their correspondence there are clearer indicators of the nature of their relationship than is provided here. But in his view, Dodd was too overwhelmed by the enormity of the task of dealing with Hitler to work effectively. Dodd was, as he told Simon, 'always inclined to take too pessimistic a view of the *near* future'.⁷ Dodd, in turn, often found Phipps socially diffident. After one encounter, he told Harry Hopkins, a confidant of President Roosevelt, that 'Sir Eric was as non-communicative as ever'.⁸ Despite this, they nevertheless worked amicably together. Before the Röhm Purge, they were both equally confident that Hitler could probably be persuaded to consider a disarmament agreement and be made to co-operate in international affairs. On 15 October 1933, details had been wired to Washington stating that Germany must have a standing army of 300,000, guns and defensive airplanes. Now Hitler proposed to submit the same scheme again together with a ten-year pact against war and would agree to an internal commission to inspect and supervise armaments, including the SS and SA. Phipps had submitted these suggestions and Simon's reply was sent to Dodd, who reported that 'it looked to me like a real movement towards disarmament'.⁹ The following day, 10 December, Dodd called on Phipps to discuss the disarmament situation further on a walk on the Hermann Göringstrasse.¹⁰ Dodd felt that Japan, according to information, was likely to attack Vladivostok in April or May the following year; if the Americans were to support the German-British position on disarmament, would the British government lend support to the United States' opposition of Japanese aggression in the Far East? Dodd also felt that it was better for the British, German and French governments to sign a disarmament pact than to take a chance on an eventual Italian-German-Russian deal that might force France into a dictatorship. Phipps did not think the Japanese threat real, he believed that on the one hand Britain wished to have American moral support but on the other hand it had also recognised Japanese claims in Manchuria. Both men agreed that a peace pact signed between Britain, Germany, the United States and endorsed by Russia was the most effective means of maintaining peace. The British should compromise so that Roosevelt could negotiate with Europe and the impasse on disarmament could be broken.¹¹

Eleven months later, five months after the Röhm Purge had revealed to both Phipps and Dodd that Hitler's ambitions would not be easily contained, Phipps wrote: 'He pretended to be surprised when I gave him the facts about German purchases of aircraft from the United States in the last six months'. Dodd told him that Schacht had revealed to him the war purposes of the Nazis. Dodd was trying to cultivate Phipps should Roosevelt try to bring American arms manufacture under government control. Dodd noted:

My hope was to enlist him in a move to persuade his government to set up an investigation like that of Senator Nye. Although I know England had protested against the exposure of the corrupt practices of its arms manufacturers, I bluntly alluded to the good effects of the Nye exposure. He agreed, though he did not indicate a desire to say anything further.¹²

The Foreign Office official and future ambassador to Paris, Gladwyn Jebb, described Phipps as 'splendidly anti-Nazi' and 'one of our ablest diplomats'.¹³ Jebb appreciated that there was a point to Phipps' humour, telling the story that 'when Göring returned from one of his shooting parties, boasting of a bag of several thousand, Phipps inquired gently "Animals, I hope?"'¹⁴ Despite his facility with words, he was not known for his sparkling conversation at social gatherings, preferring instead to talk about mundane issues. His wit appears to have been reserved either for his written communications or, when in company, levelled at those he viewed with contempt.

Phipps' reputation

Phipps' career as ambassador to Berlin and then to Paris, has frequently been viewed as one of contradiction.¹⁵ In Berlin, he has been characterised as an arch anti-appeaser, warning of the pointlessness of trying to negotiate with a regime bent on waging war. But in Paris, so it is argued, he was converted to the cause of appeasement, and became a staunch supporter of Neville Chamberlain's attempts to strike a bargain with Hitler. The existing studies of Phipps' career at this time, by the late John Herman,¹⁶ and by Matthias Jaroch,¹⁷ implicitly accept this assessment. Jaroch does not mention it, while Herman discusses it at length, but does not offer an explanation for it. Herman also fails to give full consideration to the wider impact of Phipps' views within the foreign policy decision-making process. I have endeavoured to avoid this pitfall by emphasising the effect of the ambassador's advice on the various foreign secretaries of the period. But one of the principal aims of this book is to show that Phipps was not hostile to a rapprochement with Hitler. Far from it, it was what he strove for throughout his period in Berlin. It is beyond the remit of this study to assess the extent to which these ideas were consistent with those he put forward in Paris. But the evi-

dence presented in Herman's book and in the relevant volumes of the *Documents on British Foreign Policy* suggests that there is greater congruity between these two phases of Phipps' career than has been recognised hitherto. More work needs to be done on this issue, but it is likely that [that] research would reveal Phipps' views about the most appropriate diplomatic strategies to contain Hitler varied little between 1933 and 1939.

At the same time, it would be misleading to suggest that Phipps was an idealistic appeaser. His message was in fact mixed. While every effort should be made to rein in Hitler by treaty and agreement, the likelihood of success was not great, and, as events revealed, were to diminish with time. But such a strategy should be tried nevertheless. In the meantime, the British government should prepare for a war that was likely to breakout later rather than sooner, but which would occur eventually. Phipps' reports of German plans for rearmament usually carried a suggestion that monies should be found for further British military expansion to meet any potential challenge. This point was appreciated by Vansittart. In a letter discussing the latest German rearmament plans, he wrote: 'Anyhow, my dear Eric, you and I have a clear conscience in this matter. We have given every warning that is conceivable for men in our position to be able to give.'¹⁸

While Phipps' views on how best to handle the challenges to the treaties of Versailles and Locarno posed by Hitler remained largely constant, his views about the Nazis and Nazism did evolve. Jaroch's study of Phipps' Berlin embassy suggests that it was the collaboration between Hitler and Mussolini over the Spanish Civil War during the summer of 1936 and the continued claim for the reinstatement of Germany's colonies that persuaded Phipps that the pattern of German foreign policy would probably lead to war.¹⁹ This study suggests that that point was reached much earlier in Phipps' mind. It was the events surrounding the Röhm purge (Night of the Long Knives) on 30 June 1934 that convinced Phipps that Hitler would stop at nothing to pursue his agenda, be that domestically with the removal of a rival faction, or in foreign affairs. Nevertheless, this political bloodletting did not destroy his faith in the Führer's willing to negotiate with foreign powers, but added urgency to his entreaties to increase the diplomatic pressure on Germany to conclude agreements with Britain and France that would prevent the outbreak of war. Hitler was not just awkward. He was dangerous.

The diary also dispels some of the myths about Phipps' effectiveness in Berlin, in particular the view of the American journalist, William Shirer, that the ambassador had a 'mighty fear of Hitler's wrath'.²⁰ It aims to tread in the middle ground between this remark and Ian Colvin's description of Phipps as 'the last ambassador who could laugh at Hitler'.²¹ It offers an insight into how his opinions about Hitler and National Socialism evolved; into why it was that contemporaries such as Hugh Dalton claimed that 'Phipps was the better man in Berlin' than in Paris.²²

As already suggested, the diary endeavours to contextualise many of Phipps' remarks within the general framework of British foreign policy strategy.

During Phipps' embassy in Berlin, the voices of those at the Foreign Office, such as Sir John Simon and Antony Eden, who sought rapprochements with Germany, were in a minority within the Cabinet. The diary comments on the difficulties that these men, who together occupied the post of Foreign Secretary for much of Phipps' period in Berlin, had in persuading their colleagues to embrace their ideas. Efforts had been made throughout Ramsay MacDonald's leadership of the National Government, to seek a rapprochement with Germany regarding disarmament. But by the time Phipps took up his post as ambassador to Berlin, many believed that MacDonald's mental faculties were in decline and his judgement impaired. In Phipps' view, Simon lacked the personal warmth to convert colleagues to his cause, while the more charismatic Eden was seen to be able but still lacking in experience. Eden was just two-years old when Phipps took up his first diplomatic post. The relationship that emerges between them in the diary is very conscious of the generation gap between them, and this transposed itself on to their approach to Hitler.

The diary covers the whole of Phipps' embassy, except for the first three months. It begins with his first encounter with Hitler, and the diary as a whole can be seen as an extended essay on Hitler as a political leader and diplomatic strategist. The diary is primarily a synthesis of letters and dispatches that he produced while in Berlin. He compiled it in 1940, when Europe was suffering the full horror caused by the diplomatic failures and misjudgements of the previous decade. In 1941 and in 1942 Phipps wrote to Sir Orme Sargent requesting permission to publish it. On both occasions his request was turned down. It was not, Sargent argued, appropriate because Britain was then at war with Germany. Sargent would also have been aware that Phipps' diary would have made uncomfortable reading for those who had advocated a conciliatory approach to Germany between 1933 and 1937. An additional reason for turning down the request was that the Foreign Office was in the process of compiling a selection of documents for publication charting British foreign policy from the conclusion of the Treaty of Locarno in 1925, to the outbreak of the Second World War.²³ Phipps' book would therefore be redundant.

Unfortunately, Phipps died in 1945 before making a further request to publish the diary. The reasons why he wished it to appear in print are various. As suggested above, it was not uncommon for politicians and diplomats to produce memoirs in their declining years. In that respect, the diary is unremarkable. What is interesting, however, is that it represented the second stage of recording his career as a diplomat, which he had begun when he was Minister in Vienna. In his unpublished memoir '*Light and Shade in Paris and Elsewhere*,'²⁴ Phipps displays a greater awareness than most diplomats of the historical importance of his work. He was, as already indicated, from a long line of diplomats and other servants of the Crown. Much of this memoir is concerned with the extent to which he measured up to his forebears in skill,

dedication, and above all, in diplomatic judgement. The Berlin diary is part of this process. It contained his clearest statements about the threat posed by Hitler. Phipps wished to be remembered by subsequent generations as the diplomat who, during the crucial years between the German departure from the Geneva Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations and the months before the Anschluss, saw through Hitler's posturing and bluster more than the British governments of the period. It is interesting and significant that Phipps made no attempt to assimilate material for publication of a diary of his embassy in Paris, notable because he regarded his final post as marking the pinnacle of his career.

Phipps in context

Phipps was the fourth British diplomat to hold the post of ambassador to Berlin during the interwar period. The first, Lord D'Abernon, created Viscount D'Abernon in 1926 in recognition of his role in the conclusion of the Treaty of Locarno in 1925, held the post between 1920 and 1926. Like Phipps, D'Abernon believed that the most constructive way to deal with the Germans was to adopt a policy of co-operation and reconciliation. Dealing, of course, with a series of governments that were very different in political complexion to the Nazis, D'Abernon believed that it was incumbent on Britain to lead the way in creating an international framework that the Germans would feel served their interests as well as those of the other Great Powers. At the same time, he shared the opinion of many in the Foreign Office, however, that any commitment made by Britain to this role and to any wider involvement in European diplomacy, especially the French search for security, should be strictly delineated. Unlike Phipps, D'Abernon was not a career diplomat. A background in international finance persuaded the then Prime Minister, Lloyd George, that the complexities of the reparation and reconstruction issues concerning Germany rendered him more suitable for the post than existing members of the Diplomatic Service with the requisite level of general experience. The controversy surrounding his appointment and others made during Lloyd George's second term as Prime Minister, contributed to the difficult relationship between the Premier and the Foreign Office over the conduct of British foreign policy. D'Abernon's strong pro-German sympathies also brought him into conflict with the traditionally more pro-French Foreign Office. Phipps, in some respects had almost the opposite problem – he was strongly pro-French at a time when the Foreign Office was not so much pro-German, but deeply sceptical about how strong an ally France was and how effectively the French were willing to work to save international peace.

This change of Foreign Office attitude towards France had started during the final years of Austen Chamberlain's period at the helm, although it was instigated more by French independence of diplomatic action than by any

real desire by the British to weaken the relationship. It was the search for a new way to define the Anglo-French relationship that overshadowed Sir Ronald Lindsay's Berlin embassy between 1926 and 1928.²⁵ A topic that has so far attracted no historical attention, Lindsay's embassy was nevertheless important because he was the only one of the ambassadors under discussion here who witnessed a German system of government operating under a period of relative prosperity, political stability and international harmony. The international context to Lindsay's embassy is provided by the development of the Little Entente and the French desire to improve relations with both the Soviet Union and the United States. This in turn, was mirrored in the desire of the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gustav Stresemann, to continue to pursue an 'east versus west' diplomatic strategy begun earlier in the decade, during which he sought at rapprochement with the Western European powers and the United States by signing the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928 and by negotiating what became the Young Plan system of loans in 1929 as well as by building on the treaty of mutual assistance signed with the Soviet Union in April 1926. Like Phipps, Lindsay believed in the importance of the Anglo-French relationship to help monitor German compliance with the terms of the Versailles and Locarno treaties. There are also parallels between both men's negative experiences in observing abortive attempts, albeit made in very different diplomatic climates, to ensure that the Germans took an active part in the international debate over disarmament. During the early months of his embassy, Lindsay shared a good relationship with the Austen Chamberlain. Although both were confirmed Francophiles, Lindsay was more effective at burying his suspicions about the long-term objectives of German foreign policy than Chamberlain and enjoyed a harmonious relationship with Stresemann. Chamberlain became increasingly suspicious of Lindsay's rapport with Stresemann, and in the summer of 1928, took the decision to recall him from Berlin, offering him instead the post of Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office.

His successor, Sir Horace Rumbold, who remained in Berlin for the crucial period 1928–1933, held much stronger views about the nature and direction of German foreign policy during the declining years of the Weimar Republic and Hitler's appointment as Chancellor.²⁶ Like D'Abernon, Rumbold held the German nation in high regard, thinking them to be more rational and industrious than the French. Rumbold shared Lindsay's view that the now ailing Stresemann was a man who would remain loyal to the terms of the Treaty of Locarno and who, along with President Hindenburg, were the only two senior politicians committed to maintaining democracy in Germany. With the death of Stresemann in October 1929, Rumbold, in the hope that it would still be possible to resolve residual business relating to the implementation of the peace treaties through diplomacy, urged the British government to support Brüning's minority administration to help prevent a surge of support for Hitler's National Socialist party.²⁷ Rumbold retired before

Hitler forced a complete abandonment of Weimar democracy, but in his final dispatch from Berlin, he issued a number of prophetic statements about the preparations for war that the German dictator instigated for the rest of the decade.

Having been Counsellor at the British Embassy in Berlin in 1913, Rumbold had been greatly offended at not being offered the embassy in 1920, when Britain resumed ambassadorial relations with Germany after that conflict. So unlike Phipps, Rumbold viewed the Berlin embassy when it was finally offered to him, as the pinnacle of his career, not as simply the springboard to a more prestigious post. There is a much greater emotional intensity to Rumbold's dispatches chronicling the gradual shift in German politics to the right than there is in Phipps' descriptions of the consolidation of Nazi power after 1933. The only real exception in Phipps' case is his description of the aftermath of the Röhm Purge in June 1934 – an act of Nazi brutality that genuinely shocked him. Rumbold's description of the actions of right wing paramilitary organisations on the streets of Berlin and their early targeting of the Jewish population carry a much stronger punch than Phipps' accounts of the much worse persecution of the Jews made possible by the Nuremberg Laws passed during his embassy. The difference was that between 1928 and 1933, Rumbold believed that the situation within Germany was still redeemable, that despite the breakdown of democracy and nationalist statements concerning foreign policy, the international community were sure to take steps to rein in Hitler's territorial ambitions. That had to happen because another war was unthinkable. After 1934, however, Phipps increasingly believed that Rumbold's optimism was misplaced; that the Nazi ruling elite were irrational beings and little more than animals, and that war was becoming inevitable.

The fifth British ambassador to Berlin during the interwar period, Sir Neville Henderson, has, until recently, been viewed as the most pro-German diplomat of his generation. A man who was duped by Hitler and National Socialism, who lacked scruples and insight, who consorted with a murderous regime and who did little to assist the British government obtain a realistic picture of long-term German foreign policy strategy. However, Peter Neville study of Henderson reveals a much more astute man, who provided Neville Chamberlain and Lord Halifax with invaluable information about how to read Hitler's policies and moods.²⁸ Like Phipps, Henderson was in favour of reaching a rapprochement with Hitler to prevent war, and, as John Herman has shown, by the outbreak of war in 1939, there was more that united the two ambassadors than divided them.²⁹ Henderson had given his personal support for Chamberlain's decision to use personal diplomacy to resolve the Czech crisis in 1938 and was in favour of the Prime Minister's decision to allow Hitler to annex the Sudetenland. Henderson can also be compared with D'Abernon because of the strength of their pro-German sympathies, their relative lack of popularity with the Foreign Office and also because in

different ways, they both overestimated the degree of influence they had in Berlin. At the same time, there were occasions when Henderson found dealing with Hitler over foreign affairs issues as trying as Phipps had done. In October 1938, Henderson wrote asking to be moved to 'another sphere' because he 'never want[ed] to work with the Germans again'.³⁰ By the autumn of 1938, he had lost the faith of both Halifax and of the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Alexander Cadogan, because he had countenanced a policy that effectively legalised a breach of the Treaty of Versailles. While Phipps' diary does suggest that he was also in favour of finding a rapprochement with Hitler to prevent war, there is nothing to suggest that while in Berlin, he countenanced a form of appeasement of this nature; although, it is notable that he came much closer to being in agreement with the policy that did so much to damage the reputation of his successor in Berlin when he was the ambassador to Paris.

Appointment as ambassador to Berlin

Phipps was informed of his appointment by Vansittart in April 1933. Such was the importance of the appointment, the *Daily Express* heralded it with the headline 'The man who will make history'.³¹ The Berlin embassy was one of a quartet of posts that were most sought after and which were usually, but not always, given to the most able and senior members of the Diplomatic Service of the day. In order of prestige, the embassies were: Paris, Washington, Berlin and Rome. However, since the war, the most demanding of the four had been the Berlin embassy. Wrangles over the implementation of the peace treaty, the reparation and security crises of the 1920s, the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of militaristic nationalism under Hitler meant that whoever had held the post of ambassador to Berlin had faced a full test of his diplomatic skills.

Phipps was selected primarily because Vansittart felt that his views on Germany were consistent with the out-going ambassador, Sir Horace Rumbold. Although Rumbold had resigned when Hitler's regime was only a few months old, his dispatches had convinced the Foreign Office that a man of experience who would not been hoodwinked by the Nazi propaganda machine was necessary to replace him. Phipps had proved his credentials as a sceptic about rightwing nationalism while Minister in Vienna, where he had warned about the potential excesses of the policies of Englebert Dollfuss. He had also a reputation for directness tempered with tact, and for not suffering fools gladly. There was also an obvious advantage to Vansittart in having someone in post whose views about Germany were known to him, and were broadly consistent with his own. He could be confident that Phipps would not make any special pleading of the German case that could undermine his own agenda in guiding the course of British policy towards Europe.

Phipps' views about Britain's role as a world power were also uncontroversial. While the First World War had seen a decline in British military and economic influence, the continuing extent of the empire still gave the British government a right to act as a major player in international negotiations. However, Europe was a special case. Phipps shared the views of many of his contemporaries in political and diplomatic circles that British commitment to any European power should be strictly limited and bound by treaty. The lessons about engaging in secret diplomacy that resulted in Britain becoming drawn into war in 1914 had been learnt well. British policy towards Germany during Phipps' embassy was therefore instinctively unadventurous. When it was clear that the Treaty of Locarno of 1925 was dead in the water after Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland, the British government sought to replace like with like, even though the relationship between Britain, France, Germany and Italy was profoundly different in 1936 than it had been eleven years earlier. Part of Phipps' frustration was that Hitler's diplomacy did not fit into any of the strategies that the British government understood or found acceptable, in particular, the Führer's insistence on applying his own interpretation to the concept of balance of power diplomacy.

Phipps and Hitler

Although Phipps was a servant of the British Crown and was directly responsible to the Foreign Office, his Berlin diary inevitably reveals more about his relationship with the German government than with the British. It has been argued that Phipps' lack of enthusiasm for Hitlerism stemmed from the belief, also held by many of his contemporaries, that it would be communism and not fascism that would pose the greatest threat to European security.³² The Berlin diary suggests that this assessment is flawed. He is quite clear about the potential threat to peace posed by the Nazis. There are numerous references to Soviet policy and the motives behind it, but Phipps does not view any Russian threat to be as great as that posed by Germany. Indeed, he actively encouraged the conclusion of an Eastern Pact precisely so that the Soviet Union would act as a check on German expansionist policies.

As indicated earlier, the diary can be viewed as an extended study of Hitler's personality and approach to diplomacy. Other members of the Nazi ruling elite had a prominent role, notably Göring and Göbbels. Their importance as far as Phipps was concerned was to illustrate other dimensions to Nazism that were less evident when studying Hitler. Göring emerges as a figure of ridicule, whose love of flamboyant gestures illustrated to Phipps the intellectual bankruptcy of National Socialism, while Göbbels' loyalty to Hitler showed how intelligent, educated people could fall under the Führer's spell. Phipps' conversations with the Minister for Propaganda form some of the most enlightening entries in the diary.

Phipps' relationship with Hitler was never cordial. In May 1942, Hitler described 'Sir Phipps' as a 'complete thug'.³³ Phipps' opinion of the Führer at this time, when the diplomatic agenda had moved far beyond any of their exchanges between the autumn of 1933 and the spring of 1937, is not recorded. But what is clear is that while Phipps was never impressed by Hitler, he did not view him with complete hostility and disdain during their early encounters. As the diary progresses, and the international diplomatic landscape changes, his patience with the Führer becomes increasingly strained.

Phipps' first encounter with Hitler on 24 October 1933 is notable because of the almost immediate discussion of the possibility of war in Europe. Phipps appears to have been convinced that Hitler would have been satisfied that a successful outcome of the Saar plebiscite for Germany would result in German assurances of peace to France. It is also clear that Phipps saw Britain as Germany's staunchest ally in Europe. During the early months of his embassy, he was not an advocate of rearmament, but advocated progressive disarmament. He dismissed Hitler's misgivings about the feasibility of reaching a rapprochement on disarmament by suggesting that if Germany did not agree to resume discussions on this basis, it would create a poor impression in London. His description of Hitler is that of a petulant child prone to throwing tantrums – an image reinforced by his repeated use of the door slamming metaphor in relation to Germany's departure from Geneva. At this time, Phipps' favoured diplomatic tactic in dealing with the Führer was firmly rooted in the policy of conciliation and toleration to Germany that had been such a feature of Anglo-German diplomacy in the 1920s. It was a form of appeasement built on achieving understanding rather than the form that it would take in the later 1930s, that of territorial concession.

Nevertheless, Phipps remained confident that a formula would be found with which the British and French governments could come to an agreement regarding disarmament, although he accepted that it would not be easy to achieve. He believed that it was Hitler's responsibility to take action on this matter as he was so closely bound with the image of Germany. Phipps appears to have been bemused by the passion with which Hitler spoke and in the first diary entry we have a vivid picture of a man whom he thought risible as well as mentally unbalanced. Phipps continued to receive assurances from the Führer that Germany was committed to a peaceful course. It is clear that Phipps wanted to believe him but found it difficult to do so.

Phipps' entry for 21 November 1933 suggests that he doubts Hitler's willingness to embark on a programme of discrimination and territorial revisionism. Far from being a fanatic, single-mindedly pursuing a course of action, Phipps suspects that the time since he committed his thoughts to paper in Landsberg prison may have mellowed Hitler and that consequently he may be amenable to concluding security and disarmament pacts with the

British and French. However, he acknowledged that there were contradictions between Hitler's claims for a desire for peace and the correlation of his suspicions about the French and Russians. The British government should pursue a policy of containment until Hitler grew old or was replaced by a more rational alternative. Phipps' detailed account of a meeting with Hitler on 5 December also emphasises that beneath the bluster and rhetoric, the Führer maintained a 'friendly' attitude and even when presenting a negative aspect of German attitude towards European affairs, stressed Hitler's special affection for Britain. Nevertheless it would be inaccurate to suggest that Phipps had been entirely convinced by the Führer's commitment to peace. Particular note should be taken of his reaction when Hitler compared the SA and the SS to the Salvation Army.

It is in 1934 that the greatest changes in Phipps' attitude towards Hitler occur. His initial descriptions of that year continues to emphasise the achievements of the Führer, but again it is tempered by reservations. Much good work had been done since his rise to power to address Germany's economic problems, but the Nazi revolution had not embraced all German citizens. The Jews, in particular, were becoming increasingly disadvantaged – a shrewd insight into the much worse treatment that was to come. The internal situation was potentially unstable as questions were being asked about whether the government was presenting the German people with an accurate picture of events. In particular, there was a rumour that circulated in the more liberal press that there might be a coup orchestrated by France aimed at removing Hitler from power. No plot materialised, and Phipps believed the idea to be absurd. Nevertheless, he thought that such German fears offered the potential for the negotiation of a rapprochement between France and Germany brokered by Britain.

In foreign affairs, Phipps' comments about Mussolini as a role model for Hitler is a further reference to the ambassador's belief that the diplomatic status of Germany could be improved through diplomatic means rather than through military confrontation. During the late 1920s, Mussolini had demonstrated that this was possible when he had brokered a series of agreements with Italy's neighbours, and with Britain and France, at Locarno. Again the diplomatic model of the 1920s is presented by Phipps as the way to maintain peace in the 1930s. That model was based on a pre-war style of negotiation of pacts and other agreements brokered by small number of politicians and diplomats and presented to the international community through the League of Nations only when the deals had been brokered. Phipps viewed the League not so much as a forum for diplomatic discussion but as a rubber stamp for agreements arrived at elsewhere that were consistent with the Covenant. The League was also a policing body, dispensing appropriate punishment to states in breach of the Covenant or their treaty obligations. Phipps shared none of the views of some of his more idealistic contemporaries, such as Lord Robert Cecil, Gilbert Murray and Sir Eric

Drummond, who viewed the League as the best means of maintaining international peace, and indeed, that the entire concept of war as a way of resolving international disputes should be abandoned. Even when he was ambassador to Paris, when he became more sympathetic to the policy of appeasement, he never became a pacifist. Phipps' views on war were based on a more pragmatic view that it was best avoided because it placed a massive drain on the human and economic resources of a state and seldom achieved its objectives, rather than from any well-developed moral or religious beliefs.

Phipps' attitude towards the events surrounding the Röhm purge on 30 June 1934, provides an example of his realisation that his earlier fears about the brutal means of the Nazis had proved correct. His initial response was not to demonise Hitler, but to press for him to be reined in diplomatically by the British and French. His personal opinion of the Führer did deteriorate, however, when efforts were made to implicate his friend, François-Poncet, in French support for the coup that the SA leader, Ernst Röhm, was accused of instigating, thus making the purge necessary. It nevertheless took Phipps some time to believe that the rumours of a plot had probably been fabricated. He was not a naïve man. That it took him six weeks to adopt a cynical view, reveals much about his comparatively open-minded attitude towards Nazism at this time. The key entry in this respect is that of 4 July 1934. Initially, he writes an unemotional account of Hitler's daring at removing some of President Hindenburg's closest former associates. There is almost an implication that this process was necessary to complete the transition from Weimar politics to Nazi dictatorship. Yet, Phipps is clear that the blood on Hitler's hands because of the purge will remain.

When Phipps chronicled his next meeting with Hitler on 27 November 1934 – their first encounter since the Röhm purge – his choice of imagery was appreciably different from that used to describe their earlier interviews. Until this point, it had been more implicit rather than explicit that he thought Hitler mentally unbalanced, but here Hitler is described openly as a predator. By 2 January 1935, Hitler had become a psychopathic gangster because of his involvement in the Röhm purge, and in the assassination of the Austrian Chancellor, Englebert Dollfuss on 25 July 1934. He thought that events in Germany were now on a knife's edge between good and evil and that 1935 would be the crucial year in determining whether Germany would pursue a diplomatic course leading to war or one that would maintain peace. The two dominant forces were Hitler and the army, which represented in Phipps' view the opposing forces of vulgarity and conservatism.

Another issue of concern was what he described as Hitler's 'unaccountably smooth' path in international affairs.³⁴ He urged Simon to take the lead in brokering an agreement with Germany concerning armaments, and consider British involvement in a security pact. In early 1935, Phipps' dispatches were predominantly concerned with persuading Hitler of the merits of an

eastern European security pact, that would mirror the ideas he suggested to Simon for a western pact. The common denominator between the two would be the inclusion of Germany. Once again, Phipps' instincts are to promote a Locarno-style solution to the diplomatic and military threat posed by Germany. That is, that the way to prevent war was through the use of pacts of mutual guarantee and alliance. Hitler resisted all attempts to persuade him to be party to an Eastern Pact because of his mistrust of the Soviet agenda in foreign affairs. The diary and his published dispatches do suggest that Phipps was not as aware as some of his predecessors in Berlin of the historic German fear of encirclement.³⁵ The frustrating conversations between Phipps and Hitler took place in a climate when the Führer once again raised the diplomatic stakes by introducing conscription. On the matter of a disarmament agreement between Britain, France and Germany, there were echoes of the diplomacy during the early years of peace after the First World War, as Hitler maintained that he preferred to negotiate with the British because they adopted a more amenable attitude to the German position than the French. The passage of 17-years of peace had not therefore made Britain less vulnerable to becoming drawn into the squabbles of her nearest continental neighbour. The issue, as ever was not mistrust of Britain, but the climate of mutual suspicion between France and Germany. Nevertheless, Phipps thought that it would be counterproductive to threaten Germany and that it would be ill-advised to form a military alliance unless it was clear how it would react should Hitler refuse its demands and make war inevitable. As Simon contemplated visiting Berlin, Phipps reprised his tiger motive to describe Hitler's attitude towards the British government. Unlike his predecessor, Lord D'Abernon, Phipps did not envisage a close relationship between Britain and Germany in the short-term. Simon should co-operate with Hitler, but not become his friend. Without allies, Hitler could not destabilise Europe. And so far, the Führer had succeeded in winning few friends abroad. The German revolution was proceeding slowly. The events of 30 June 1934 had shown that there was some disaffection within the Nazi party. It was perhaps only a matter of time before the German people saw sense, abandoned National Socialism and looked to Britain and France to help reinstate democracy. But in the meantime, a contingency plan of military and mutual assistance alliances was necessary should that eventuality not come about.

The diary contains numerous references to *Mein Kampf*, and it is clear that Phipps views its content as a blueprint for Hitler's strategy, particularly in foreign affairs. Nevertheless, he did not believe that the Führer had a timetable to achieve his objectives. The continuing weak state of the German economy and the relatively undeveloped state of the army and air force made an act of aggression in the immediate future unlikely. Hitler was probably sincere when he claimed that there were no outstanding territorial differences between France and Germany. But he warned that Hitler might

seek to achieve his diplomatic objectives by the same means that he had secured power as Chancellor in 1933, through manipulation of internal politics. The German victory in the Saar plebiscite in January had convinced him to force a similar vote in Austria for an Anschluss. In the spring of 1935, Phipps believed that the only factor that was preventing Hitler from adopting such a strategy was fear of the Italian response. As the events of 1935 progress, the diary chronicles German and British reaction to Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia and the resulting international crisis. One of the most notable features of this period is the changing relationship between Germany and Italy, from potential enemies during the era of the Stresa conference, through the neutrality of the Abyssinian war, to their co-operation during the Spanish Civil War, that broke out in the summer of 1936. The diary illustrates that Hitler and Mussolini were always unlikely allies despite the ideological similarity between their regimes, and despite the latter's admiration for the former.

Much of the energies of the British and German governments in the summer of 1935 were taken up with the negotiation of a naval agreement between the two countries. The history of the diplomacy that led to the Anglo-German Naval Agreement is given in the linking text. Phipps was not directly involved in the negotiations, providing only intermittent comment on the course of events. Most of his observations are reserved for the chief German negotiator and ambassador-at-large to London, von Ribbentrop, whom Phipps could not stand. The diary provides an interesting illustration of the way in which the negotiations dominated Anglo-German relations at this time, despite the fact that their substance was truly intelligible only to a small group of expert naval officers.

The Anglo-German naval negotiations refuelled a wider discussion in Whitehall about the consequence of German rearmament. Increasing attention was paid to Hitler's likely intentions towards the region of the Rhineland that had been demilitarised since the signature of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, and which was, according to the treaty, to remain in that state for 15-years. Phipps thought that Hitler would shy away from ordering a reoccupation of the territory because it would be in breach not only of the peace treaty but the Treaty of Locarno of 1925, which had reaffirmed the legality of the border between France and Germany as established at the Paris Peace Conference. If Hitler did go ahead, then war would probably be inevitable. Again, the diary contains evidence that Phipps believed that Hitler was a man with whom a diplomatic deal could be done to diffuse the tension over the future of the Rhineland. He urged the then Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, to see all aspects of Hitler's character – that he was 'like most men, an amalgam', and a man of his word.³⁶ Despite an ill-tempered encounter with the Führer in December 1935, Phipps remained wedded to this analysis. The British government should seek means of building on the foundations provided by the naval agreement and seek a security

rapprochement with Germany. The German economy was becoming stronger. If too much time was allowed to elapse, German industrial capability would be such that an agreement would be more difficult to broker. Again returning to the image of the petulant child prone to tantrums, Phipps advised both Hoare and his successor, Eden, to handle Hitler with care. There was the danger that Hitler would provoke war and then consider the consequences.

It was at this time that additional pressure was brought to bear on the British government to seek a rapprochement with Hitler. The influential socio-political Cliveden Set, centred around the Astor family, made representations to Eden in the spring of 1936. They suggested that Phipps did not take Hitler sufficiently seriously, and recommended his replacement with one more willing to 'to enter with sympathetic interest into Hitler's aspirations'.¹³⁷ The plan came to nothing and the diary does not reveal details of the efforts of the Cliveden Set to achieve their objective, although there is discussion of representations made by von Ribbentrop to Eden about this issue, and the question that was later asked in the House of Commons on the matter. The socially ambitious von Ribbentrop, now ambassador to London, had been influenced in his thinking by this group of ultra-right wing Conservative party members.

In the spring of 1936, Phipps continued to warn about Hitler's likely diplomatic strategy regarding the Rhineland. He did not believe that the League offered the forum to contain Hitler's territorial ambitions. Nevertheless, he had not abandoned all hope of a negotiated settlement with Germany on issues relating to rearmament and security. Prophetically, he predicted that the British government would not make recourse to war at the first signs of the infringement of the treaties of Versailles and Locarno, but that that point would be dictated by public opinion. Once that time had arrived, any attempt to reach a rapprochement with Germany – Phipps could have used the word appeasement here, but did not – would have been pointless. Referring to the use of League sanctions against Mussolini during the Abyssinian war, Phipps believed that it was good that they had proved ineffective. If they had worked, the British and French might have been lulled into a false sense of security and believe that such a policy would work against Hitler. In one of his last diary entries before taking up his post as ambassador to Paris, Phipps predicted that it would be the British government that would mount the challenge to prevent Hitler from challenging the security of Europe.

Note on the text

The text of the diary is some 77,000 typewritten words. All of it, except for a few references to inconsequential social engagements, is reproduced in this volume. The diary is contained in files PHPP I 10/1 and PHPP I 10/2 in the

Phipps papers at Churchill College Archive Centre, University of Cambridge. Phipps preferred to use the umlaut form when writing German names – hence Göring, as opposed to Goering which is the more commonplace spelling today. Likewise, Goebbels appears as Göbbels. He also used double inverted commas for quotations or to highlight phrases, instead of the single form more frequently in use now. This has been retained. Any phrases underlined in the original manuscript are indicated in the same way in this version, along with any explanations for the emphasis made by Phipps. There are places where the entries appear slightly out of chronological order. They appear in the order in which Phipps compiled them.

I have linked the text of the diary with explanatory and contextual discussion printed in italics. This does not claim to be comprehensive, and readers may also want to make reference to one of the vast number of general historical surveys of the 1930s. The contextual material is inevitable focussed on British and German policies and the influences that shaped them, and on Phipps' thoughts and actions. Constraints of space prevent the footnoting of every relevant dispatch, speech, newspaper article, etc, within the linking text, although these are included in the diary entries. However, the reader should use the appropriate volumes of the Second Series of the *Documents on British Foreign Policy* and Series C of the *Documents on German Foreign Policy* as a guide to this. For ease of reference, the identities of most of the people referred to within the diary who were alive at the time are revealed in the short biography section at the beginning of the book. Biographical information about individuals who were not contemporaneous, for example, Tallyrand, is given in footnotes in the appropriate place. All the page numbers given by Phipps to quotations from *Mein Kampf* are from the standard German edition of the work. The translations into English were made by Phipps or taken from one of several English translations that appeared in the 1930s. A guide to further reading is provided at the end.

The Diary

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After the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the British and French governments believed that there were two principal ways in which Germany might increase international tension. First, through a breach of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, which prohibited Germany from possessing military aircraft, artillery, tanks, submarines and ships over 11,000 tons, and restricted the German army to 100,000 men. Second, through contravention of the Treaty of Locarno of 1925, under which the British, French, German and Italian government guaranteed the frontier between Germany and France as defined by the Treaty of Versailles. An infringement of the military clauses of the settlement of 1919 could also provide the means of flouting the Locarno treaty. Consequently, the British government focussed its attention on German compliance with the former agreement. The French, concerned about future German invasion of their territory, gave priority to reinforcing the Locarno treaty by seeking further British assurances of military assistance in the event of a German attack.

On 16 March 1933, two months after Hitler became Chancellor, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, submitted a draft convention to the Geneva Disarmament Conference, which had been in session since the previous year. It proposed that within five years, all European states should transform their armies into short-term militias. French forces stationed in Europe would be reduced to 200,000 men and the German figure raised to that level. The moratorium on building capital ships until 1936, established under the Treaty of London in 1930, would be extended to all European states.

Werner von Blomberg, the German Minister for Defence, believed that reducing the German army to the status of a militia was absurd. Restrictions on the expansion of the German navy were also unacceptable because the French were constructing battleships larger than those of the German fleet. The German government could secure a better deal by cultivating a close relationship with Britain and use that as a lever with the French. Hitler's instinct was to reject the MacDonald Plan unless a reduction in the status of the Reichswehr was offset by an expansion in the number of heavy weapons at its disposal. But his mind was changed by a speech made by the American President, Franklin Roosevelt, asking that all those participating in

the Disarmament Conference agree to exclude offensive weapons from their arsenals. Hitler felt that the MacDonald plan now represented the lesser of two evils and agreed to its terms.

However, the French government voted to reject the plan and wished instead to adhere to the enforcement of Article 213 of the Treaty of Versailles, which rendered all expansion of German armed forces illegal. To Hitler, the French response highlighted the need for an agreement with the Soviet Union that would prevent intelligence relating to German rearmament on Soviet soil falling into the hands of Britain and France. In September, he learnt that the British and French governments had already made representations to the Soviets on this matter. Indeed, by the middle of the month, the French had accumulated a dossier, later dispatched to London, that suggested that Germany had been flouting Article 213 for some time. When the evidence was presented to the Disarmament Conference, the German delegation was forced to admit that the intelligence was correct. In response, the French proposed a disarmament convention in two phases, each of four years duration, that would more strictly monitor German activities than that offered by the Treaty of Versailles. During the first period, a means of overseeing an infrastructure for disarmament would be established. The second phase would allow for partial rearmament of those states with restricted levels of armaments, while those states not in that category would be expected to make substantial reductions in the size of their armed forces.

On 30 September, MacDonald proposed a conference, to be held in Geneva at which a British initiative would be discussed, although it was unclear on what basis this proposal would be made. The Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, favoured an abandonment of the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles that limited German armaments, whereas the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, believed that disarmament would be best achieved progressively. Simon was influenced by the advice of Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, who predicted massive German rearmament in the near future. This pessimism was reflected in instructions to Phipps. But the ambassador, who had arrived in Berlin on 2 August, initially thought that Simon and Vansittart were worrying unnecessarily. He was convinced that while Hitler needed careful handling, the Führer would not adopt a strategy on disarmament that would alienate Britain.

In early October, Simon received an outline of German policy on disarmament. Hitler was willing to accept a programme based on the MacDonald plan. If a limit were placed on the number of retained arms, it would be adhered to on the condition that the figure would be constantly reviewed. Compliance would also be made to terms relating to the deployment of arms not limited by the peace treaty providing other nations agreed to do the same. Simon was encouraged, but was unsure whether the Germans understood that the British plan was only applicable when a general agreement about security had been reached. Rumours began to circulate about a possible German withdrawal from the League of Nations and from the Disarmament Conference. Phipps believed that the British government should try

to save the negotiations while making it clear that Germany would be blamed for any breakdown. On 14 October, however, the German delegations to the Disarmament conference and to the League were withdrawn.

The decision stemmed from the British belief that it would be dangerous for Germany to engage in negotiations when the German position was not accorded the same status as that of the British and French. Under the most recent French plan, Germany could not even arm the reserve forces that would accumulate during the four years stipulated under its terms. Furthermore, it was unlikely that states with a full complement of military hardware would reduce their capability to the levels suggested in the second phase of the plan. In order to find time to create an alternative strategy, Hitler asked President Hindenburg's permission to dissolve the Reichstag. The new parliament, he argued, would debate a new peace policy that would demonstrate Germany's commitment to the treaties of Versailles and Locarno, and prove that it was British and French policies that were most likely to lead to war.

It was in this context that Phipps presented his diplomatic credentials to Hindenburg and sought his first interview with Hitler. Relations between Britain and Germany, although strained, were not in a state of total collapse. Simon remained optimistic about persuading the German government to return to the Disarmament conference and to the League. He was also aware that different tactics to those hitherto adopted would have to be used to bring this about. Phipps' diary therefore opens during a period of transition in Anglo-German relations.

18 October

This morning I presented to President Hindenburg the letter whereby The King has been graciously pleased to accredit me to him as His Majesty's Ambassador.

The President seemed in very good health and spirits, and begged me to convey to The King his best thanks for the enquiry about his health that His Majesty had instructed me to make.

The following are the texts of my speech on this occasion and of the President's reply:-

'Herr Reichspräsident,

I have the honour to deliver to Your Excellency the letter by which The King, my August Sovereign, accredits me to the Reich as His Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

I am proud to have been entrusted with this honourable mission at so important a juncture.

Never before was international co-operation more necessary in the financial, economic and political spheres alike. To surmount our individual difficulties joint efforts are needed: to render those efforts fruitful, reciprocal trust and confidence are essential.

So long as I am privileged to represent His Majesty in Berlin I shall devote my best endeavours to cultivating friendly relations between our two countries, and in the discharge of this task, so important for the cause of general peace and prosperity, I confidently look to Your Excellency and your Ministers for a continuance of that same valuable assistance as was afforded to my distinguished predecessor, Sir Horace Rumbold.

On the previous Saturday the German delegates at Geneva had received instructions to break off all conversations at the League and to return to Berlin. The news was brought to me at a luncheon party that I was giving at the Embassy to the principal British Consular Officers in Germany, whom I had invited in order to make their acquaintance and to exchange impressions with them.

The German slamming of the door at Geneva caused universal surprise here, even in the best informed circles.¹ [Cerutti], who was lunching last Saturday (October 14th) with Goebbels, only heard, like all of us did, of the German decision at luncheon time and was very annoyed with the Germans at having been kept in the dark.

The French ambassador, M. François-Poncet, told me yesterday that he also had been taken completely by surprise, for he had always thought it likely that the Germans would wish to conclude a Disarmament Convention.

From all I hear in well-informed quarters, it seems certain that it was Hitler himself who decided to leave Geneva and the League. He affected to believe that he was being treated differently to any other German Government and moreover, internal discussions in the Nazi party and the unfavourable economic situation in Germany made it desirable to make a foreign diversion which would rally the whole of Germany to Hitler's side.

M. François-Poncet is not by any means taken in by Hitler's awkward declaration of love to France,² for Monsieur Daladier would find it much more difficult to make reasonable concessions to Germany in a *tête-à-tête* than he would if he could point out to his public opinion that any such concessions were made as a result of British, American or Italian³ pressure. On the other hand, in face of a totally unreasonable Hitler, Monsieur Daladier's internal position is strong, for he would presumable obtain the support both of the Left and of the Right.⁴

Phipps' scepticism about Hitler's commitment to disarmament led him to ask one of the Chancellor's aides 'why a peace-loving Chancellor allowed militarist displays and such militant teaching in schools'.⁵ Simon, concerned at Phipps' boldness, asked him to smooth things over with the Germans so that an atmosphere conducive to re-starting the disarmament negotiations could be created. Simon had taken heart by Mussolini's willingness to denounce the German withdrawal. Hitler undoubtedly required special handling, but a possible way forward, brokered by Mussolini, lay open for the disarmament negotiations to continue. Furthermore, the

Duce might bring pressure to bear on Hitler to return to the Disarmament Conference.

During his first interview with Phipps, Hitler was more interested in discussing the continental European situation than Germany's relations with Britain. This was partly because the German Foreign Ministry had produced a secret memorandum on 23 October claiming that France would not risk taking military action against Germany despite the events of the 14th of that month. Hitler therefore felt that he could negotiate from a position of strength. The Saar question⁶ was discussed in many of Hitler's statements about foreign policy when he was trying to convey the view that Germany was being hindered by the British and French. He was anxious to be seen as an apostle of peace, striving for a good relationship with France. He wished to distance Germany from the Soviet Union after the revelations relating to the use of Soviet facilities to expand German military capability leaked by the French in September. But this did not rule out possible negotiations with Britain and France regarding the future of the Polish Corridor.⁷ Hitler's condemnation of the Treaty of Versailles was one of the central planks of his foreign policy in the 1930s.

Eden believed that the meeting between Hitler and Phipps offered an insight into the diplomatic skill of the German leader.⁸ While protesting his feelings of friendship to France, Hitler denounced the League as an organisation devoted to the subjugation of Germany. At the same time, he demanded an increase in the German army from 200,000 stipulated in the British draft convention to 300,000 by 1938. He also stated that he would not object if a disarmament convention were drawn up in Germany's absence – a situation that the British government would have found unacceptable. Phipps nevertheless emphasised that the onus was on Germany to demonstrate a commitment to disarmament and peace, and that much needed to be done to achieve this.

24 October⁹

I was received for the first time by the Chancellor this morning.

I opened the conversation by telling Herr Hitler how happy I was to represent His Majesty at Berlin at so difficult a moment, and that it would always be my greatest endeavour to do all that I could personally to contribute towards friendly relations between our two countries.

Herr Hitler warmly reciprocated my feelings and declared that his one wish was for peace. Germany, after the great revolution which had just taken place, was not mad enough to desire war, which, moreover, had shown that it could benefit nobody.

Herr Hitler then referred to France and remarked that once the question of the Saar was solved in accordance with treaty provisions, no territorial question would stand between them. Alsace-Lorraine were certainly not worth fighting for: they always turned longing eyes to whichever country they did not belong to.¹⁰ He was ready, he said, to give far-reaching guarantees to France of his good faith.

Herr Hitler then proceeded, after a long disquisition on Russia and the danger which that country presented to Germany from an industrial, economic and agricultural point of view owing to the lower standard of living existing there, to remark rather vaguely that he sought certain possibilities of expansion in Eastern Europe: he disclaimed, however, all wish to rectify the "absurd and unfair Corridor question" by force.

Herr Hitler declared with great vehemence that he would never have consented to sign the Treaty of Versailles, he would merely have said: "occupy what territories you wish, but I will not sign away German honour". I remarked that Great Britain had ever since the conclusion of peace fought Germany's battles for her on every field: this he did not dispute, but laid great stress on the intolerable position created for Germany by the discrimination exercised against her for so many years after the conclusion of peace, and which had apparently been meant to continue for another 8 years. I here remarked that *Gleichberechtigung*¹¹ would have come at the latest after four and not after 8 years. I then urged the Chancellor to tell me what exactly he meant by *Gleichberechtigung*, and how he envisaged the resumption of the negotiations for disarmament. He replied that he was firmly convinced that the highly armed States, especially France, would never be allowed by their parliaments to proceed to real disarmament. This statement I disputed and remarked that immediate disarmament might be impossible, but that progressive disarmament by stages would not only be feasible but very popular. Moreover England could not be accused on this point of not setting a good example, for she had reduced her fighting forces to what was by many considered a dangerous minimum. Herr Hitler, however, was unconvinced. He proceeded to state that he was quite ready for the highly armed States to retain their armaments, which should, however, be limited to their present number by means of a convention. France could retain her offensive weapons and her army of over 600,000 men and he would ask for no reduction in the Polish, Czech or other armies. He would only demand for Germany a short-time army of 300,000 men with no offensive weapons, but complete liberty to have as many defensive weapons as might be necessary for this number. He urged that poison-gas and bombing behind the battle zones should be entirely prohibited.

At first the Chancellor said that those highly armed States must come to an arrangement between themselves without Germany, for he maintained with great vehemence that if France possessed an enormous and heavily armed army, supported by a vast and powerful system of fortification, it could not be against poor defenceless Germany that it was directed. At this stage I pointed out what a lamentable effect would be created in England and on His Majesty's Government in particular if Germany declined or hesitated to resume negotiations with the other Powers. I remarked that Germany had left the room in which friendly conversations had taken place and had banged the door.¹² It was therefore most desirable that she should

participate again in some sort of friendly conversation. I here referred to and read extracts from the Prime Minister's speech in Sussex on October 23rd,¹³ and urged the Chancellor to reply thereto.

I remarked, as a personal observation of my own, that however materially Germany might have disarmed, it struck the ordinary foreign observer that spiritually she was very heavily armed indeed. It was difficult, I said, for anybody living permanently in Germany, like the Chancellor himself, to realise the extent of the military, I would not say warlike spirit pervading the whole country. To realise this it would be necessary for him to cross some frontier in order to see how in other countries, particularly England, any form of military display was merely an incident, whereas here it constituted the *Leitmotiv* of the nation. I had the feeling that a spark might suffice to turn this German military spirit into a really warlike one.

Herr Hitler here burst into an eloquent torrent of protestation against any German military spirit. He declared that what foreign observers thought was military feeling was merely a well-disciplined attitude against Communism. He maintained that if he had not come to power half a million dead would have been heaped up in German streets. He shouted out that it was intolerable for Germany to submit to foreign interference, for a Dutchman and Bulgarians¹⁴ to come and set fire to the *Reichstag* buildings and for accusations then to be made abroad that the German Government had had the fire started. Thousands of his supporters had been killed or wounded by Communists.

I replied that since the Chancellor had succeeded in producing so disciplined a nation the responsibility that rested upon him personally was all the greater. I would say without flattery that his words at present carried more weight than those of any one man, and finally I addressed a strong personal, appeal to him to do all that lay in his power to further the precious interests of world peace.

On perusing the above it strikes me as an all too bald account of a most strange interview. My several interpolations could only be made when the Führer¹⁵ paused for breath in the torrent of his eloquence. On these occasions he certainly listened politely to what I had to say, but I entertain little illusion as to the impression I may have made upon him. At times he resembled an automaton; for instance, my remark on "German militarism" seemed to open a tap in his brain marked "anti-Communism".

Herr Hitler's tempestuous flow of words was apparently addressed to a vast audience far removed from the *Reichskanzlei*, perhaps because he found me inadequate both as regards numbers and enthusiasm, perhaps because he was rehearsing his final electoral speech to be delivered tonight.

At one moment he told me with passionate emphasis that death meant nothing to him and that he would willingly lay down his life for his people (*Mein Volk*), but he would never sign away their honour. I could see him as he spoke, advancing unarmed and Mahdi-like,¹⁶ clutching his swastika flag

to meet death from a French machine gun. A trace of healthy, human fear of death would have reassured me more. Once or twice I felt inclined to smile at Herr Hitler's shouting crescendo, but the seriousness, not to say tragedy, of the situation prevented that inclination from developing. It was disquieting to feel such power in the hands of so unbalanced a being. I fancy that it is to the emotions of Germany's dictator rather than to his reason that we must suddenly appeal on any vital issue. Indeed [François-Poncet] has found him easier to move than Baron von Neurath, whose great wish seems to be to out-Herod Herod.

On this occasion Herr von Neurath was present, but did nothing to disturb or enliven the proceedings, for he sat throughout like a wooden image without uttering a word.

Although Phipps thought Hitler volatile and unpredictable, he believed there was consistency in the German leader's diplomatic agenda, which had remained unchanged since the foundation of the National Socialist Party in 1919. Important issues, identifiable because of the enthusiasm with which Hitler discussed them, could, in theory, be more easily tackled than matters expressed in more moderate language. If the British government recognised the passion behind Hitler's words, and responded with equal vigour, then deals were more likely to be concluded than if his views were condemned from the outset. Phipps' opposite number in London, Leopold von Hoesch, took a different view.¹⁷ To him, capital should have been made out of differences between British and French policy on disarmament, allowing Germany to seize the diplomatic initiative and leave the Allies to argue among themselves. To guard against this, Phipps urged Simon to take the lead in keeping the disarmament negotiations going.

Throughout November, Phipps took comfort from von Neurath's public disagreement with Hitler over a possible German return to the Disarmament conference.¹⁸ In the run-up to elections in Germany, Phipps thought that the German withdrawal from Geneva had given the Nazis an easy propaganda victory, but that in the long term their actions were foolish. Stresemann had often threatened a schism with the British and the French, but had had the good sense not to carry it out. The Nazis needed to be protected from themselves. At the same time, he was sure that Hitler intended to assume absolute power. The task in hand therefore would not be easy, but was one that had to be accomplished. Phipps was not convinced by Hitler's summary of German foreign policy as 'peace, honour and equality' and believed that in the Nazis' eyes, the Treaty of Versailles was now defunct.

In an effort to breathe fresh life into the Disarmament conference, Simon and Eden visited Geneva in mid November. However, their united front hid divisions. The Foreign Secretary believed that to conclude a disarmament agreement without consulting Germany would create more problems than it would solve. Eden, however, inclined towards an Anglo-French agreement. Simon came under pressure from the Cabinet to produce a strategy paper on disarmament that clarified the

*British position and offered a way forward. When Phipps met von Blomberg on 20 November, therefore, the Germans retained the diplomatic upper hand.*¹⁹

21 November²⁰

I met the *Reichswehr* Minister at dinner last night. After dinner General von Blomberg spoke to me with considerable frankness. He began by asking what I thought of the offer made to me by the Chancellor on October 24th. Did I not think it a highly reasonable one? Being unaware of the views of His Majesty's Government on the subject, I merely replied that its great drawback seemed to me that it implied German rearmament rather than an offer of disarmament, and I asked whether Germany would not prefer the latter.

General von Blomberg smiled and replied that he certainly would but, although England had perhaps disarmed more than was strictly necessary, both the Chancellor and he were firmly convinced that France had no intention of disarming. Moreover, real disarmament would mean that 40 million French would be confronted by 65 million Germans and to this he considered it was impossible to ask the French to agree.

A rumour having reached me that General Göring, during his recent visit to Rome,²¹ had informed Signor Mussolini that Germany would require guns of at least 210 millimetres, I enquired of General von Blomberg what would be the heaviest guns that she would require. He unhesitatingly replied that she would not ask for any guns over 155 millimetres. The Chancellor would in the last resort, moreover, be prepared to accept a system of general supervision, although he did not believe in its efficacy; he would prefer that a number of French officers, say one or two hundred, should be attached permanently to various regiments in the German Army, and vice versa. General von Blomberg said that he had made all these proposals to General Weygand at the time of the Daladier Ministry,²² and seemed convinced that the latter had been overthrown by the French Socialists because they thought Monsieur Daladier was inclined to accept those proposals as a basis for discussion. Both the Chancellor and General von Blomberg himself felt that no arrangement with France would be possible until the formation there of a really strong Government such as a Tardieu-Daladier combination; the present Sarraut Government²³ was far too weak to conclude any reasonable agreement. If Monsieur Herriot were to come to power it would be disastrous, for he would be hypnotised by the desire to bring about a Franco-Russian alliance which would constitute a grave danger to peace.

General von Blomberg said that he had tried in vain to elicit from the French what they meant by "security"; to give it them the Germans would, he told me, be prepared to agree even to an Anglo-French defensive alliance advocated by Lord Rothermere, provided it comprised no secret clauses directed against Germany, and there they felt that they could trust England.

Hitler had remarked to him recently that to inspire such fear showed that Germany had fought too well in the war.

It having been reported to me that the German Government were toying with the idea of evading the stipulations of the Locarno Treaties, I then remarked that, in my opinion, the maintenance of those Treaties would be an essential condition to any arrangement of the nature suggested. General von Blomberg declared that the Germans did not dream of trying to wriggle out of Locarno, although the demilitarisation of the Rhineland²⁴ was a great hardship for Germany, nearly 20 million Germans being left in those regions without any military defence. This remark shows, I think, that Germany will, sooner or later, try to force herself from those bonds also, as constituting an infringement of her famous *Gleichberechtigung*. I hear, moreover, that Dr. Gaus, the Legal Adviser to the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs, is quite prepared to argue with equal vigour and conviction either (1) that Germany, on leaving the League of Nations, is freed from the trammels of Locarno,²⁵ or (2) that Locarno remains intact despite Germany's departure from the League.

General von Blomberg then assured me in the most positive manner that Germany would never again contemplate building a fleet against England; she would merely require a few small submarines for defensive purposes and a few battleships of over 10,000 tons, that limit being unpractical for the purpose.²⁶ A small but highly efficient fleet was what Germany required, sufficient to throw into the scales in whatever group of Powers she might wish to join; to constitute, in fact, so I gather, a bargaining asset for Germany's collaboration in the future.

In conclusion, General von Blomberg declared that he would at any time be ready to go to Paris to discuss matters there with General Weygand, and he added that he would be only too happy to converse with me and to give me any further details that might be required.

In contemplating the present situation arising out of an electoral campaign waged against a practically non-existent adversary and conducted with propaganda methods of unexampled violence and mendacity,²⁷ one is tempted to put certain far-reaching questions regarding the future of the Hitler movement and the future policy of Hitler. It has been asked, for instance, whether the movement is not a convenient screen behind which the old Prussian Nationalism is weaving its dark web. This may well be, but if so the screen itself is singularly inefficacious and fails to conceal the fact that the youth of Germany is being reared in a purely militarist spirit. When I told the Chancellor that militarism seemed to me to be the *Leitmotiv* of this country, whereas elsewhere it was merely an incident, that a spark might suffice to kindle the militarist spirit into a war-like flame, I might have added that the above-mentioned campaign of lies, depicting Germany as the one innocent lamb among a pack of wolves, was not calculated to inculcate in German youth that spirit of peace and understanding advo-

cated so inappropriately and so loudly after Germany's banging of the Geneva door.

As regards Hitler, I doubt whether he himself realises how far he is at present the author of *Mein Kampf*,²⁸ the full-blown blood-and-thunder book as originally published in Germany, that is to say, and not the recent pale abridged and bowdlerised edition which has been published by his direction and translated into English.

Who can tell how far that Hitler resembles the present German Chancellor who has been making the welkin ring with shouts of peace? In some respects it is certain that he remains true to type for he has not varied over the Jewish question or Austria²⁹ since writing the book; but it would be too simple and even perhaps dangerous to assume that he maintains intact all the views held and expressed with such incredible violence in a work written in a Bavarian prison 10 years ago, though, of course, those views cannot be left out of consideration in any endeavour to gauge the Chancellor's intentions on any given subject. His hatred of France, Germany's deadliest enemy, for instance, is written in flaming letters, and certainly seems difficult to reconcile with his recent attempts to wheedle her into a tête-à-tête conversation.

Again, the recent no-force agreement with Poland³⁰ is undoubtedly regarded by my French colleague as an attempt to drive a wedge between that country and France. Yet, though this may have entered into Hitler's calculations, the fact of German-Polish *apaisement* should nevertheless facilitate France and Germany. In this connection General von Blomberg's remarks to me are of interest.

To revert to Hitler: we cannot regard him solely as the author of *Mein Kampf* for in such case we should logically be bound to adopt the policy of a "preventive" war, nor can we afford to ignore him. Would it not therefore be advisable soon to try to bind that damnably dynamic man? To bind him, that is, by an agreement bearing his signature freely and proudly given? By some odd kink in his mental make-up he might even feel impelled to honour it. His signature under even a not altogether satisfactory agreement, only partially agreeable to Great Britain and France and not too distasteful to Italy might prevent for a time any further German shots among the International ducks. His signature, moreover, would bind all Germany like no other Germans in all her past. Years might then pass and even Hitler might grow old, and reason might come to this side and fear leave it. New problems would present themselves and old problems, including disarmament, might perhaps have solved themselves through the mere passage of time, and without those Hurculean and hitherto vain efforts to satisfy German "honour" and allay French fear.

Phipps was preoccupied by the increasing divergence between the British and French governments on how to respond to the German demands for rearmament. François-Poncet had recommended an agreement on the basis of that suggested by Phipps to Hitler on 24 October, but which would be strictly supervised and contain agreement

about the future of Austria. Simon thought it worthy of consideration, although he shared Phipps' view that it appeared to involve substantial German rearmament. If that were the case, the British government would not agree to the measures suggested. However, conversations between François-Poncet and Hitler between 25 and 27 November suggested that the Germans would insist that the French disarm to their level; a policy that would have been wholly unacceptable in Paris. Mindful of the continuing precarious state of British and French disarmament discussions, Phipps agreed to be tactful when next discussing the matter with Hitler. Like Simon, he thought that Mussolini might be prevailed upon to exert influence in Berlin to break the stalemate. In the meantime, he sought further assurances of Germany's peaceful intent and commitment to disarmament.

5 December³¹

I was received this morning by the Chancellor and spent three-quarters of an hour with him.³²

I opened the conversation by telling Herr Hitler, as I had already told Baron von Neurath, who was again present during this interview, that, as would have been gathered from Sir John Simon's speech in the House of Commons on the 24th November last,³³ His Majesty's Government had been taking attentive note of the communication made to me by him on October 24th and were giving it careful consideration. The drawback to that proposal was, however, that it seemed to involve substantial German rearmament instead of disarmament, and this was an aspect of the matter which gave His Majesty's Government much concern. I then drew the Chancellor's special attention to the observations Sir John had made to the House regarding German assurances that the only desire of the German Government was for peace; I added that whilst His Majesty's Government valued such declarations, they felt that the necessary basis of world confidence, upon which a regulation of armaments must so largely rest, would be greatly strengthened if a way could be found for giving those utterances more concrete shape. That was partly why His Majesty's Government told the French that if they felt that they could agree to get into closer communication with the German Government, they had the complete goodwill of His Majesty's Government in so doing.

I then asked the Chancellor what hope he had of reaching an agreement with France and in what way he contemplated allaying French fears regarding their security. Herr Hitler's eyes here became glazed, the British Ambassador faded away and was replaced by hordes of faithful and enthusiastic S.A. and S.S. troops, to whom, rather than to me, the torrent of words was addressed, of which the following was the gist.

He was not ashamed of Germany's defeat after fighting the world. That defeat, moreover, had been finally accomplished by the action of traitors at home and not disaster in the field. With those traitors he had now dealt in a

ruthless and satisfactory way (Herr Hitler here made a somewhat sinister movement of the hand as though cutting off some noxious excrescence). For weeks and months he had been trying in vain to discover what really the French meant by the word "security". They had during the last few years constructed an absolutely impregnable system as was unknown even in the great war. In order to have the slightest chance of breaking through those fortifications Germany would have to possess large quantities of the very heaviest guns, and even then her chances of success would be remote, and she would have to sacrifice numberless German lives in the attempt. On the other hand, Germany's frontier was completely undefended and, as things were at present, the French could walk into the country whenever they liked. Indeed, there was a very real danger of some future weak French Government deciding to embark on a policy of foreign adventure in order to divert attention from its weakness at home, and to proceed to the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine. This was an intolerable situation for Germany, who was thereby placed in the position of being eternally considered to be a second-class Power. She must also be in a position to throw her might into the scales at some future time and, in this connection, might not Great Britain herself be glad of other alternatives to her present friendships? ...

During a short pause in this outburst I managed to return into Herr Hitler's range of vision and to remark that the French, so far as I was aware, did not fear a frontal attack on them by Germany. It was rather to the East that they looked anxiously, towards Poland and, in particular of late, towards Czechoslovakia.³⁴ The Chancellor remarked that it was for that very reason that he was in course of improving the relations between Germany and Poland. Marshal Pilsudski, he said, had shown himself to be singularly reasonable and to be possessed of discrimination and farsightedness. He was, however, an old man and only human, and might disappear. In that case the French situation might be reproduced in Poland where, again, a weak Polish Government might seek, by a policy of foreign adventure, to enhance its shaken prestige, for instance, by overrunning East Prussia. If France wanted more security than she had at present, why not conclude a Franco-British defensive alliance, to which he would have no objection whatever? I replied that British public opinion would not permit of the conclusion of such an instrument. Could not France be given security by some other means? At this point the Chancellor burst out that he would be ready to conclude pacts of non-aggression with all his neighbours for the space of 10 years, during which any resort to force would be completely eliminated. A network of such pacts should be concluded. Then Germany, if she were the aggressor, would have the world against her. At the end of 10 years the position could be reviewed in the light of then existing circumstances. Would this not satisfy French requirements?

In the course of our conversation I elicited from the Chancellor that his proposal for a short-term army of 300,000 men was based on the fact that

that number is considered to represent roughly 25% of the total forces of France, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Germany would require an air force of approximately the same percentage of the joint air forces of those three Powers. Herr Hitler would willingly agree to general supervision. The German army would be on a basis of one year's service with a certain percentage of long-term officers, N.C.O.s and technical instructors (drawn, presumably, from the existing *Reichswehr*). I tried to elicit that percentage but here the Chancellor for once was *boutonné*, and remarked that that was a technical question which must be decided at a later date by experts.

I enquired what exactly the Chancellor meant when he had suggested to me in my previous interview that the "highly armed" Powers should be bound by a species of standstill agreement to their present armaments. Herr Hitler replied that he had only had in mind France, Poland and Czechoslovakia. So far as Great Britain was concerned, not only should she not be included in any such standstill agreement, but he would even welcome considerable additions to the British fleet and air force.

On the naval side, I remarked that we had often proposed the total abolition of submarines, to which Herr Hitler replied that Germany also would be delighted if submarines could be abolished. He then repeated what General von Blomberg had already told me that Germany would never dream of competing against England at sea, but that he would like a few (*ein Paar*) big ships after 1935, until which date she would remain within the limits prescribed by the Treaty [of Versailles].

The Chancellor declared that he did not believe the present French Government was strong enough to reach any satisfactory comprehensive arrangement with Germany. I thereupon asked what procedure he would favour in order to reach some agreement. He replied that if Great Britain and Italy would urge upon France the advisability of concluding an arrangement, at any rate on the basis outlined above, it might in due [course] induce the French Government to take the necessary decision. Herr Hitler finally expressed satisfaction at Mr. Baldwin's speech on November 27th³⁵ and in particular at the three alternatives mentioned by him i.e. (1) disarmament of all countries to Germany's level, (2) limitation of armaments at a point excluding all large offensive weapons, and (3) competition in armaments.

The Chancellor, even when frenzied, was friendly. Baron von Neurath again maintained silence, which he only broke once in order to assure us that Italy's balance of trade with Russia was passive.

Phipps concluded that the Führer's complaints had been valid and that his real concern was the consequences to the disarmament negotiations wrought by Daladier's recent fall from office. In order to smoothen any ruffled feathers in Berlin, Phipps was instructed to assure Hitler that the British government was giving full consideration to the German point of view. At the same time, it should be made clear that an increase in the size of the army to 300,000 men was bound to be unacceptable.

Furthermore, the SA and SS must cease to be independent of the German army. Phipps also saw the change of government in France as an opportunity for Britain to seize the initiative in cultivating a better relationship with Hitler. Personal dialogue between Hitler and Daladier had promoted a better understanding between Germany and France. British adoption of this tactic might reap similar rewards.

7 December

I feel sure that later on a meeting between Sir John Simon and Hitler would be excellent and, indeed, perhaps indispensable, but I feel strongly that the moment is not yet. It is much too soon after the violent and unjust attacks made upon the former by the official German press, and any indication that he contemplated coming here in the near future would give the Germans a bad attack of swollen head. They would, moreover, probably open their mouths a good deal wider in the forthcoming negotiations if they were in a position to boast that an eminent British statesman was running after them so soon after the banging of the Geneva door. Later on, his visit to clinch matters would, I feel, be of the utmost utility. Incidentally, I may remark that the Italian Ambassador came to see me on December 4th and read out to me a telegram in which Grandi informed Mussolini of Sir John's intention to come to Berlin shortly. Signor Cerruti asked whether I knew anything about it, and I replied that Sir John had in effect told me that perhaps at some quite indeterminate and future date it might be advisable for him to see Hitler, but that this was highly confidential.

I hear that Bismarck, just after the Fulham election,³⁶ reported to the German Government that England was becoming very pacifist and [wanted] peace at any price. Hitler attaches importance to Bismarck's views and it would be very undesirable if this idea became too firmly fixed in the Führer's mind. The less pacifist and peace at any price talk there is in England now the better, for such talk is only calculated to make the Germans open their mouths wider than ever.

The following day, Phipps saw Hitler to discuss the disarmament question. The meeting resulted in an aide mémoire on the British position. His Majesty's government shared the German wish for an agreement. To facilitate this, a list of the Führer's requirements was needed. Nevertheless, the British government would not sign an agreement that compromised the Covenant of the League of Nations. An effective treaty would not be possible unless Germany took a full part in its negotiation. The German commitment to reach a disarmament settlement would however be questioned if the proposed expansion of the army, air force and navy went ahead contrary to the views of the international community. Likewise, the status of the SA and SS remained unclear.

A week later, Phipps returned to London for a six-day visit to discuss the viability of the three options outlined by Baldwin at the end of November, and for a further briefing on the issues outlined in the aide mémoire. Simon thought Phipps too

conciliatory. He was instructed to tell Hitler that the British government categorically rejected the proposed expansion of the German army to 300,000 men. Phipps, nevertheless, played down the vehemence of the British position in a personal letter to the Führer. He skirted around the most contentious issues and emphasised British willingness to contemplate an agreement provided it was consistent with Britain's League obligations. He thought that to adopt a confrontational approach would create more problems than it would solve.

In the remaining weeks of 1933, German attention was focussed more on France than on Britain. On 26 December, news reached Berlin that the French had offered the Soviet Union a military alliance. Hitler was unconcerned by the news, believing that the Soviets would never sign an agreement that would be used against Germany because of the history of mutual assistance between the two countries since the war. Furthermore, it was now doubtful that France would take military action against Germany without Soviet support. Britain would not confront Germany without French support and seemed set on a diplomatic settlement of the disarmament question. It was therefore unlikely that direct pressure would be brought to bear for the foreseeable future by any of the major European powers. It was within this context that the expansion of the German army and air force began apace.

In December 1933, Simon considered a British agreement with Germany on disarmament. Anticipating French objections, he visited Paris on 22 December. French political opinion was divided. On the one hand, further negotiations with Germany could result in unacceptable concessions being made. On the other hand, the prospect of no further discussion filled French hearts with foreboding. It was from this stymied position that the French government issued its response to Hitler's proposal for an increase in the German army, on 1 January 1934. The note expressed doubts about the status of the SA and SS and was hostile to any agreement that allowed for German rearmament. Phipps reported the German government's dismay at the French note and that Hitler now believed that a speedy resolution of the disarmament question was out of the question. Phipps advised that the British government should take the lead in the negotiations. The French and the Germans could not be relied upon to formulate sensible policies because of the climate of mutual suspicion between them.

Simon nevertheless believed that it was important for the British government to be certain about how to approach any dialogue with France and Germany on disarmament. His greatest concern was that if a permanent breakdown of negotiation occurred, British uncertainty would be made public knowledge by the press. He was anxious to avoid any radical new diplomatic approaches. Under the Kellogg–Briand non-aggression pact of 1928, a meeting of the principal signatory powers would be convened in the event of the pact's violation. Simon hoped for a similar arrangement to be created regarding the Draft Convention. This would foster a sense of collective responsibility for disarmament but would blend in well with Britain's general strategy towards the maintenance of international peace and security.

Hitler was unsure about how to respond to the French note. Escalation of tension with France over disarmament could lead to tensions regarding the outcome of the Saar plebiscite. On 19 January, however, the official German response to the Anglo-French disarmament plans was published, announcing a willingness to conclude a pact requiring all signatory powers to renounce the use of aggression. It welcomed the MacDonald plan as a basis for negotiation and agreed to postpone a decision about the status of the Rhineland. At the same time, an expansion of the German

army to 300,000 men should not be viewed as excessive in Paris and London. But Phipps thought that these were hollow words. He was certain that the German government had now abandoned any desire to conclude a disarmament agreement. The policy of the British government should be one of containment, of damage limitation. The French were too wrapped up in their own concerns, to be able to take the lead on such a policy.

22 January¹

The main trend of German foreign policy with reference to disarmament at present is a firm intention to re-arm. To meet this I can only see two courses to pursue:-

- 1, Sanctions, or
- 2, the conclusion of a Convention with Germany, granting her limited, gradual and controlled rearmament.

Either of these courses, to be successful, implies a united front against undue German pretensions. The Germans must in fact, be made to fear that their failure to be reasonable over (2) will find them confronted with (1). At present this fear is non-existent, for they bank on our all too palpable differences and inertia. Instead, they have a mitigated fear (diminishing as time goes on) of a possible attack by France and perhaps one or two of her minor satellites. Meanwhile, rearmament proceeds, until the time arrives, as the Italian Ambassador remarked to me yesterday, when the military aeroplanes are produced and flown openly.

A few weeks ago the Führer, it seems, breathed defiance to Signor Cerruti, and said that if the French challenged him he would meet them, losing if necessary 600,000 men; but inflicting still greater damage on them.² To me he once murmured softly that in case of French aggression he would show no resistance and would appeal to the world. I cannot tell which course he would really follow; that would presumably depend, amongst other things, on the internal situation.

It is here, I think, that certain French circles, encouraged by unreliable and prejudiced German emigrés, make a big mistake. They hope, it seems, that the Hitler régime is tottering to its fall, and that time is therefore working for them, whereas time, in my opinion, is rather working for Hitler, or some military successor; for his fall would not necessarily imply the emergence of a benevolent, carpet-slipper régime, redolent of Weimar: for more probably its perfume would be of powder, and not the innocuous kind.

Nor do I see anything to show that Hitler will fall in the near future, despite his many real difficulties with his own extremists, with the Catholics and Protestant Churches, with the economic and financial situation, and other matters. His adversaries in fact, both at home and abroad, lack that unity and determined policy which alone might enable them to meet him

with a fair chance of success. Hence it is that he rules supreme at home, and flouts, not only in succession but simultaneously, all his powerful foreign opponents in the political, economic and financial fields: hence it is that he will in all probability continue the rearmament of Germany until his security is such that he can afford to display openly what now he still condescends to conceal.

On 29 January, the British government produced a proposal for a disarmament convention that could be extended to include Germany and which embraced the second solution Phipps had outlined above.³ During the ten years in which the agreement would be in force, the German army would be limited to 200,000 men but would be allowed tanks of up to six tons. Military aircraft would be abolished and the use of civilian aircraft would be strictly monitored. But if this had not been accomplished within two years, Germany would be permitted to possess a small air force and would have parity with other signatory powers at the end of the ten year period. Phipps was sent the plan to show Hitler privately before its publication. He thought it unlikely that the Germans would accept the abolition of a military air force for two years. But his spirits rose when Hitler made a speech in the Reichstag announcing that the British proposal represented proof that Germany could expect fair treatment from Britain.⁴

Simon was anxious to capitalise on this psychological breakthrough by sending Eden on a tour of key European capitals to gauge support for the initiative.⁵ Although heartened by developments, Phipps was not convinced that the plan would achieve much in the long term.⁶ It was vitally important to have French co-operation if lasting progress was to be made and that the recently formed Doumergue government would offer this. Simon agreed, and it was to Paris that Eden was dispatched, before visiting Berlin.

But by 14 February, Hitler had come to the conclusion that a disarmament convention would tie no hands but his own. Phipps was convinced that the Führer had changed his mind because the British proposal would lead to the discovery of extant German plans for air rearmament. It was in this climate that Eden arrived in Paris two days later to discuss the British disarmament memorandum. He found the new French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Louis Barthou, sceptical about any request to disarm when it was clear that Germany was expanding her army and air force. Far from leaving for Berlin with French support, Eden came under pressure to offer additional assurance of British military assistance in the event of a German attack.

When Eden arrived in Berlin on 19 February, Phipps warned him not to be taken in by German statements about a desire for peace. The Reichswehr was being groomed as a military combat force, despite Hitler's statements to the contrary. However, Phipps' words fell on deaf ears. Later, at a meeting with Hitler, Eden was impressed by the Führer's devotion to the cause of peace – a very different impression to that which he had given to Phipps several days earlier.⁷ On his departure from Berlin, Eden was satisfied that a breakthrough had been made and acknowledged that Phipps had played a significant part in the process.

24 February

The Lord Privy Seal and his party arrived in Berlin from Paris late in the evening of February 19th.

The next morning Mr. Eden and I had a preliminary conversation at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with Baron von Neurath, General von Blomberg and Herr von Bülow, and attended a luncheon given in Mr. Eden's honour by Baron von Neurath.⁸ In the afternoon Mr. Eden was received by the Chancellor – Baron von Neurath, General von Blomberg, Herr von Ribbentrop and Herr Thomsen, the Chancellor's Private Secretary, myself and Mr. Strang being also present.⁹

On February 21st we arranged a small luncheon at the Embassy to which we invited the Chancellor, Baron von Neurath, Dr. Goebbels, Herr Hess and Herr Thomsen. Afterwards Mr. Eden had a further conversation with the Chancellor, which lasted for about an hour and a half. Baron von Neurath, Herr Hess, Herr Thomsen, Mr. Strang and I were also present.

On February 22nd Mr. Eden had a final conversation with Baron von Neurath in my presence, and went with me to the President, who had expressed a wish to see him. During his stay here Mr. Eden also saw the Vice-Chancellor and the French, Italian and American Ambassadors. On the morning of February 23rd he left for Rome.¹⁰

The German Government were certainly gratified at this visit and their satisfaction was reflected both in the tone of the press, which was uniformly favourable, and in the friendly reception accorded to Mr. Eden in official circles. His manner and personality did much to improve the general atmosphere which had been somewhat vitiated by the recent exchange of notes with the French Government. From this point of view the visit was an undoubted success and it will, if agreement is eventually reached have been an important contributory factor. Herr Hitler seemed to feel a genuine sympathy for Mr. Eden, who certainly succeeded in bringing to the surface of that strange being certain human qualities which for me had hitherto remained obstinately dormant. This was confirmed to me last night by General von Blomberg, who said that Herr Hitler had found Mr. Eden's personality unusually sympathetic.

Despite this mood of optimism, Simon was dissatisfied with the outcome of Eden's visit. He was concerned that a willingness to compromise with Germany could arouse hostility in Paris. Eden had been foolish to agree to a starting base of 1,000 planes for the German air force. In the meantime, he instructed that no undertakings be given to Hitler on the matter.¹¹ Eden thought Simon misguided and asked the Prime Minister to await his return to London before asking the Cabinet to come to a decision about the German proposals. However, Ramsay MacDonald also thought Eden too accommodating and recommended that Hitler be told that his suggestion was unacceptable. Phipps came to Eden's defence, although he too had

been disconcerted by the ease with which Eden had got on with Hitler. There was little reason why the British government should sponsor the German plan after its terms had been made known to the French and to the Italians. Either of these countries, therefore, could be prevailed upon to take the lead in the negotiations. The British policy of making only a limited security commitment to Europe could therefore be maintained.

28 February

The German–English Society entertained me at dinner last night at the Berliner Club. General Göring, Prime Minister of Prussia, and Reichsminister for Aviation, was in the Chair ...

General Göring was in general inclined to be most friendly. He said that the three capitals he liked best were London, Stockholm and Rome,¹² but London was by far his favourite. He had been to London on several occasions, the last one being, I think in 1929. He liked London in the spring, in the early summer and even in a slight autumn fog. He took particular pleasure in English country houses, in green lawns and in quiet places. He particularly admired Oxford. He expressed regret that it would presumably be difficult for him to go to England in the near future, as, if recognised, he might be the object of a hostile demonstration, but perhaps he might manage to get to Scotland unnoticed.

Needless to say, I did not think the occasion a suitable one for reproaching General Göring with his unnecessary *Daily Mail* interview,¹³ nor did I make any reference to the Bulgarian Communist prisoners. Quite spontaneously, however, General Göring said that on the evening before he had summoned Dimitroff and his two companions and had asked them how they were. Dimitroff replied that he was suffering from slight indigestion, but otherwise was in good health. General Göring then said to the Bulgarians: "Tomorrow at 7 o'clock" – the Bulgarians at these words seemed to think that this indicated the hour of their execution, but he added: "An aeroplane will convey you to Moscow." Dimitroff, far from showing any pleasure at this news, began to make difficulties, remarking that the notice was very short and that his mother had not yet been told. General Göring remarked to me dryly that England did not seem very anxious to receive Dimitroff. I replied that we thought, on the whole, the climate and atmosphere of Russia would suit him better. General Göring admitted that at the *Reichstag* trial he had been annoyed with Dimitroff who, when asked whether he would not, if their places had been reversed, have strung up General Göring and other Nazis, unhesitatingly replied that he certainly would.

General Göring, however, seemed to have a greater detestation for what he described as cowardly Communists, such as Herr L[öbe], who recently expressed himself in an admiring manner in the Belgian press about the Hitler régime, than for Dimitroff and his companions. General Göring felt

special contempt for the cowardice of Herr H[entschell], a prominent Communist, who recently wrote from his concentration camp to say that he would like to have been behind Hitler's chair in the *Reichstag* on January 30th last,¹⁴ and to serve in future as a pillar of the National Socialist party. It was distasteful to him, General Göring said, to keep such cowards in a concentration camp. He would like to be rid of them altogether (he did not explain how, but his look almost suggested the delivery to them of single tickets to the Great Beyond. In any case, English lawns and country houses and Oxford here seemed far away indeed).

On my other side sat the notorious Dr. Rosenberg with whom I had some conversation on more abstract and philosophical subjects. Dr. Rosenberg observed that there were ten million Germans anxiously waiting for a new religion, having found all existing ones wanting. I enquired whether that new religion would be founded in any way upon Christianity, but Dr. Rosenberg professed that it was too early for him to be able to answer that question. I fear that the religion when it materialises will probably be found to revolve round those old and dreary Germanic Gods whom Wagner¹⁵ has rendered familiar and bearable to us by music, but whom he has endeared to the hearts of the Führer and many of his satellites. Dr. Rosenberg deplored his ignorance of English, but expressed a keen desire, in any possible intervals of religion-making, to master it. Perhaps he would have been well advised to do so before embarking on his recent unfortunate journey to England, accompanied as he was by the wrong Prince Bismarck. He explained to me that Germany's geographical position rendered it essential for her sons to indulge in uniformed and well-disciplined marchings. Young England, on the other hand, could afford a slacker mode of life. Never did I feel more gratitude for the blessed "silver streak":¹⁶ the thought will bring me comfort when next it buffets me.

General Göring, Herr Rosenberg, and all those with whom after dinner I conversed, seemed most anxious to be friendly, and repeatedly affirmed the value they attached to the maintenance of good relations between England and Germany.

General Göring welcomed me in a short speech in which he laid stress on the good work done by the German-English Society in the past, and expressed the hope that I would render it every assistance in carrying on its good work in the future. I made a short reply in German, the English text of which is as follows:-

Herr Minister President, Excellencies, Gentlemen:

First I must thank you all most warmly for your very kind welcome and hospitality, which touch me deeply.

It is evenings such as this that, by bringing us together in a friendly and cordial manner, help us to know, and therefore to understand, each other better. And can it not be said that most international troubles arise from

the mere failure to understand? Our failure at times to understand one another's sterling qualities arises perhaps from two main reasons – firstly, from laziness, for our faults, being generally on the surface, are easier to detect than our more deeply rooted virtues; and secondly from a craving for sensation. Imagine, Gentlemen, a newspaper that confined itself to the dreary and monotonous record of merely happy events, that only chronicled the lives of merely happy people. What circulation would such a journal have? The length of its existence would certainly depend upon the length of its idealistic owner's purse. I blush to admit that I should not be numbered among its subscribers.

And so in public affairs – it is a perusal of conflicts and struggles that whets our appetites at breakfast rather than that of the reasonable settlement of some contentious issue.

Agreement is infinitely more precious, and infinitely rarer than disagreement: yet it is the latter and not the former that awakes and holds our interest.

Only in films do we insistently demand, and generally obtain, the “happy end”. Thus we satisfy on the plane of fantasy a desire we seemingly lack on the plane of Life.

There are interludes of course in this drama of conflict, and one such we are living now. During those interludes we meet together in a spirit of cordial friendship and mutual understanding, exchanging our ideas, our wishes and our hopes.

For my part I can promise you that so long as I have the honour of representing my Sovereign in your great country I shall do my best to perform my share in the above-mentioned agreeable task.

Whilst thanking you once more for all your kindness and hospitality, I wish a long life to the *Deutsch-Englische Vereinigung*, to enable it to contribute to the maintenance of those friendly relations between our two countries, which are so essential not only to our own peace and prosperity, but to the peace and prosperity of all the world.

On 28 February 1934, Hitler announced his plans to introduce conscription; a move intended to convince the leader of the SA, Ernst Röhm, that the Ministry of Defence possessed sole right to determine military policy. But within a week, Hitler was in conflict with the SA when it emerged that the organisation had recruited men for short-term service on machine gun detachments without reference to von Blomberg. The Minister for Defence objected to the Führer's interference, and tension over the role of the SA continued despite repeated assurances of loyalty by Röhm.¹⁷

It was within this context that Simon asked Phipps for further information about German intentions to rearm. Declarations of support for a disarmament convention that Eden had recently received from Mussolini left Simon optimistic that an agreement could be forthcoming.¹⁸ But it was important to ensure French support. In early March, the British government issued a statement linking a possible disarmament

convention with German promises to disband the SA and the SS. Simon was mindful that Hitler's constantly changing attitude meant that any disarmament convention signed by Germany would have to have teeth. But it was not his instinct to adopt a heavy diplomatic hand. While Hitler was openly flouting the Treaty of Versailles, and despite mounting Cabinet criticism, Simon continued to argue that it was unlikely that any German military action would be targeted against Britain and France. He proposed an international air pact that would outlaw bombing and oblige all signatory powers to take action against any participating state that broke its terms. Simon's idea nevertheless met with Cabinet criticism. As a compromise, a committee representing all European states would be created that would agree a set of economic sanctions in the event that a state become in breach of the disarmament convention when it was concluded.

Simon's ideas were also criticised by Phipps. To insist on the disbandment of German paramilitary organisations as a pre-requisite to disarmament negotiations would provoke protests in Berlin. But Phipps was wrong. None was forthcoming. The German government intended to broker a separate disarmament deal with Britain that would eliminate the need to consider French security requirements. Phipps continued to massage Hitler's ego, suggesting that the British government would probably accept the Führer's proposals as a basis for negotiation.

21 March¹⁹

I tried, in the course of an after-dinner conversation at General von Blomberg's on March 19th, to elicit from my host something more definite regarding German air requirements; but he was evasive, merely assuring me that France was the villain of the piece and that it would always be easy for Great Britain and Germany to reach agreement in the matter.

General von Blomberg told me that he had discussed with the Chancellor the apparently unfortunate effect produced in England by General Göring's Potsdam speech,²⁰ and Mr. Eden's reference thereto in the House.²¹ Herr Hitler admitted that he himself would not have made the speech. It confirmed its bad effect in England.

I cannot help feeling rather grateful to General Göring. He has supplied a resounding negative to the British pacifists' repeated question: "Cannot the Prussian leopard ... ?" Moreover it must be remembered that such a combination of place and person could hardly fail to prove irresistible. Lunching with the Warden of New College, General Göring might pass as almost civilised; but stimulated by Potsdam goose-steps and other Prussian paraphernalia he was bound to revert to type. In fact he and Potsdam resemble those two powders which, separated are innocuous, and only when placed in the same recipient, explode.²²

The British government published a response to the proposal for an Anglo-German disarmament agreement on 21 March. Even if the agreement was

reached, Britain would need to rearm in response to Germany's expanding military capability. Consideration would also have to be given to whether Britain's security interests would best be served through multilateral or bilateral alliances. Simon favoured the former: a multilateral disarmament convention that distinguished between guarantees for execution of an arms convention and joint security against aggression. He agreed with Eden that the British government should preserve French security irrespective of whether France signed the agreement. The Cabinet, however, continued to be sceptical about Simon's ideas, favouring a scaling down of Britain's European security commitments. Nevertheless, Simon believed that disarmament would only be secured through a treaty based on the Draft Convention. Some of Hitler's more recent demands for expansion of the German military could be incorporated if Germany returned to the League. In late March, Eden went to Geneva dismayed that he did not have anything further to offer the French on security.

Embarrassment, however, was averted by Phipps and François-Poncet. The latter had done much to convince Barthou of the merits of signing a disarmament convention. Limited and carefully policed rearmament by Germany was better than the unfettered expansion that would result in the absence of an agreement. If France was party to the agreement, French influence could be brought to bear on the level of German rearmament permitted. Barthou, who believed that only collective action against Germany would have any effect, was convinced. But it was Phipps who was most aware of the gravity of the situation. He had been privy to conversations with von Neurath that had revealed plans for an expansion of the German air force and navy. He had been unconvinced by von Neurath's attempt to explain this as simply upgrading and replacing obsolete planes and ships. Further alarm bells rang in London in early April when von Hoesch told an astounded Eden that any statements from Berlin professing a commitment to disarmament were false. Hitler, he said, was only motivated by a desire to flout the Treaty of Versailles.²³

16 April

The French Ambassador has returned from Paris, where he tells me he has been waging a regular campaign in favour of a Disarmament Convention.

His Excellency found M. Tardieu and others were quite intractable. M. Tardieu vowed he would never put his signature alongside a German's again:²⁴ to do so would be mere mockery, moreover, in case of war the Hitler régime would disappear in a week.

The majority of the Cabinet, however, were much more reasonable, had evolved since coming to power, and desired a Convention. Particularly was this the case with Mr Barthou and also Marshal Pétain, who surprised my French colleagues by his vision and clarity.

The President of the Council²⁵ is opposed to admitting the rearmament of Germany; but will come round if Great Britain grants a large measure of the security demands that France will make to His Majesty's Government this

week. M. François-Poncet expressed the earnest hope that His Majesty's Government would see their way to do this, for in his opinion the key to the problem is in their heads.

The French Ambassador deplores the undue importance attached by the Germans to French internal troubles, and declares those troubles to be in the mind, and that they would vanish in the face of any German aggressiveness.

The following extract represents a continuation of the discussion which began on 20 November 1933 when Phipps had had dinner with von Blomberg. Phipps' conversation with von Rosenberg took place on the day when the French government announced that it was unlikely that there would ever be a disarmament convention to which France could agree. It was therefore more important than ever that the British, at least, endeavoured to penetrate the psyche of the Nazi leadership.

18 April²⁶

Last night I accepted one of the numerous invitations addressed to me by Dr. Rosenberg to attend a *Bier Abend* ...

On this occasion we were invited to hear Dr. Darré, the Minister of Agriculture, explain certain aspects of his policy. He was, however, over an hour late, so the usual order of the day was reversed, and our meal formed the preface instead of the epilogue to the evening's proceedings.

Being next to Dr. Rosenberg, I tried to draw him on the religious question. This was not a difficult task for under the stimulating influence of congenial food and drink he expanded.

Dr. Rosenberg admitted to me that he and others, I gathered millions, were grievously disappointed with Christianity, its inability to solve the numerous ills that afflicted humanity and its failure generally. The idea that such failure might be due to the fact that there are so few true Christians did not seem to occur to Dr. Rosenberg, who looks forward with manifest zest and pleasure to constructing a new religion more potent, harmonious and satisfying than Christianity, whilst he apparently wishes almost simultaneously to pull down large districts of Berlin. He expressed disgust at the Friedrichstrasse, with its inadequate architecture of the 1890s period, and declared that new buildings must in time be substituted there for, more in harmony with the noble spiritual aspirations of National Socialism. I hold no brief for the Friedrichstrasse, which is ugly, but no uglier than countless other long and dreary streets in this city without a soul. To impart one to it will presumably be as difficult a task as, and an even more expensive one that, Dr. Rosenberg's efforts in the spiritual sphere.

I asked my host whether the complaint made by some of my Catholic friends was justified, viz, that the demands made upon German Catholic youth by the Nationalist Socialist party regarding early mustering on Sunday mornings prevented them from attending mass. Dr. Rosenberg replied that this was quite untrue. The party associations only met at about 9 o'clock on

Sunday mornings for their marches into the country, etc., and Catholic boys and girls could perfectly well attend early mass at six o'clock. Dr. Rosenberg evidently expects great zealousness from Catholic youth, which must presumably be happy to rise with the lark before setting forth on tiring marches along dusty roads. My general impression is that if reason and moderation are to be shown in the Church conflict they will not spring from Dr. Rosenberg's ardent and swiftly breathing bosom.

When Dr. Darré appeared he was profuse in apologies for being so late. He proceeded to read his speech, which seemed to me unusually tedious and unenlightening. Half way through he broke off and explained that he had not had time to have the rest of the speech typewritten and that he would have to conclude by an improvisation. At this moment, however, a secretary rushed in with the missing pages, which the lecturer proceeded to read to the end.

Dr. Darré somewhat naïvely admitted to me afterwards that he had originally intended to lecture last night on the famous Law of the 29th September [1933] of Yeoman Inheritance,²⁷ but had changed his mind at the last moment, hence his late appearance, for he had had to re-write his speech. The truth is, as I hear today, that this Law is proving most difficult if not impossible to apply and that the Chancellor, when Dr. Darré's speech was submitted to him, insisted that some other aspect of agricultural policy and not that contentious issue, should form the subject of the lecture. Great difficulties have been found to exist in the proper application of the Law. A serious hindrance lies in the fact that although a cardinal feature of the Law consists in all mortgages being forbidden on the farms concerned, the existence of such mortgages in the past on most of these farms would require vast sums of money to pay them off.

Dr. Darré spoke to me in a most friendly way about England, where he had been, and his regret that the Chancellor had not had the good fortune, although his knowledge of the British Constitution and of English History was remarkable.²⁸

I learn from an excellent source that conflicts in Church and Army are causing Hitler much anxiety.

The persistent opposition of the Evangelical Church is being seriously reinforced by that of the Catholic priests. Göring and the party extremists at Munich have been urging Hitler to quell the Catholic revolt by drastic measures, but the Führer has declined lest this might jeopardise the Saar plebiscite.²⁹ He complains that he is being asked to fight simultaneously the Evangelicals, the International Jewish Organisation and the Vatican, with its world-wide support.

The *Reichswehr* position is also difficult. Röhm is insistent that certain S.A. leaders should be made Generals as soon as expansion begins in order to guarantee the loyalty of the new Army. To this the *Reichswehr* and President von Hindenburg remain vigorously opposed.

The President looks to Herr von Papen for help in the case of the Army, while Hitler equally looks to him to bring the Vatican to reason. Herr von Papen is very depressed, and thinks that General von Reichenau, rather than he, should arrange the Army dispute. The General's position, however, is very uncomfortable as he is blamed by the army and Nazis alike.

The President, who had planned to go to Neudeck,³⁰ has postponed his departure in view of the *Reichswehr* situation. One of his contemporaries, General von E[inem], died recently, and after the funeral the President received visits from many old friends who complained bitterly of the new régime. He admitted that he had miscalculated when he appointed Hitler. He realised that he had received bad advice from all concerned during recent years.

Colonel von Hindenburg,³¹ who played such an important rôle a year ago, has, I am told, nothing to say, and realises that the Presidency will disappear as an institution when his father dies.

Another source of conflict is the "compulsory" Labour Service. Hierl, the head of that body, complains that, owing to Röhm's opposition, the idea of compulsory service has been dropped, and the organisation generally is being neglected. Hitler is now in one of his undecided moods, and refuses to commit himself whether in regard to Army, Church or Labour Service.

Concerning the conclusion of a disarmament convention, Hitler had been chastened by the loss of French heart and regretted making extravagant requests for the expansion of the German army and air force. Privately, however, Phipps did not believe that the Führer's contrition was genuine, or that it would result in improved relations with Britain. It was more likely that Hitler would turn to Mussolini for suggestions for a proposal that could be extended to France at a later date. The British government should search for way of preventing any diplomatic deal between Hitler and Mussolini at all costs.

25 April³²

Dr. Schacht, who lunched with me last week, objects to the word "autarky", but affects to laud that policy. He declared that Germany could perfectly well pursue it to a far greater extent without any danger. The German citizen could after all use paper collars, and he himself would gladly have the suit he was wearing at my luncheon re-boiled and re-woven instead of buying a new one. In fact the standard of living could be considerably reduced. I enquired whether he really thought Germany would stand such heroic conditions in peace time and he answered in a decided affirmative. It is always difficult to know how far Dr. Schacht is talking through his hat, whether it be made of felt or of the more Spartan cardboard, but he spoke quite seriously, perhaps with the forthcoming creditors' meeting in view ...

The economic and financial difficulties of the country are naturally affecting the moral[e] of the Nazi party. The left wing demands a stronger admix-

ture of socialism, the nationalist elements resent the intrusion of the new men. Each leader has his own panacea and the differences amongst them are openly canvassed. There is an atmosphere of intrigue and counter-intrigue in which the factions manoeuvre for position in order to catch the ear of the Chancellor. Conflicts are proceeding over the Army and the Labour Service. Another wrangle has taken place over the appointment of Herr Himmler as head of the Prussian political police despite the strong opposition of General Göring. Herr Himmler has taken over the political police in almost all the other states and his new appointment constitutes an encroachment on General Göring's preserve. In the economic and financial spheres there is constant friction between the Nazi doctrinaires, such as Dr. Ley on the one hand, and Dr. Schacht and Dr. Schmitt on the other. The work of so eminent a Nazi stalwart as Dr. Göbbels is being openly criticised in several quarters. The relations between *Stabschef* Röhm and General von Reichenau are notoriously bad. The difficulties caused by the *Erbhofgesetz* have caused the stock of Herr Darré, the Minister of Agriculture, to fall still lower. Herr Hitler's personal prestige remains as high as ever, but the differences which are known to exist among his subordinate leaders must tend to shake public confidence.

Another question which is agitating public opinion is the attitude of the Government towards the churches. No solution of the conflict with the Catholic Church is yet in sight and the situation in the immediate future seems more likely to deteriorate than improve. In the case of the Evangelical Church strenuous efforts are being made to find solutions of the problems at issue, but with what success remains to be seen. The fundamental issue with Rome is the education of the Catholic youth of Germany.

In the Evangelical Church the Youth Organisations have already been incorporated in the Hitler Youth. The questions at issue are therefore different and centre chiefly round church reorganisation and the conflict which this may entail with dogma, e.g., in the matter of the Aryan cause. Another question is [that] dispute is the right of Evangelical communities to select their own preachers and leaders. Luther fought for this right in the Reformation, but it is inconsistent with the principle of leadership which the Nazi State seeks to establish throughout Germany.

In the field of foreign affairs the Government are considered by the public to have suffered recently two reverses. From the Austrian and German wireless it is apparent to the simplest listener that Germany has sustained a severe setback in matter of the Anschluss³³ and that in this respect Herr Hitler has fared even worse than his predecessor, Dr. Brüning.³⁴ Secondly, in the matter of disarmament Herr Hitler, having done better than his predecessors during the preliminary negotiations, has now [been] rebuffed by the French. This brings into play certain aspects of German psychology which may be briefly summarised.

As Germany, especially the new Germany, has adopted the *Führerprinzip*³⁵ in internal political affairs and suppressed all opposition, it appears to the man in the street that this principle might very easily be extended to the

international sphere. Germany, if she had the power, might well claim the leadership in Europe. In accordance with the Nazi creed, therefore, France appears to many Germans to be justified in denying to Germany equality of rights just as Hitler, having gained power, denied the right of the Centre or any other political party to oppose the National Socialists. Large sections of the population are vaguely anxious about the future. They know that in the past Governments, which have talked confidently and noisily at home, have carefully concealed the truth about the course of events abroad. They wonder whether the present Government is withholding information, whether France and Europe are preparing unpleasant surprises and whether for that matter Hitler's peaceful speeches deserve unlimited credence.

Speaking to a member of my staff, a late member of the Political or Secret Police stated in confidence that in his opinion Hitler did not even now command an absolute majority in the country. There had been no real election for over a year and he did not hesitate to admit that the recent election was a farce. Indeed, he added that the more flagrant cases of falsification of returns and intimidation were still being investigated and punished. Speaking of the political situation generally he said that the main difference was that the political parties were now inside the Nazi party whereas hitherto they had been outside it. It was the activity of the Communists within the party, and particularly within the S.A., which had so far caused the most work and worry. The millions of unemployed did not fail to note the smart uniforms, expensive cars, and swollen staffs of the new political pundits. Luckily, he added, the Germans were a docile community and he doubted whether they would have revolted even after their terrible experiences during the recent war had not the military and civil authorities faded away and left the field clear in a moment of panic. The Allies had demanded the adoption of a parliamentary régime and Germany had acquiesced.

The revival of militarism with the approach of fine weather has revived the conflict between parents and children which lay dormant during the winter. Children belong to the Nazi *Kinderschar* until the age of 8, while those between 8 and 14 belong to the *Jungvolk*. Between 14 and 18 they belong to the Hitler *Jugend*, after which they join the S.A. or S.S. Girls join similar organisations, so that the youth of the country belongs to the State from the tenderest age. Children of all countries enjoy playing at soldiers and German children need little encouragement to don uniforms and march behind drums in a country where this form of activity has always enjoyed popularity. Parents, however, are vaguely apprehensive lest, in spite of the Führer's declared devotion to peace, circumstances may prove too strong for him and their children have to undergo the same experiences as they endured nearly twenty years ago. Youth, however, follows the Führer and forms the mainstay of the movement as heretofore.

Perhaps the most prevalent feeling in the country at large is one of bewilderment. The reversion from the feeble parliamentary régime of recent years

to a system more authoritative than that to which Prussia was accustomed under her Kings is not resented. Restrictions which elsewhere would be considered irksome, and intolerable in Anglo-Saxon countries, or in France, are not felt here to the same degree because Prussian rule for hundreds of years was based on the authoritative principle. It is the peculiar mixture of dogmas and principles under the present regime which gives rise to distrust and uncertainty. The mass parades, the compulsory membership of Unions and Associations, the glorification of Labour and the cultivation of mass consciousness savours of Moscow, while the revival of militarism and the abolition of Parliament and the freedom of the press savours of Potsdam. For the time being the scales are so deftly adjusted that equilibrium may still be said to exist. Is the régime reactionary? The workman is unable to save definitely any more than the employer. The Government have shown surprising skill in dodging every social issue in which they would be forced to show their hand. In public speeches Ministers talk slightly of employers and capitalists, and even General Göring pays his modicum of lip service to Socialism, but in practice the employer, like the worker, cannot be said to be materially worse off than he was under Dr. Brüning or Herr von Papen. Indeed, it is a tribute to Dr. Brüning's sense of social justice that the edifice which he took over from his predecessors and renovated, has been accepted by Hitler with slight alterations in spite of the sound and fury with which it was assailed before the Nazis took office.

So, in the second year of his advent to power, we find Hitler, quite apart from the vast material difficulties that surround him, engaged at home in acute spiritual conflict with various sections and sects and creeds, whilst abroad, after some flashy initial successes, he has met with almost general failure. Far be it from me to deny the advantages of making a few fairly powerful enemies: nothing more stimulates our true friends – allied phagocytes who rush to our assistance on the attack of hostile microbes – but it must be admitted that in his choice of enemies Hitler has been for once too catholic, having practically picked the world for a hostile team. Now, rather late, he awakens to the fact that the thunderous applause of his German millions cannot compensate him for the almost universal suspicion that he has aroused abroad. Hence doubtless the meek reception by the Germans of our searching enquiries regarding their military, naval and air-force estimates. Hence the repeated German protestations of friendship for England that have been made to me of late.

“Clouds over Hitler”, this chapter must be headed. Whether they burst or roll away only a later chapter will tell. Never before was true prophecy more essential, and never more hopeless to attempt.

On 24 April, von Ribbentrop was appointed Special Commissioner for Disarmament Questions. Simon received assurances that the appointment would not result in a change of German policy on disarmament. An unpopular appointment with the

remainder of the German Diplomatic Corps, von Ribbentrop's appointment nevertheless afforded him the opportunity to exercise his passionate anglophilia. But his enthusiasm was tempered in London and Berlin by reminders from Phipps of the complexity of the situation and of Britain's commitments under the treaties of Versailles and Locarno and to the League.

29 April³⁶

Herr von Ribbentrop, the newly appointed German Commissioner for disarmament questions, called on me yesterday.

I asked Herr von Ribbentrop whether he saw any way out of the present "impasse" and he replied that he did not. The French had banged the door; their reply was most unreasonable, was considered so by most people in England and by many in France itself, and unless His Majesty's Government could persuade the French to abandon their present attitude he did not see how the negotiations could proceed.

I reminded Herr von Ribbentrop of what I had said to him a long time ago, i.e., of the wonderful position in which Germany would have been vis-à-vis of world opinion if she had accepted the British Memorandum as it stood without her demands for a powerful military air force. I made it clear that I was speaking entirely for myself without any instructions, but I enquired whether it would not even now be possible for Germany to take a step in the direction of the British Memorandum by agreeing, at any rate for a limited period, to a more modest air force than the one she demanded. I pointed out that 50% of the French air force might seem reasonable, but, although I was no expert, it was not so modest a demand as at first sight it appeared. I gathered, and I believe that that was also the German view, that a very large proportion of the present French air force consisted of what might be described as "tin kettles," whereas naturally every aeroplane of the new German air force would be highly up to date and in every way efficient. Moreover, Great Britain, by a show of what the Chancellor himself had described to me as excessive moderation, had reduced her air force to an absolute minimum. Would it not be possible for the German Government to join His Majesty's Government in their reasonable and moderate attitude, set the good example and content themselves with far fewer military aeroplanes than they originally demanded, for a limited time, within which strenuous efforts would be made to obtain the total abolition of military aircraft? (It would be far more difficult eventually to scrap new machines than old ones). If Germany took such a step her position before world opinion would be enormously strong and she would presumably render it difficult, if not impossible, for France not to meet her half-way.

Herr von Ribbentrop said that he feared any such step would be quite impossible. Germany had from the outset of the discussions put all her cards on the table: she had made her highly reasonable demands not in order to

bargain, but merely to set forth her requirements for bare purposes of self-defence. Indeed, he indicated that if no Convention were signed Germany's offer to accept modest percentages of her neighbours' air forces would lapse and she would be free from any limitation. I was unable to shake Herr von Ribbentrop in any way, and he repeatedly referred to public opinion in England, which he was convinced favoured the German demands, and particularly to the leading article in *The Times* of April 27th.³⁷

In connection with this article it appears to me probable that it was greatly due to its appearance that Baron von Neurath made his speech that same evening.³⁸ This speech was, as he admitted to me last night after dinner at the Belgian Legation, drafted about a week ago, but held up pending the conclusion of M. Barthou's tour and of Signor Suvich's visit to London.³⁹ Herr von Hoesch had reported the inconclusive character of that visit and so Baron von Neurath decided to release his speech.

I had a long conversation at the Belgian Legation with His Excellency and [Count Kerchove de Denterghem]. They both agreed that it was hopeless to expect France to accept the double operation of his own disarmament and German rearmament. Baron von Neurath, who knew that I was going to London today, said to me: "Tell your Government that all now depends on them. They must show determination and courage, and again take the initiative, and all will yet be well. I know it is hard for them after all this time to have to confess that disarmament is still an empty dream, but all sensible people in England will eventually recognise that fact. Mr Henderson admitted it to me as long ago as last September."⁴⁰

I asked Baron von Neurath whether Germany would return to Geneva and to the League. He replied that the process he had in mind was (1) agreement (not at Geneva) on the main outlines of a Convention of Limitation of Armaments, (2) discussion of technical details thereof at Geneva, (3) signature of Convention, (4) modification of procedure of League, and (5) return to the League of Germany.

It emerged from our discussion that Germany would only require a limitation of the subjects to be discussed by the League, but would not expect the small Powers to be placed in any position of inferiority (any such idea would end, so the Belgian Minister declared, in Belgium leaving the League).

Baron von Neurath's manner throughout was most friendly; he assured us of his earnest desire to conclude a Convention and said that he had made his speech, which was addressed in particular to Great Britain, with the object of opening the door that France had slammed.

Count Kerchove was told yesterday at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that the chief passage in the speech was the last sentence, i.e., the reference to Germany's outstretched hand. He is very hopeful after Baron von Neurath's above-mentioned remarks and will certainly report favourably thereon to the Belgian Government. I repeatedly in the course of our discussion laid special stress on the good example set by Great Britain in the matter of

disarmament, an example that nobody else had followed. I also pointed to the natural aversion felt by British public opinion to a disarmament conference that ended in mere rearmament. Both Ministers remained unconvinced, however, and pointed in their turn to the advantages of controlled limitation over uncontrolled and unlimited armaments.

I promised to report faithfully to His Majesty's Government what had passed between us, but gave no indication whatever that the suggested initiative to be taken by them would be in any way welcome. So far as "disarmament" is concerned, the suggestion is in effect that we should sponsor the original proposals made to me by Herr Hitler on October 24th last, plus certain additional assurances regarding control of the S.A. and S.S., etc., and, presumably, plus certain guarantees to France to overcome her present refusal to "legalise" any form of German rearmament. It will be remembered that the Chancellor has declared himself to be quite ready even to agree to an Anglo-French defensive alliance.

On 10 May, Eden discussed the disarmament question with von Ribbentrop.⁴¹ The latter was reluctant to discuss the specific details of the German position, but offered assurances that Germany would return to the League. Hitler desired friendship with Britain, wished to reach a rapprochement with France and wanted a permanent return of the Polish Corridor. Eden suggested that these objectives would be best achieved if the German government abandoned its programme of rearmament and tried to obtain the confidence of the international community.

A week later, Eden and Simon visited Geneva for what was to be the final meeting of the Disarmament conference. Simon thought that bringing the conference to an end was tantamount to abandoning the cause for which it stood. The French intended to make a statement on disarmament despite the bad feeling that had gone before. He did not want to do anything to prevent this. There was also widespread impatience with the slow process of the conference in Britain. An adjournment would only fuel this. The Germans, however, felt that the climate was such that further negotiation would increase rather than reduce this tension. German enthusiasm for non-aggression pacts with neighbouring states might also begin to wane.

In London, at a meeting of the Cabinet, faced with the task of financing an expansion in British military capability, Neville Chamberlain argued that Britain could not afford to fight a war on two fronts. Efforts should be concentrated on seeking an agreement with Japan to secure British interests in the Far East in the wake of Japanese expansion in that region, and on dealing with the threat posed by Hitler. The most effective deterrent would be an expanded air force, with a British army presence on Continental soil only being necessary if air defences failed. Concentration on the European theatre would also reduce the costs of a naval presence as most of the fleet would not have to sail far from home bases.

The British emphasis on economy of commitment and of resources was in marked contrast to Hitler's priorities. Events a month later were to suggest that Hitler's compromise was intended to enhance his own standing domestically rather

than as a genuine attempt to address the anxieties of foreign powers. In foreign affairs, like the British, the Nazis were looking at the bigger picture but were contemplating equally large-scale responses.

30 May⁴²

The friction in the party to which Baron von Neurath referred in conversation with me is due first and foremost to the dispute between Hitler and Röhm on the major question of the S.A.

The *Reichswehr* and the President are convinced that Germany would stand a much better chance of getting her 300,000 army and her other defensive requirements from the French and ourselves if the S.A. were made invisible. Hitler is disposed to agree. Hence his stoppage of irregular military training and his talk of not recalling the great body of the S.A. after their July leave. To this Röhm replies that Hitler is putting his neck in a noose if he trusts himself to the *Reichswehr* before the army has really gone Nazi.

The party leaders realise that in this and in other questions of foreign policy, such as relations with Russia and the Jews, the interests of the country and those of the party tend to conflict. The Franco-Russian rapprochement and Russia's possible entry into the League are severe disappointments which the country is not taking at all well.

Further causes of friction are, I know, the policy to be adopted towards the Jews, in view of the foreign trade slump, the recent decree tying agricultural labourers to the land, and the Stahlhelm dispute.

In early June, Phipps attended a number of parties thrown by members of the German aristocracy. He found himself in the thick of conversations rich in comparisons between Germany's imperial past and the aspirations of the Nazis. The pre-war German ruling elite looked to the Nazis to reinstate Germany as one of the dominant powers in Europe. At the same time, the new order in Germany looked to the old for political role models. Phipps' account below of Göring as a country squire became famous in the Foreign Office, and was frequently referred to as 'the bison dispatch'.

7 June

We were invited last week to a garden-party given by the ex-Crown Prince and Princess at Potsdam ...

In the course of our conversation the Crown Prince declared that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, Germany was not in any way possessed of the militarist spirit, the marchings and counter-marchings going on daily in most parts of Germany being only the German manifestation of the sporting spirit.

Last week I dined twice next to the Vice-Chancellor, Herr von Papen, who seems obsessed with a fear of Russia. Herr von Papen declared that Russia

now possessed 5,000 military aeroplanes in first-class condition and that her army was most efficient and well-equipped in every respect. When I informed the French Ambassador of these remarks he replied that they were quite true.

Yesterday we lunched with Herr and Frau von Ribbentrop. Herr von Ribbentrop, being Commissioner for Disarmament Affairs, considers himself to be Mr. Eden's opposite number; he was at pains to assure me that Hitler still ardently desired a Disarmament Convention; but he declared that Germany could not make any reductions in her highly reasonable demands which constituted an irreducible minimum.⁴³

Herr Himmler, the head of the S.S., and newly appointed Chief of the Secret Police, was also present. He told me that the Communist danger was by no means over in Germany, where thousands of Communist propaganda leaflets were still distributed daily. Ten thousand most desperate Communists were at large in this country, ready to run any risk in their cause. Herr Himmler seemed to share Herr von Papen's fears of Russia, and asserted that any Communist activities in the British Colonies and the Dominions were due to the inspiration of that Power.

11 June⁴⁴

General Göring, Prussian Prime Minister and "Head Ranger of the *Reich*" (*Reichsjägermeister*), invited us yesterday to visit the new bison enclosure on the Schorfheide, about 70 kilometres from Berlin.⁴⁵

We arrived at our destination at 3 o'clock by motor, being shown the last part of the way by keepers posted at all cross-roads. Our host as usual was late, but eventually arrived in a fast racing car driven by himself. He was clad in aviator's garments of India rubber with top boots and a large hunting knife stuck in his belt. The American, Italian and French Ambassadors, Herr von Papen, General Blomberg, the Minister of Finance and Countess Schwerin von Krosigk were also present, the number of guests amounting to about 40.

General Göring opened the proceedings by a lecture delivered to us on the outskirts of the bison enclosure in a stentorian voice with aid of a microphone. He celebrated the beauties of the primeval German forest in which roamed the primeval German animals, and announced his intention of reconstituting such a forest, ensuring to the animals the necessary forest peacefulness and to the German citizen the possibility of glancing at primitive German animals in German surroundings.

On the conclusion of General Göring's address three or four cow bison were driven towards a large box containing a bull bison. A host of cinematograph operators and photographers aimed their machines at this box preparatory to the exit of the bull. Those who, like myself, have seen the mad charge of the Spanish bull out of his "torril" looked forward to a similar

sight on this occasion, but we were grievously disappointed for the bison emerged from his box with the utmost reluctance, and, after eyeing the cows somewhat sadly, tried to return to it. This part of the programme, therefore, did not fulfil our expectations.

The guests were then taken for a long drive across the Schorfheide in open carriages, General Göring heading the procession accompanied by the wife of the Italian Ambassador in a small vehicle drawn by two powerful horses. After about an hour we alighted at a spot between some swamps where General Göring made another address on the beauties of bird life. After a further drive we got into our motors again which had been sent on to meet us, and General Göring disappeared alone at breakneck speed in his racing car. Some twenty minutes motor drive brought us eventually to the shooting-box which General Göring has just completed building for himself, overlooking a lovely lake. Our host met us here in a costume consisting of white tennis shoes, white duck trousers, white flannel shirt and a green leather jacket with the large hunting knife still stuck into his belt. In his hand he carried a long harpoon-like instrument with which he punctuated the further address that he then proceeded to deliver, expatiating on the beauties of his shooting-box, and all the purely German materials of which it had been made. We were then taken through every room. The chief ornament in the living room was a bronze medallion of the Führer, but opposite to it was a vacant space, reserved for the effigy of Wotan.⁴⁶ A tree grows in the living room, presumably ready to receive the sword to be placed there by Wotan and eventually to be removed by Siegmund,⁴⁷ or General Göring.

After this an excellent and purely Germanic collation was served at small tables in the open air and presided over most amiably by the actress, Frau Sonnemann, introduced by our host as his "private secretary". By this time it was past seven o'clock and we were about to take our leave, but were told that the *pièce de résistance* was yet to come.

The concluding scene in this strange comedy was enacted at a lonely and very beautiful spot some 500 yards distant, overlooking the lake, where a mausoleum had been erected by General Göring, to contain, as he told us in his final and semi-funeral oration, the remains of his Swedish wife, and his own, (no mention was made of Frau Sonnemann). Under an oak tree General Göring planted himself, harpoon in hand, and celebrated to his guests drawn up in a semi-circle round him, the Germanic and idyllic beauties of these Germanic surroundings. The mausoleum was placed between two German oak trees and flanked by six druidical (but Germanic) sarsen stones reminiscent of Stonehenge, which itself must be Germanic though we do not know it. The stones are to have various appropriate marks engraved upon them, including the swastika, but no sign of the Cross. The only blot in an otherwise perfect and consequently Germanic picture was the tombstone itself, which is made of Swedish marble; but this could not be avoided, as General Göring explained to me apologetically, for it was the original tombstone of his wife's grave in Sweden ...

On the return walk to our motor General Göring told me that the interment will take place on June 20th in the presence of numerous detachments of the S.A., S.S. and *Reichswehr* and also a number of aeroplanes. At times he stopped and drew me pictures in the sand with his harpoon of the mausoleum as it will look years hence when newly-planted German trees will flank it yet more worthily.

The whole proceedings were so strange as at times to convey a feeling of unreality; but they opened, as it were, a window on the Nazi mentality and as such were not perhaps quite useless. The chief impression was that of the most pathetic naïveté of General Göring, who showed us his toys like a big, fat, spoilt child: his primeval woods, his bison and birds, his shooting-box and lake and bathing beach, his blond "private secretary", his wife's mausoleum and swans and sarsen stones, all mere toys to satisfy his varying moods, and all, or so nearly all, as he was careful to explain, Germanic. And then I remembered there were other toys, less innocent though winged, and these might some day be launched on their murderous mission in the same childlike spirit and with the same childlike glee.

This spectacle was played out against the backdrop of important diplomatic developments.

The Soviets had made representations to the French about a non-aggression and mutual assistance treaty that could later be extended to include Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic States and Germany. The so-called Eastern Pact would be invoked by an act of aggression by any of the signatory powers.⁴⁸ Phipps thought that French agreement would be contingent upon a Soviet undertaking to honour the Treaty of Locarno, while German acceptance was likely only if Britain and Italy agreed to sign. But Simon was sceptical about involving Britain in any further diplomatic initiatives. Relations with Barthou were still strained after their meeting at the Geneva Disarmament Conference. Simon feared that his quest to find a solution to the disarmament question had failed. He channelled his energies into an air rearmament pact in the hope that it might persuade the French of British support in the event of a German bombardment of France. Barthou seized Simon's change of heart as an opportunity to visit London in early July to seek British co-operation regarding the Eastern Pact.

But German reaction to the proposed agreement was hostile. The Soviets and French would work together to stifle Germany. Phipps' dispatches offered a variety of reasons for the German attitude. Von Neurath thought the pact too reminiscent of pre-war diplomacy. Offence was taken at Soviet statements that a rapprochement was necessary because of German territorial ambitions in the Soviet Union.

25 June

Herr Richter, the Hamburg Senator at the head of the Hamburg Horse-racing and breeding Society, was so good as to invite me to luncheon before the

German Derby, which was run at Hamburg yesterday. Several foreign representatives also accepted this invitation, but the only Ambassador present besides myself was my Italian colleague.

... Our host, at whose table I sat, made a set speech, which he read, warmly welcoming the foreign guests, and Signor Cerruti, as senior Ambassador, replied briefly in a few well-chosen words. I sat next to the Burgomaster of Hamburg, an agreeable man with English sympathies. He asked me whether I liked Berlin, and to my affirmative reply retorted that he, like many other Hamburgers, hated it ...

On arrival at the races, we found the official box full, but a place was provided for me next to Herr von Papen, who was already there, impeccably dressed, as though for Ascot. Somewhat later Dr. Göbbels arrived by air from Essen (where he had just delivered another violent onslaught on the Vice-Chancellor)⁴⁹ in soft and shapeless coat and hat. He was accompanied by a body of S.A. and S.S. men, but, the box being full, he remained for some time standing in the passage behind it; Herr von Papen made no effort to provide any room for his colleague. Eventually Dr. Göbbels, with black looks, retired to sulk, not in his tent but, as he told me subsequently, to view the races from the middle of the course "amongst the people". Before the Derby Herr von Papen asked me to accompany him to the paddock on the other side of the course in order to see the horses. This I did, and our way took us through the stand of the Union Club (the Berlin Jockey Club), where Herr von Papen was greeted with rousing cheers, and these followed him in quite remarkable volume throughout our progress to the paddock.

After the Derby from the official box ... I was able to get a good view of the whole course. I noticed that a large number of S.S. men, by joining hands, were making a sort of moving corridor to enable Dr. Göbbels through the crowd at length to reach the box. This he proceeded to do, accompanied, however, somewhat to my surprise, by Herr von Papen: an ill-assorted pair, the man of the world and the raging demagogue, though each smiled at the crowd, as though to capture its applause. A "spontaneous" counter-demonstration was now staged for Dr. Göbbels, who during his progress ostentatiously and effusively shook hands with various members of the public and particularly small Brown Shirt boys, whose applause was vociferous. Thus escorted, the two Ministers joined me, together with Frau Göbbels, in the box, so that, in spite of myself, I became the witness at close quarters to a kind of official reconciliation between the two protagonists, both of whom, as well as Frau Göbbels, whilst maintaining a frigid attitude to one another, displayed a cordiality towards myself that was quite embarrassing. Herr von Papen then, feeling, I understand, some misgivings regarding possible Government action against the Hamburg Racing Society and the Berlin Union Club for their failure to provide suitable seats for the *Reichsminister* for Propaganda, murmured to Frau Göbbels an invitation to participate with her husband in a "picnic" dinner to take place that evening at a Hamburg hotel. Frau

Göbbels, however, seemed doubtful, and asked the Vice-Chancellor to repeat this invitation to her husband, which he proceeded to do. Dr. Göbbels, on learning that the dinner party would mostly consist of members of the above-mentioned somewhat conservative and aristocratic societies, the “fine gentlemen”, that is to say, whom he had so outrageously attacked that very morning, in his turn expressed doubt as to whether he would be able to attend, but I hear from the Italian Ambassador, who was at the dinner, that both Dr. and Frau Göbbels finally came, and that all went off better than could have been expected. Herr von Papen presided over one table, Dr. Göbbels over another, and Baron Thyssen, the owner of the Derby winner, over a third. Several prominent Jewish race-horse owners, such as Herr von Weinberg and Baron Oppenheim, were present, but Herr von Papen diplomatically arranged that they should not be seated at the same table as Dr. Göbbels, whose wife stayed on and danced till nearly 1 a.m. Herr von Papen had very kindly invited me to dine, but an engagement in Berlin compelled me to return there after the races ...

As a result of Herr von Papen’s speech,⁵⁰ the foreign Press brings rumours of the probable imminence of a military dictatorship, but of this I cannot obtain any confirmation. Prussian soldiers may have their faults, but a partiality for *pronunciamentos* is not one of them. Nor can I on the other hand agree with those Germans who, whilst approving Herr von Papen’s criticisms, consider that they were made at the wrong time. When, it may be asked, would the really cautious consider it the right time to say the right thing? Hardly before the Greek Kalends, I fancy. It seems to me that Herr von Papen said a good many right things not a moment too soon. Why should he, as Vice-Chancellor, continue to keep silence, with its implied consent, in the face of recent National-Socialist excesses against religious and other civilising influences? I happen to know that he feels remorse for being more than anybody responsible for the advent to power of the régime. His Marburg speech therefore seems rather to be overdue than premature.⁵¹ To wait till its mere pronouncement caused the walls of Nazidom to fall would have meant delay till Doomsday. Such as it is, it has served a useful purpose. It has let off steam to the relief of many in a country only accustomed of late to hot air. It has shown Göbbels and his too leftward friends that other people count besides themselves. Even Göring and Hess in recent pronouncements have indicated that no second revolutionary wave can be launched except at the Führer’s express command.

As for Hitler, I fancy he will continue, at any rate through the summer, to lead his ill-assorted Cabinet as hitherto with undoubted skill, and will refrain as long as possible from taking too definite a side in the controversies of Right and Left, each of whom, I know, thinks that he inclines towards itself. After all he is, at the lowest possible estimate and in hostile eyes, a cunning man with streaks of genius. No other such has emerged in present-day Germany. For countless Germans he still stands supreme on a lofty, lonely

eminence. In his hands he holds their happiness and him they still worship like the God they now neglect.

Neither Right nor Left dares, even if it wishes, oppose this tremendous force, whose collapse would bring millions of Germans to a state of dangerous disillusion and despair. Both will therefore, I think, continue to be guided by their common Leader, for in neither camp can any other man pretend to succeed where he has failed – if failed indeed he has.

On the evening of 30 June, Hitler ordered the assassination of senior members of the SA, whom he claimed were planning a second revolution that would destroy the Nazi state and oust him from power. Seventy-seven Nazis suspected of complicity were murdered, along with more than one hundred sympathisers. Chief among them was the leader of the SA, Ernst Röhm, and Kurt von Schleicher, the former Chancellor and head of the Reichswehr. The events of 30 June have been seen as evidence of the ruthlessness with which Hitler was prepared to defend and consolidate his position as Führer. Unusually, Phipps' initial response was to believe the propaganda put out by Hitler to justify what had happened – that is, that most of those who died did so resisting arrest, and that the crisis was now over. The German Ministry for Foreign Affairs went to some lengths to convince him that von Neurath had not been involved in planning the assassinations. Consequently, Phipps' first direct reference to the Röhm Purge was far from condemnatory.

30 June

This afternoon I met Herr von Ribbentrop on my way to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. I told him that a "blood bath" was even then in progress. He seemed astonished and upset at the news. I then left him to try and find out from Baron von Neurath what his version might be.

The following day, Phipps dined with François-Poncet, who had been angered by accusations made by Hitler of French involvement in the Röhm purge, in particular, that he himself had plotted directly with von Schleicher. Usually a staunch ally of his French opposite number, on this occasion, Phipps tried to place events in their wider context. He continued to believe that the threat posed by Röhm to Hitler had been real. Furthermore, he anticipated that such violent events would not prove distasteful to the German people. This was part of life in the Third Reich, where a love of military conflict set Germany apart from the more civilised French.

2 July⁵²

It is of course too soon to estimate the effect of recent events on Herr Hitler's position. The week-end mixture of blood and mud that he has offered to the German public will probably not prove as distasteful to them as it would to the British, and the immediate effect may be to consolidate him, despite the

fact that he shut his eyes to the mud until, for political reasons, the blood became necessary.

The conclusion to the dispatch on which the above entry is based reiterates Phipps' belief that Röhm and the SA had posed a genuine threat to Hitler's position. This view of the Röhm purge suited Hitler. For three days the international diplomatic community was discouraged from seeking information about events because it was claimed that its release could further jeopardise national security. Furthermore, if the purge had been seen as a needlessly repressive measure, it would have reinforced fears about Hitler's willingness to negotiate on wider issues of international importance. But by early July, Phipps had become profoundly sceptical about Nazi propaganda concerning the purge.

4 July ⁵³

I asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs whether he could give me any information regarding recent events.

Baron von Neurath said that it was now clear from seized documents that a *Putsch* was to have taken place in August, but that the culprits having learned that certain details had reached Hitler's ears, decided to strike at 4 p.m. on June 30th, and to form a completely S.A. Ministry, except for the Vice-Chancellorship, which was to have been taken by General von Schleicher.

Röhm was to have combined the offices of Minister for War and Head of the S.A., the Ministry for Foreign Affairs being taken by Herr von Detten. It was hoped to sweep Hitler off his legs, rescue him from the non-Nazi members of the Government, and induce him to remain on as Chancellor ...

Hitler therefore, in order to avoid a civil war or at least very bloody encounters which might have cost hundreds of lives, was forced to strike quickly and with great severity. Baron von Neurath told me that only yesterday after the Cabinet the Chancellor had assured him that he had never believed it possible that he would have been obliged to take such action against his old comrade Röhm, whose betrayal had affected him more than anything else.

His Excellency told me that the number of executions throughout Germany was either forty-three or forty-six – he could not be sure. All other figures given were unreliable and exaggerated. The Chancellor meant to pursue his purging policy, but in a normal manner according to civil law and without any further bloodshed. Baron von Neurath added that the S.A. when it returned from its leave would be greatly reduced in numbers and would only be a purely political organisation.

In reply to a question Baron von Neurath said that no Cabinet changes were contemplated. Herr von Papen had been present at yesterday's Cabinet and would, I gathered, continue as Vice Chancellor. His [Marburg] speech

had been unfortunate, but it had merely expressed feelings which he (Baron von Neurath) himself and other members of the Government had already uttered in the Cabinet and with which the Chancellor had not disagreed.

One result of Hitler's action will presumably be the reorganisation of the S.A. into a purely political body. The S.S. on the other hand, young men in the prime of life, will doubtless gain in prestige and importance. Hitler's promise that the State would not maintain two armies (*Reichswehr* and S.A.), is apparently to be fulfilled and if, as he hopes, the rank and file of the *Reichswehr* soon become Nazi in allegiance, the régime will no longer have any reason to distrust the regular army. So long as the S.A. maintained their military organisation, the army regarded them as rivals with whom hostilities might break out in certain eventualities. This danger now seems to be at an end.

The more distant repercussions in a country like this are not easy to foresee. Forecasts based on the use of commonsense are unreliable where commonsense is the rarest of all attributes, whether of statesmen or simple citizens.

Hitler's prestige may not have suffered with the masses. In refined and cultured German circles the ruthless butchering of his old associates aroused mixed feelings. Heads, he always promised, would roll when he came into power. Nobody believed at that time that the heads would be those of his oldest and closest associates. To behead political opponents like Schleicher and Bredow is not merely an act of barbarism. It is a dangerous precedent, and Hitler must be very confident of the future to dismiss some of President von Hindenburg's old comrades in arms in this offhand fashion. Anxiety is now felt in the ranks of the S.S. lest their brown-shirted rivals should seek to avenge themselves not so much on the Führer as on Dr. Göbbels and General Göring, Röhm's enemies. The surviving associates of murderers like Heines and super-gangsters like Killinger (who planned and carried out the Rathenau murder),⁵⁴ Schneidhuber, Schmid of Munich and others, are themselves redoubtable gangsters. Those responsible for Hitler's safety may well feel that these men are more dangerous than their Socialist or Communist adversaries of 1932,⁵⁵ and the normal precautions for his safety must be redoubled for a long time to come.

Blood doubtless dries quickly, like an April shower on sand. Yet on Hitler's hands the stains may stay. Nor can some of the mud in which Hitler's trusted lieutenants are shown to have wallowed fail to stick to the régime itself. The squalid circumstances attending the capture of Heines and Röhm were belled out of the "radio" into quiet and respectable homes all over Germany and will not easily be forgotten.

Something has changed since last week-end and this was clear on Monday afternoon when Hitler and Baron von Neurath drove past the Embassy through the deserted Wilhelmstrasse to make their final official visit to the King and Queen of Siam.⁵⁶ The Führer looked pale and strange in his high

hat. The police had cleared the street and had even forbidden the people to open their windows. The public were herded behind a cordon of police at a respectable distance from the Adlon Hotel at the corner of the Linden. I heard some cheering as the Dictator, followed by several motors with S.S. guards, debouched from the empty Wilhelmstrasse, but I missed the usual note of tremulous enthusiasm.

Something too must have changed in the man, who struck me at our first meeting as an "unbalanced being". His last weekend can only have made him still less normal. Mussolini, I hear, was astonished, on telling Hitler in Venice⁵⁷ of the assassination of the Polish Minister of the Interior, at the tremendous effect produced upon him.⁵⁸ Hitler changed colour and muttered that that was bad news indeed and that such acts were catching.

The future outlook then seems gloomy for Germany, directed as she is by a now less than ever balanced Führer, who is himself flanked by two such lieutenants as Göring and Göbbels. Memories of my "bison" afternoon [10 June 1934] with the former inspire me with no particular confidence on his account. As for Göbbels, his raging demagoguery is too notorious to require a special description.

With these three actors playing the chief parts in the German drama, who can foretell how even the next act will end? Behind the scenes stands a factor without whose approval no real dénouement will be possible, I mean, the army – not that any actual pronunciamiento is likely.

This has doubtless been the case for a long time past, but now, with blood instead of clouds on Hitler, more so than ever. And then again, to a long list of "imponderables" must be added the German economic situation. This shows no sign of improvement.

It will be seen that one thing only is certain and that is the general uncertainty. The actors are too unstable, the factors too numerous and too shifting to allow of prophecy for more than a few weeks, which should bring a lull. To indulge in a guessing game on a rainy day in a country house might be amusing. To attempt any reasoned prognostication on the future course of events in Germany would be the height of unreason.

On the same day, Phipps sent a detailed chronological account of the Röhm purge to Simon. It was inevitable that a realignment of the kind that had taken place on 30 June would take place as part of Hitler's quest to consolidate his position as Führer. It was the nature of dictatorship to crush all opposition. The Foreign Office, however, thought Phipps' conclusions excessively pessimistic. Orme Sargent, head of the Central European Department, believed that many of Phipps' observations were based on gossip rather than on concrete information. He was, however, interested in Phipps' conclusion that Hitler might be willing to participate in the negotiation of a security pact as a means of mollifying international opinion at his handling of the SA. Vansittart was so taken with this idea that he asked Phipps to suggest this course of action to the Führer. But Phipps was not optimistic of success.

5 July⁵⁹

It seems that the Germans greatly fear that M. Barthou, when he visits England, will try to persuade His Majesty's Government to collaborate much more closely with France, with a view of forming a Western "bloc" against Germany, to be joined perhaps later on by Italy.

This fear is increased by the fact that the British press last Sunday and Monday was relatively moderate in its judgment of the German "executions".⁶⁰ On Tuesday, however, a great change for the worse took place in the tone of our press, which, the Germans think, must have obeyed a *mot d'ordre* from the Foreign Office.⁶¹

It would never occur to a German official that British public opinion, when fully awake to the facts, might, without any Foreign Office inspiration or pressure, object to a former Chancellor and his wife being murdered in cold blood whilst at luncheon.⁶² Even senior German military and naval officers are not unduly shocked at General von Schleicher's murder, for General von Blomberg assured them that he was undoubtedly guilty of treason and deserved his fate.

Barthou's visit to London offered Simon fresh hope that disaster could be averted and that a security agreement paving the way towards a disarmament pact might yet be possible. The Röhm Purge appalled Simon. International law needed to be strengthened to rein Germany in. Barthou's plan was for an agreement between the Little Entente powers, the Soviet Union and Poland that would offer joint resistance to Nazi aggression through the League of Nations. Simon approved, not least because it required no added British commitment to maintain European security. And if carefully phrased, the pact could apply to acts of aggression against Germany by the Soviet Union as well as vice versa. However, Phipps remained convinced that as the German regime did not behave rationally, there was little point in seeking an agreement that was likely to be adhered to in Berlin. Measures other than diplomacy were necessary.

11 July

Göbbels' frenzied speech on the sins of the foreign press has, no doubt, been adequately reported by Reuter and our newspapers.⁶³ According to an official statement issued this morning it was broadcast in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian, and was specially transmitted last evening by the B.B.C. in England. At first sight it might seem strange that the B.B.C. should put itself at the disposal of the German Propaganda Ministry for the purpose of misleading British public opinion, and disseminating what must have been the most violent attack ever made by a Government on the foreign press. But as I listened to the hysterical outburst I realised that no better anti-Nazi propaganda could have been devised by the bitterest adversary of this mad régime, of which the speech was characteristic.

Having had occasion to execute summarily a number of alleged Nazi revolutionaries, the Hitler triumvirate, especially Göring, seized the opportunity to “bump off” a number of their political opponents as well. They have not dared to publish the names of their victims so far, presumably because they think that even the stolid German public might be shocked. Truly, even in England death may come on a summer day, but not despatched from Downing Street.

Von Neurath announced that his government would only sign the security pact if complete equality of rights for Germany were guaranteed, particularly parity of armaments. He was not convinced that an agreement was necessary because a treaty between Germany and Poland already existed. Germany did not have a common border with the Soviet Union, so the likelihood of invasion was small. Relations with France, with whom Germany did share a frontier, were regulated by the Treaty of Locarno. But again if Britain agreed to sign the Eastern Pact, German objections would cease. Von Neurath believed that the Foreign Office had made it easy for Barthou to obtain concessions about the new French policy of alliances and that the principal objective of MacDonald's foreign policy – a disarmament agreement – had been abandoned.⁶⁴ Undeterred, on 14 July, Phipps handed the German Minister the terms under which the British government would sign a security pact. However an obstacle remained Hitler's hostility to François-Poncet. Phipps suggested that all members of the diplomatic corps in Berlin should express their contempt at Hitler's treatment of his opposite number by boycotting social functions organised by the German government.

17 July

The Chancellor, in his *Reichstag* speech on July 13th alluded to the connexion of a foreign diplomatist with the so-called Röhm plot.

Monsieur François-Poncet is the diplomatist in question and his “connexion” with the “bloc” was a perfectly innocent dinner party that he attended last May to meet Capt. Röhm and others at the house of Herr Regendanz. No questions of political interest were even discussed.

His anger at Herr Hitler's public reference to this dinner party can well be imagined, particularly in view of the fact that throughout his mission in Berlin he has risked his future, both as a political man and a diplomatist, by adopting what many persons in Paris consider to be an unduly pro-German attitude: in fact he has by some Frenchmen been practically accused of treason towards his own country. He now sees all his strenuous and honourable efforts towards reaching a reasonable Franco-German understanding wrecked by the very man on whose behalf he has risked so much. All this may of course blow over, but at present Monsieur François-Poncet is still debating whether or not to resign his post as Ambassador and to make, from a position of greater freedom and less responsibility, some declaration giving

the lie to Herr Hitler. He has meanwhile informed Monsieur Barthou of all the circumstances of the case and the latter may perhaps decide to speak strongly on the subject to the German Ambassador in Paris, or even to take more drastic action.

Of those participating in the above-mentioned dinner, four have been executed without trial, one lingers in a concentration camp and the host himself is a refugee in England. This list of casualties for one dinner party might make even a Borgia⁶⁵ envious. Only Monsieur François-Poncet has so far escaped, but even he has been attacked in a manner hardly compatible with the privilege to which a foreign Ambassador may justly consider himself to be entitled.

All this, and Hitler's further somewhat contemptuous reference in his order to the S.A. of the 30th June last to "so-called diplomatic banquets", etc., raises the general question of hospitality to be given and accepted by the foreign heads of missions in Berlin. If I and most of my colleagues, including the American, Italian and Spanish Ambassadors, accepted Röhm's invitation to a dinner party last February, it was not to suit our convenience or pleasure but from a strict sense of duty, Herr Röhm at that time – and indeed until his sudden death from Herr Hitler – being a member of the German Cabinet. I feel, with many of my colleagues, that Herr Hitler's words constitute a veiled snub to the diplomatic body for accepting the hospitality of a Cabinet Minister. The remarks in his speech last week in the *Reichstag* respecting a "foreign diplomatist", although they are generally known to apply to the French Ambassador, might equally be supposed to apply to any one of us; and in any case a veiled attack on one of our number can only be described as insolent. We none of us now, and in view of the strained situation, wish to add to present complications, but I form one do not propose to begin any entertaining in the autumn without putting some leading questions to Baron von Neurath on the subject. It might be interesting for us to know for instance who are the Germans, whether Cabinet Ministers or not, whose invitations we can accept or whom we can invite or meet on neutral ground without risk of being publicly snubbed or accused of plotting against the régime. I fancy that in due course some of the heads of missions will urge [Cesare Oresenigo], in his capacity as Doyen, to thrash the matter out with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who incidentally, together with General von Blomberg, was at Röhm's dinner party to which we went.

Last week when General von Blomberg dined with me privately to meet Rear-Admiral Noble and some of the Officers of H.M.S. *Leander*, I told him quite frankly, and speaking unofficially, that British public opinion had been unspeakably shocked at the killing of General von Schleicher and of his wife. I added that it was a mere chance that I had not known General von Schleicher. If the opportunity of meeting an ex-Chancellor had presented itself I should certainly have availed myself of it with a perfectly clear conscience. General von Blomberg's reply was to the effect that absolute proof existed of a Röhm-Schleicher plot. If General von Schleicher had not drawn

his revolver when the police came to his house he would, nevertheless, have been shot the same evening for treachery to Herr Hitler and treasonable plottings with a foreign Power. Frau von Schleicher had very courageously thrown herself in front of her husband and nobody regretted her death more than the Chancellor. Only a mild and mitigated regret pervaded General von Blomberg's remarks – no trace of disapproval was noticeable. He observed also that it was not fair to judge German events by English standards. Great Britain was a happy island, far from external strife, whereas Germany, defeated and crushed, was suffering from fifteen years of "Socialist" governments. Such conversations show how difficult it is for us, with the best will in the world, to speak the same language as even the better type of German, at any rate in the political sphere. I persist in believing, moreover, that our high standard of civilisation is not solely due to the salt water surrounding us.

His Excellency in the course of our talk hinted that it would be well if I went to the *Reichstag* on July 13th to hear Herr Hitler's speech,⁶⁶ as such a much better idea is obtained of the "atmosphere" by personal attendance than by listening in. I chose the latter course, however, my American and French colleagues did likewise, and I do not regret that the *Times* correspondent called attention to our absence, though with no prompting from me, in his description of the *Reichstag* proceedings.⁶⁷

So long as the *Reichstag* merely serves as a convenient platform for the glorification of crime and for attacks on foreign heads of mission in Berlin, I propose to leave vacant the seat which in normal circumstances The King's representative might be glad occasionally to occupy.

Diplomatic tension between Germany and Britain and France increased as the Luftwaffe began exercises in open violation of the Treaty of Versailles. To placate international criticism because of the Röhm purge, von Bülow ordered the suspension of the manufacture of bombers. Hitler and von Blomberg, however, preferred to renounce the use of offensive weapons by the army. Relations between the three countries were, however, brought to a new low by the murder of the Austrian Prime Minister, Engelbert Dollfuss, by Austrian Nazis on 25 July. The resulting political crisis appeared to leave Austria vulnerable to a Nazi-inspired Anschluss.

Of greatest concern to the British government was Italian involvement in the assassination. Mussolini had hitherto proved to be an important ally in reining in Hitler. Simon was now concerned that the Italian dictator would use the crisis as an opportunity to move troops to the Austrian frontier. He was equally sure that the British government would not guarantee to uphold the territorial integrity of Austria. It has been suggested that this marked a major shift in the conduct of British foreign policy until the Hoare-Laval Pact of 1935.⁶⁸ However, Phipps' dispatches indicate that Simon's change of heart was much less significant, lasting only until November 1934.

Recalled to the Foreign Office in the final week of July, Phipps told Simon that Hitler would probably give greater priority to reoccupying the Rhineland than to an

Anschluss. Furthermore, he would risk war if Britain and France took steps to oppose the re-annexation of the Rhineland. The British and French should therefore keep an eye on the diplomatic and military activities of Germany. There was also the possibility that the Nazis may not be able to respond adequately to the social tensions created by the continuing impact of the Great Depression. Recent conversations with Schacht had revealed the continuing German obsession with economic autarky. In the present financial climate, this would only be achieved through the annexation of territory. This process might not stop with the Rhineland, but could include all areas lost under the Treaty of Versailles.

Germany prior to the peace treaty at the end of the First World War provided a subtext to the funeral of President Hindenburg on 7 August in the Feldherrn tower of the Tannenberg⁶⁹ Memorial in East Prussia. Hindenburg's death cut the last ties with the Weimar era, while offering an opportunity to celebrate old Prussian military values.

8 August⁷⁰

Since my return last week to Berlin and during my journeys to and from Tannenburg to attend President Hindenburg's funeral, I found my foreign colleagues very pessimistic as to the situation in Germany and as to what the future holds in store. I must regretfully admit that I see no reason to take a more cheerful view than they.

Both the funeral session of the *Reichstag* and the ceremony yesterday within the grim walls of the colossal fortress-like memorial at Tannenberg were carried out to perfection and without a hitch. On both occasions there must have been many of those present who hoped that some light might come to the Führer, some great change in this grave hour. No change, however, was apparent, at least none for the better. Violent, arrogant, fanatical, his manner more than his actual language bodes ill for such of his unfortunate countrymen who venture to differ from him. At Tannenberg his last words were to consign the late Field-Marshal to Walhalla, that abode of false and dreary Wagnerian gods, where no civilised being would wish to spend a weekend. This peroration is illuminating and reveals the vulgarity of his highest ideal.

The prospects of a prosperous Germany led by such a man and such lieutenants would be none too bright. But Germany is the reverse of prosperous and her economic and financial fate is in the hands of Dr. Schacht, whose financial ability is dimmed by his aggressive Jingoism and by his worshipping at the Nazi shrine.

Reichswehr circles are, I am assured, none too happy and do not all approve General von Blomberg's subservience to Herr Hitler, to whom, however, they have sworn unconditional obedience. In three matters recently it is felt that the latter was badly advised: (1) the "clean-up" of June 30th; (2) his policy towards Austria; and (3) his assumption of the joint office of Head of the

State and Chancellor. In this connexion certain Nazis maintain that the abolition of the title of President is due to Herr Hitler's wish to be able at some future time, and if things go too badly, to restore the monarchy.

On the international plane it is probable that Hitler is sincere – for the present – when he bellows peace in his speeches or bleats it in interviews with foreign Pressmen, but meanwhile German armament proceeds apace and my French colleague affirms that the triple expansion of the Army will be completed by October. Quite apart from the imminence or otherwise of this eventuality, the risk of some disagreeable incident cannot be overlooked.

To bind Germany and her rulers by an Eastern pact of mutual assistance would seem highly desirable: but pact or no pact, it appears essential for Europe, whilst careful to avoid giving Germany any just cause for complaint, to remain watchful, strong and as united as possible.

The next entry describes two conversations six days apart. Phipps describes the reaction of foreign diplomats to the ceremony held on 6 September to mark Hitler's adoption of the dual roles of President and Chancellor. William Dodd's diary revealed that they debated with Phipps whether they should attend and what advice they should offer their most senior colleague, Cesare Orsenigo, the Papal Nuncio, when preparing his speech of congratulation. Phipps attitude was the most uncompromising. The Nuncio's speech should remove all flattering references to Hitler.

During the week between the meetings, Phipps' dispatches chronicled a tense relationship with the Führer over German involvement in an Eastern Pact. Phipps came under pressure from the Foreign Office to persuade the Germans of the merits of such an agreement. This was no easy task. The German press was convinced that the French and German positions were irreconcilable, with the government in Paris favouring bilateral alliances while the Nazis wanting [wanted] to be able to take unilateral action if German security was violated.

12 September

The foreign Heads of Missions were received by the Chancellor this morning for the first time since his assumption of the functions of President.

We were drawn up in a circle when Herr Hitler entered, accompanied by Baron von Neurath, Herr von Bülow, the eternal Dr. Meissner, who has been Secretary of State at the Presidency since the days of Herr Ebert, and other subordinate Nazi and Ministry for Foreign Affairs' officials. He was in evening dress without any orders or decorations ...

The Chancellor pointedly remained for a longer time than usual in friendly and animated conversation with the French Ambassador. This was, I feel sure, due to the strong protest made by M. Barthou to the German Ambassador in Paris against the insinuations which Herr Hitler had made against M. François-Poncet in regard to his so-called "intrigues" with General von Schleicher and Röhm. M. François-Poncet told me the other day

that the German Ambassador had been instructed to inform M. Barthou in reply that Herr Hitler had never mentioned my French colleague by name (and this was true), that the German Government had nothing whatever against him and that indeed he was and always had been *persona grata* with them. This rather disagreeable Franco-German incident can therefore now be regarded as closed.

Herr Hitler, in the course of his short conversation with me, expressed the earnest hope that The King's health was good, for he had seen that one day at Balmoral His Majesty had not been out as usual. I thanked Herr Hitler and replied that I was thankful to say His Majesty's health was excellent.

The Chancellor admitted to me that he felt tired after recent events, and said that he meant to leave Berlin again almost at once for the country.

It struck me and some of my colleagues that Herr Hitler seemed much more at his ease this morning than on the occasion after President Hindenburg's death when he received those of us who had had the honour of being charged with the duty of representing our Sovereigns at the Funeral.

Baron von Neurath, who is also leaving Berlin again for a few days, told me that he had seen several English people at Nuremberg,⁷¹ where they had been invited as guests of the German Government. Some had expressed a wish to be received by the Führer, and, although it had been difficult he (Baron von Neurath) had been able to arrange this, and they were, it seems, delighted.

The lesson to be derived from Nuremberg and the events that preceded it is, I think, that no change of régime here must be expected for some time to come. The winter may, and probably will, bring hardships to the German people, but not such as to induce them to revolt against the established order of things. The Nazis have their hands on every lever now; besides, and this also is important, large numbers of Germans regard Hitler with a species of mystic adoration: some pick up the earth upon which he treads to keep as a precious souvenir. Whatever, therefore, financial and economic experts may say I believe that imponderables will, in the case of present-day Germany, like so often in past history, prove to be more decisive than other and seemingly weightier factors.

The next issue to concern Phipps was the admission of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations on 17 September. Several days later, he was summoned to hear the official German response to the news. The move was viewed favourably and contained none of the anticipated references to French attempts to use allies to encircle Germany diplomatically. Von Neurath assured Phipps that it was only a matter of time before the Soviets grew tired of the League. Recent intelligence suggested that the Soviets were backing away from a military confrontation with Germany.

But this was simply German bravado. In December 1934, fearing a capitalist alliance between France and Germany counter to Soviet interests, the Soviets signed

a Protocol with France in which both countries agreed not to enter into negotiations that would prejudice an Eastern Pact. Litvinov insisted that it be extended to include Czechoslovakia – a gesture that was viewed in Berlin as a direct threat to German interests in the Sudetenland, and which came to fruition in the early summer of 1935. Hitler's response was to extend the rearmament programme.

Soviet membership of the League, although viewed positively by the British government, did not bring about the desired breakthrough in security policy. If one totalitarian regime could be accommodated by the League, it was reasonable that others, particularly the Nazis, might follow. The reasoning was simple, but it gave fresh impetus to the debate that had been raging within the Foreign Office since 1918 about how best to treat Germany – a policy of concession or a policy of confrontation. Phipps' instincts were to use the latter option, although only as a last resort should such a policy lead to war.

However, Phipps believed that the German government had more pressing problems in domestic rather than in foreign affairs. In particular, export trade was suffering because few wanted to trade with a dictator with blood on his hands. Phipps predicted that most German industry would have to come under state ownership to survive. At the same time, Germany was at a political crossroads. Hindenburg had lived long enough to see Hitler's regime installed but had died too soon after the Röhm Purge to do anything about the methods it employed to suppress opposition. Meanwhile, the eclipse of the SA had led to the ascendancy of Himmler's SS – a rise that was to continue for the rest of the decade.⁷²

3 October

I hear from a good source that the number of "executions" on June 30th was between 400 and 500, and that the message that Hindenburg sent to Hitler approving the latter was forged ...

I hear from a foreign colleague (Belgian) who accepted the invitation of the German Government to the harvest festival at the Bückeberg that the "bouquet" of the day's proceedings was the setting on fire and destruction of machine-guns of a cosy model farm with all its corn, etc.! My colleague admitted to me that he had accepted the invitation this year merely to prove to the Germans that he did not always follow in the wake of the Great Powers! The French and American Ambassadors remained at home like I did.

By early October, Phipps' instructions clearly reflected Simon's pessimism about a disarmament agreement with Germany.⁷³ He was to assume that relations between Britain and Germany on this matter had now irretrievably broken down. Furthermore, tacit recognition was to be offered by the British government to German violations of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles without diplomatic protest. This course of action had been suggested by Colonel Andrew Thorne, the British Military Attaché in Berlin, as a means of offering future negotiation with Hitler. Phipps thought this unlikely to work. Hitler would probably never formally

renounce Part V. The Führer's diplomatic tactics were much less direct. There would be no announcement that the Treaty of Versailles was now defunct, Hitler would simply behave as though it had never existed.

But as far as Simon was concerned, British policy was a means to a wider end.⁷⁴ His mind was occupied with the forthcoming Saar plebiscite. This important coal-mining region had been ceded to France at the end of the First World War and was governed by an international commission. Under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the inhabitants had the right to decide whether the region remained French or was returned to Germany after 15 years. The French government hoped that the economic bond created between the Saar and France during this time would lead to an acceptance of political integration. But Hitler viewed its return as the first stage in the campaign to restore Germany's pre-war borders. The Council of the League of Nations had arranged for the plebiscite to take place in January 1935. Simon's conversations with von Hoesch in mid October 1934, make it clear that he wanted the British government to maintain a policy of strict impartiality in the proceedings. He therefore wanted to avoid any unnecessary confrontations with Germany over Part V of the Treaty of Versailles that could lead to accusations of a pro-French bias in London.⁷⁵

25 October

... If the British public is told every week that Germany is going to attack us in a few months, it will be another case of crying "wolf", with a corresponding reaction after a certain time when the wolf fails to put in an appearance. The truth is, I think, that Germany is steadily arming,⁷⁶ and means to be in a very strong position indeed in three or four years' time.

Phipps' dispatches for the remainder of 1934 contained descriptions of worsening diplomatic relations between France and Germany in the run-up to the Saar plebiscite.⁷⁷ At the end of October, he reported that great prominence was given in Berlin to press reports that French troops were to be placed at the disposal of the Saar Governing Commission.⁷⁸ This increased German determination to reclaim the territory. But if a French military invasion occurred, it would violate the impartial nature of the government of the region as determined by the League of Nations. Nevertheless, the growing tension between the French and German government spilt over in Berlin. Phipps found himself caught in a diplomatic row between François-Poncet and von Bülow in which he endeavoured to convince both parties of the strengths and weaknesses of each other's argument.⁷⁹ Phipps was sure that the French would not be so foolish as to send a military force into the Saar. As the same time, while growing German military might posed a threat to European peace in the long term, Hitler would not risk war to reclaim the Saar.

This view was held by many in the Foreign Office. On 5 November, Simon told the House of Commons that tensions were unlikely to result in military intervention.⁸⁰ Franco-German hostility continued to increase. Simon heard that the German

government intended to make a formal protest about the French attitude. The basis of the complaint was that the threat of French military occupation failed to create an atmosphere conducive to the fair conduct of the plebiscite. Simon thought it was important for the British government to ensure that the vote took place in a political atmosphere that was as devoid of tension as possible. Simon's anxiety was heightened in mid-November by word from Phipps that the mood in Germany was pessimistic about the outcome of the plebiscite, with a substantial hostile vote against Germany now expected. To counter this, Hitler was putting pressure on the Catholic Church to use its influence with the Saarlanders to improve the result, threatening reprisals should the vote not go his way.

On 16 November, Phipps reported that the German army was undergoing massive reorganisation.⁸¹ He was, however, at pains to convey that this was not intended to be a provocative move. Von Neurath was concerned lest he should have to respond to a formal British or French protest at a further contravention of the Treaty of Versailles. Furthermore, aircraft production had been suspended until after the plebiscite in order to placate the French. The numerous references to Louis Barthou were spawned by the international outrage at his assassination in early October. Although Phipps was prepared to concede that Barthou had been right about German military expansion, he had found his unwillingness to pursue a constructive collectivist policy on this issue frustrating.

17 November

On 17th April [1934] M. Barthou broke off the disarmament negotiations by demanding Germany's return to the League, and by accusing Germany on the basis of her new budget figures of an intention to increase her army strength. (The German budget figures indicated an increase of £17½ million at par.)

Seven months have now elapsed, during which Germany has been feverishly re-arming on land and in the air without hindrance or even protest on the part of M. Barthou or anybody else. The impression left by the summer and autumn is one of incessant marching and drilling. It is evident to any foreign observer that the German people, with their innate love of discipline and military training, are revelling in their new freedom. Even the demonstrations of the labour front and the peasant rallies seem to the outsider to be mainly military parades. We have to face the fact that, while other countries enjoy playing football or sipping coffee at little tables under trees, German youth is happiest on the barrack square.

If M. Barthou anticipated the fall of the Hitler régime he was mistaken. During these seven months important political changes have taken place. These can be summed up in a few words: The rowdy element in the Nazi party has been eliminated with the execution of Röhm and his friends and the partial disbandment of the S.A. Much of the unpractical party programme has been discarded. The army and the civil service have come into

their own. There has been a general appeasement, and even the churches have now partly made their peace with Hitlerism. The return to normality has been very marked of late and the new régime seems to balance the scales to a nicety between Right and Left. It is of course a matter for speculation whether the working masses will continue to accept their lot with the same docility as heretofore, but the Government have the radio and the press in their hands, and it is hard to see how any opposition can assert itself against so ruthless a despot as Adolf Hitler. Even if Hitlerism were overturned Germany would never revert to the pacifist Weimar attitude, and no new Government would give much better terms than Hitler from the military point of view. The road to rearmament is open, and as month succeeds month the country feels its muscles hardening. Under any new Government the military will have great influence. The few short years during which a travesty of parliamentary government existed appear to have left no permanent impression.

Seen from Berlin the French attitude of last April was hard to understand. Today it is still harder to fathom. Monsieur Barthou refused a convention on the ground that it would merely tie the hands of France and not those of Germany. In the absence of a convention Germany is re-arming just the same, and as soon as she has reached the end of the first stage – say twenty-one divisions – pressure to expand further may set in ... By that time Germany will have begun to realise her great strength which lies in the fact that her neighbours regard military training, which to her is the pleasantest pastime, as irksome if not intolerable. Presumably by that time also she will have observed that the respect of other countries is won by the big battalions. A convention signed now might possibly forestall such a development.

Phipps nevertheless remained convinced that Hitler would not risk war in the near future. He placed great store on intelligence received by the military and air attachés attached to the embassy in Berlin.⁸² However, these comments did not cut ice in London or in Paris. Eden was engrossed in conversations with the new French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pierre Laval, about the Saar plebiscite.⁸³ Laval could not offer an assurance that serious disturbances could be avoided and that drastic action may have to be taken to suppress it. He was convinced that Hitler would stop at nothing to reclaim the Saar, irrespective of the outcome of the plebiscite. It was therefore important to monitor the administration of the region after the referendum had taken place as well as before. Eden agreed that Britain should send a police force to assist the French with this task. He knew that this suggestion would meet with opposition, but with Simon's assistance, he secured Cabinet agreement.

Phipps dispatches reflected none of this. The German government, he reported, was so optimistic about a positive outcome of the plebiscite achieved through legitimate means that attention was no longer being paid to French activities.⁸⁴ No objection was raised to British promises of assistance to France as it was unlikely that the two countries would ever need to take action against Germany. Von Neurath

reflected the political consensus in Berlin that the creation of the Franco-British police force stemmed from hostility to German involvement in the assassination of Dollfuss. This was not an unreasonable point of view. The possibility of an Anschluss that had followed the murder had placed a severe strain on British and French relations with Italy. Von Neurath was right in thinking that the need to resolve that matter was as important to Britain and France as a peaceful conduct of the Saar plebiscite.

The importance of Italian co-operation to the British and French was reflected in a memorandum that Phipps composed on 23 November.⁸⁵ Reiterating many of his earlier statements on German military expansion, he noted how anxious the Nazis were to avoid condemnation for flouting the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. He thought that Germany's financial problems were too severe for a massive programme of rearmament to be undertaken. At the same time, Phipps offered little hope for persuading Hitler to return to the League of Nations and for a return to disarmament negotiations. A pact might be negotiated with Czechoslovakia or with Poland, but Hitler might make British involvement a requirement to their conclusion. Phipps believed that it was important to conclude an agreement on levels of rearmament that accommodated the Italians as well as the French. Mussolini could be used as a role model to demonstrate to Hitler that it was possible for a fascist dictator to reach an acceptable rapprochement with democratic powers. The recent General Election in France could auger a change from the intransigence of Doumergue and Barthou. Phipps continued to oppose Simon's willingness to ignore German contraventions of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. These should only be tolerated if Germany was prepared to rejoin the League and to sign an Eastern Pact. Until the results of the Saar plebiscite were known, efforts should be made to broker bilateral non-aggression pacts between Germany and her neighbours as a preliminary to the Eastern Pact.⁸⁶

Simon thought that the timing of Phipps suggestions was not right. He was in no doubt that Germany was rearming. Having recalled Phipps to London on 23 November, he was anxious to impress on the ambassador that he did not want him to discuss a German return to the League or a reconvening of the Geneva Disarmament Conference.⁸⁷ Furthermore, as far as the British government was concerned, German non-compliance with the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and the Saar plebiscite were two separate issues.

27 November

I return to Berlin this morning from London, where I had been summoned by Sir John Simon for consultation with the Cabinet Committee⁸⁸ on German rearmament before the approaching debate in the House of Commons.⁸⁹

I was received today by Herr Hitler in order to give him the views of His Majesty's Government on the present situation, and to inform him of the statement they would make during the debate. I told him they had been gravely concerned for some time past over German rearmament, the

increase in the German army and the development of the German military air force, which were facts beyond doubt.

I impressed upon him the extremely serious view which His Majesty's Government took of the effect of all this, together with the militaristic trend of German education and training. I added that this was making a peaceful and agreed solution of the international situation more and more difficult.

His Majesty's Government took note of Germany's repeated declarations that she has been inspired by nothing but purposes of defence. But the fact remained that the psychological reaction on others was to inspire suspicion of an offensive purpose. Herr Hitler did not take my remarks in good part; he spoke of Germany not wishing to continue to serve as a doormat, and savagely referred to recent anti-German demonstrations at Prague,⁹⁰ and to the intolerable insolence of Lithuania⁹¹ towards Germany. These references bode ill for the smaller Powers when once the Germans feel themselves strong enough to speak to them in truly German tones.

I naturally scouted Herr Hitler's idea of an actually existing military alliance⁹² between France and Russia, and referred to the official French *démenti*, but the Chancellor angrily declared he did not believe a word if it and that he had proof positive of the existence of such an alliance; in this he was supported by Baron von Neurath. I warned them not to attach too much credence to reports regarding this from Russian sources, for Russia's great wish was to conclude this alliance, and she might well desire to believe in the *fait accompli*, whilst France wanted to avoid that contingency; hence the Eastern Pact project. My arguments fell flat, and Herr Hitler replied that the Eastern Pact would in any case only have rendered a military alliance easier to bring about. I gather he bases his conviction on a report from some secret source in Moscow.⁹³

In the course of our conversation the Chancellor bitterly reproached Great Britain for turning a deaf ear to the proposals he had made to her to reach a bilateral agreement over armaments, etc. I replied that what we wanted was a general agreement, not merely a bilateral one, whose only effect would be to transform Europe into two opposite camps as before the war. He made the customary declaration that he never contemplated building a navy against us, but in his torrent of words I thought I caught the figure of 35% as being the proportion of our navy that Germany would eventually claim the right to possess. The moment was not favourable, however, for a close examination of figures.

This was the first occasion upon which I had seen Herr Hitler for any length of time since the "blood bath" of June 30th. It has not increased his charm or attractiveness. Whilst I spoke he eyed me hungrily like a tiger. I derived the distinct impression that had my nationality and status been different I should have formed part of his evening meal.

At our further conversation this evening Baron von Neurath spoke to me again quite softly and not in His Master's Voice, the bad impression of whose strident tones, combined with his own raucous interjections last night, he

seemed desirous of effacing. I took the opportunity of tackling him again on the subject of the Franco-Russian "military alliance", and, when pressed, he admitted that "it might not be a regular alliance, but the offer of the Soviet army has been made to the French, who have not declined it."

Phipps had two interviews with von Neurath on 27 November.⁹⁴ In the second, von Neurath made it clear that, unlike Hitler, he wished the disarmament negotiations to resume after the Saar plebiscite.⁹⁵ Phipps also saw Hitler, who informed him that if the size of the German air capability were exaggerated, he would henceforward assume that the British were as paranoid as the French about the threat of German air strikes. An alliance between France and the Soviet Union posed a greater threat to European peace than Germany. Therefore it was foolish of the British government to be more concerned with German rearmament than with the military capabilities of the French and the Soviets.⁹⁶

Both Phipps and the Foreign Office viewed Hitler's comments as a minor tantrum.⁹⁷ But it was severe enough for Sargent to conclude that Phipps had been right about German concerns about international condemnation of violations of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. On 29 November, Simon circulated a paper on how the British government should respond to German breaches of the peace treaty. It asked two questions. First, would any contravention be acceptable to the British government, and second, what would be the consequences to Anglo-French relations if the answer to that question was yes? Simon's paper prompted a flurry of suggestions that attempted to place Britain's relations with Germany and France within the wider context of European diplomacy. Most suggested that Hitler's outburst to Phipps had been prompted by a fear of a united British-French-Italian front against Germany on rearmament before the Führer was ready to take the initiative himself. Simon should bolster relations with France to encourage Hitler to adopt this view.

Relations between Hitler and the British government continued to deteriorate. On 30 November, Phipps had another interview with the Führer, who attacked British policy towards Germany, saying that it was more consistent with what emanated from Paris. The following day, von Neurath saw Phipps to discuss the administration of the Saar plebiscite. It also became apparent that, despite Hitler's ranting, no statement of German policy regarding rearmament would be forthcoming until after the vote had taken place. To Phipps, this was either an example of a lack of German diplomatic confidence or a cynical ploy to gain advantage with Britain and France in the long term. If Hitler could demonstrate his popularity through a resounding victory in the plebiscite, that would enhance his negotiating position on other issues. Phipps was convinced that such a strategy would not work.⁹⁸

Eden tried to convince his Cabinet colleagues that unless action was taken by the British government, French troops would probably enter the Saar. His only support was from Baldwin, who thought that British policy towards France and Germany had been allowed to drift and that the time had arrived for a more vigorous approach. Baldwin also succeeded in persuading the Cabinet to support Eden in taking steps to prevent a French invasion of the Saar. On 5 December, Eden saw

Laval in Geneva, who accepted the offer of British assistance.⁹⁹ Despite this, Eden thought the British and French position would be strengthened if it had the support of the Italian government, which had hitherto expressed reservations about the creation of an international force to oversee the Saar plebiscite. Time was, however, pressing as the League Council was due to meet that day to consider the issue. Eden therefore sought an immediate interview with Baron Pompeo Aloisi, head of the Italian delegation to the League of Nations, and persuaded him that the international force in the Saar would only succeed if it included Italian military co-operation. League approval was secured, and British, French and Italian contingents were later joined by Sweden and the Netherlands. Phipps reported that no objection was raised in Berlin to the creation of an international force. Nevertheless, von Neurath had made a point of telling him of his government's desire to co-operate with France over the future of the Saar. The result of the plebiscite was not, however, in any doubt. There would be a German victory, and that victory would greatly enhance Hitler's prestige.

Of more direct interest to the Germans were recent statements made by the British government on rearmament. On 26 November, Baldwin had told the Cabinet that Germany's total air budget had been 43.5 million Reichsmarks for 1932–1933, 78.5 million for 1933–1934, and was set to rise to 210 million in 1934–1935. It was estimated that 160–180 aircrafts were being produced per month, with the total in existence given as 1,000. The only conclusion that could be drawn was that Germany aimed to threaten the peace of Europe. Baldwin made these figures public in the House of Commons two days later.¹⁰⁰

Phipps reported Hitler's response. Baldwin's speech justified stepping up German armament production.¹⁰¹ The figure of 1,000 planes would be used as a basis to secure a further 1,000. Phipps dismissed these statements as mere pre-plebiscite rhetoric. Hitler would find it difficult to find the economic resources necessary to double Germany's air capabilities in a year. Similarly, he thought that an expansion of the German army was unlikely to happen for the same reason. Simon, however, wanted to make the British position clear. Phipps was to tell Hitler that as far as the British government was concerned, Part V of the Treaty of Versailles still applied to Germany. Unofficially, however, both Simon and Phipps knew that it was defunct and had been for some time.

Indeed, Hitler and von Neurath interpreted Baldwin's statement as evidence that the British government no longer regarded Germany bound by Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. At the same time, it was important that the arrival at this conclusion was not viewed in Berlin as offering *carte blanche* to Hitler to do as he pleased in international diplomacy. In early December, Simon sought support from Flandin and Laval.¹⁰² He wished to secure agreement with France before Germany made fresh demands, that he anticipated would follow the Saar plebiscite. Flandin concurred, but in return for British assistance in securing a rapprochement between France and Italy over Austria. Simon saw the brokering of a new relationship with Germany as his principal task for 1935.

1935

Simon believed that 1935 would be the year in which European peace would either be secured or in which war would become inevitable. He did not anticipate that Hitler would become easier to deal with after the Saar plebiscite, and was also concerned by the expansion of the Luftwaffe.¹ But in January, he was heartened by news of the Franco-Italian agreement guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Austria. Both Simon and Phipps believed that a German victory in the Saar plebiscite was inevitable.² Consequently, Phipps devoted little attention to the subject after December 1934. The vote took place on 13 January, producing a 91 per cent vote in favour of secession to Germany. The international debate about the conduct of the plebiscite had been characterised as being democracy versus authoritarianism. Although the events of 1935 were to demonstrate that the growing rift with Italy was to be costly to Hitler.

2 January

The German Chancellor at his New Year reception assured both the French Ambassador and myself that he would take care after the Saar plebiscite that the German cries of victory should not be too loud, so that Franco-German relations should not be poisoned.

... Hitler's fanaticism, however, probably deadens, though it may not obliterate, his feelings of remorse for all the German and Austrian blood shed last year by his gangster-like methods. It was strange to watch him as he listened to the Nuncio's speech, to think of him leading this great people with, after all, great traditions. On entering the room he bowed to the diplomatic corps, but on leaving it he relapsed into an awkward and crooked Hitler salute that jarred.

3 January

... And now, what may be the possibilities for good and evil in 1935? ... Today in Germany two forces dominate – the Army and Hitler – and at present they work fairly well together. The Army represents solidity,

conservatism and tradition, whilst Hitler and his acolytes supply the flashiness, bombast and vulgarity so dear to the crowd, with sparks of happy inspiration, plus cunning, thrown in. Nor must Dr. Schacht be forgotten. In economic and financial affairs his word is law, and the *Führer* trusts in him implicitly. So far it has suited these disparate forces to work together towards a common goal – the reconstruction of a great and powerful Germany.

... Nor does it seem to me likely that Herr Hitler will tempt Providence again in 1935 or later without the Army's consent. The conflict with Austria was of course one in which the sympathies of the world were against him, and here lies perhaps the greatest weakness of the régime, viz., the hostility of foreign countries.

... Meanwhile, softer tones may be heard and Germany may well astonish the world of her sweet reasonableness. Perhaps, however, it will be prudent, whilst welcoming this seeming change of spirit, to see that we all remain sufficiently united and strong to encourage, if not its genuineness, at least its duration.

As the date of the Saar plebiscite drew closer, Simon was anxious to impress upon Hitler that Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations would not prejudice the way League officials would administer the referendum.³ Von Neurath remained nervous that attendance at the meeting of the League Council at which the final outcome would be announced would be prejudicial to German interests. This discussion was part of a wider German debate about how foreign policy should be conducted. Some shared von Neurath's scepticism; while others believed that a German presence in Geneva could pave the way for a return to the League. But despite Phipps' best efforts, it was the mood of suspicion about the League that prevailed. When the result of the plebiscite was announced on 15 January, von Neurath declared that henceforward the German government would act carefully before signing further international pacts.⁴ He was particularly concerned by Franco-Italian conversations about Austria, seeing them as an attempt to establish a protectorate in the region. On 19 January, von Ribbentrop revealed that the German government would be prepared to guarantee the independence of Austria but would not be party to a Franco-Italian pact.⁵ Phipps told him that the British government would approve of such an agreement but would not become a co-signatory. But two days later, von Ribbentrop raised the diplomatic stakes by claiming that the German government would sign the pact if the British were also prepared to do so. Phipps warned Simon against such a strategy.⁶ Hitler was unlikely to adhere to any international agreement, especially relating to disarmament and the Treaty of Versailles. Furthermore, despite statements to the contrary, Germany would not return to the League under any circumstances. The resounding German victory in the Saar plebiscite had now given Hitler the confidence to do as he saw fit irrespective of the constraints imposed by international treaties.

Phipps' views found support with Eden, who thought that German rearmament was now proceeding at a dangerous pace.⁷ Fearing that the moment had passed for

a rapprochement with France, he nevertheless invited Flandin and Laval to London. On 3 February, they initialled an agreement pledging further discussions on rearmament, pacts of mutual assistance in Eastern Europe and Germany's return to the League.⁸ The most significant proposal was for an Anglo-French air pact. The two nations would support each other in the event of one being the victim of an unprovoked air attack. The French government would only countenance current levels of German rearmament if Germany rejoined the League. Hitler must agree that in air power the balance of armaments should always favour France. The British could negotiate with Germany but no agreement could be signed unless the disarmament question had been resolved to French satisfaction. Simon realised that the pact would not be popular with the Cabinet, but he urged its acceptance because it was important for Britain to have a proactive security policy. His wider vision included British participation in an Eastern Pact, a confirmation of a willingness to maintain the demilitarised state of the Rhineland and a redefinition of Britain's obligations under the Treaty of Locarno. Simon was, however, surprised to learn from Phipps that Hitler intended to co-operate with the British and French regarding the air pact. But the onus was on the British to make the first move.

23 January⁹

I had a conversation with the Chancellor last night after the dinner he gave to the foreign Heads of Missions.

I opened by remarking that he must be pleased with the result of the Saar Plebiscite, to which he replied in a hearty affirmative. He added that if elections were held in Austria tomorrow they would doubtless result in an overwhelming Nazi victory. This brought us to the Austrian Pact and he declared that he had no intention of signing it. He could not bind many to any such vague, abstract undertakings. It would be impossible to define the words used therein. He would not, however, mind signing a declaration undertaking to respect the independence of Austria.

I then referred to the Eastern Pact and enquired what his views were on that, but again he declared very definitely that he could not join it. He was ready to enter into clearly defined, concrete agreements with individual states, but could not contemplate joining such vague and far-reaching pacts which would commit Germany further than it was possible to foresee at the moment of signature. For instance, how could it be imagined that he would consent to attack Poland if the latter Power decided at some future date to attack Russia?

I did not conceal my disappointment and urged the Chancellor not to throw away what might be a last opportunity of coming to a satisfactory arrangement with France now that so reasonable a government as the present one was in power. M. Flandin and M. Laval, as he must know better than I, were deeply desirous of reaching a satisfactory understanding with Germany. This Herr Hitler did not deny but maintained that, despite appearances, they were merely one of a series of weak French Governments. In this connection he referred to the seeming impossibility of reaching any agreement

in the matter of an Arms Convention. Poland could not limit her armaments owing to the neighbourhood of Russia and would not limit her's and could not be trusted even if she did. Germany, in turn, could not do so, nor could France, particularly, as stated above, in view of the weakness of her successive governments. I objected that Russia was in a most pacific mood and most likely to attack anybody, as was shown by her attitude towards Japan.¹⁰ This Herr Hitler admitted, but maintained that it was only for a short space, after which Russia would again seek to foment world revolution and strife.

The Chancellor here again brought up the question of *Gleichberechtigung* concerning which I tried to elicit a precise definition but merely succeeded in drawing forth a violent tirade about Memel and a savage attack on Lithuania – that wretched little country, as he described it, that dared to beard 88 millions of Germans.¹¹ One division of his *Reichswehr*, he said, could wipe it out. The Germans were constantly being maltreated and beaten. What would we say if an English county had been torn from us and put under some trumpety foreign State? In a lull I urged that we had reason to believe that the Governor of Memel [Dr Ottomar Schreiber] was in a more reasonable mood and that good hopes of a satisfactory compromise existed if only the majority parties in the Landtag were encouraged to accept the proposal for the granting to them of 3 seats in the Directorate and certain further concessions. My words did not penetrate, however, and seemed literally to fall on the parquet flooring.

The Chancellor then spoke of Great Britain and of the ease with which it would be possible for Germany to reach an agreement alone with her. The Kaiser's biggest blunder had been to offend us by building a big navy instead of leading the world as he might have done in collaboration with us – (two Powers equal as regards race and culture), – he on land and we at sea. *Gleichberechtigung* would in this case mean German liberty to discuss freely and negotiate an arrangement with us establishing a certain fixed ration between our respective fleets.

Herr Hitler, as he generally does when discussing Anglo-German affairs, here adopted his most persuasive manner. He remarked, whilst disclaiming any wish to mix up in British internal politics, that the Conservative Party¹² would, he thought, do well not to attempt to steal the thunder of their opponents, and to discard so unattainable an object as disarmament from their programme. If he himself had reached his present position it was merely due to the fact that he had never attempted to adopt his opponents' programme but had ruthlessly pursued his own. I replied that disarmament was a subject that all British parties had equally at heart. I cannot help thinking that when the Chancellor made these last remarks he had in mind the visit to Berlin of Lord Allen of Hurtwood¹³ who has been having lengthy conversations with Baron von Neurath, with various Wilhelmstrasse¹⁴ officials and others, and who will on January 25th be received by the Chancellor himself.

Herr Hitler concluded by displaying an almost touching solicitude for the welfare of the British Empire and expressing a fervent hope that India would

never be lost. That would, he declared, be a catastrophe for the whole civilised world.

Finally he expressed himself ready to discuss matters at greater length with me whenever I liked.

Hitler did not share von Neurath's view that Germany would sign a pact guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Austria if Britain agreed to do so. That said, Phipps believed that Hitler would welcome an arms convention were it not for German concerns about the threat of the Soviet Union.¹⁵ But a German return to the League was out of the question because the organisation was defunct. It was now up to each country to look after its own defence interests.

The news from Berlin added impetus to the negotiations between the British and French governments regarding an air pact. Germany was clearly a maverick state. The only effective defence was collective security. Sargent drafted a paper on 28 January linking Phipps' observations with the debate concerning the proposed Eastern Pact. In Sargent's view, the French had only been interested in an Eastern Pact because they had lost faith in Britain's willingness to guarantee French security. The conclusion of an air pact would remove that doubt. Furthermore, a Franco-Soviet alliance would make the operation of the Treaty of Locarno difficult. The British government was willing to interpret the Treaty of Versailles flexibly to accommodate recent German rearmament, but such latitude would not be exercised in relation to the Locarno agreement. Simon took a broader view. The Anglo-French air pact offered the only way of brokering a deal on rearmament with Germany. Nothing must be allowed to stand in its way.¹⁶

From Lord Lothian,¹⁷ Simon heard that Hitler would work with the British and French to bring into operation an air pact because he was anxious to establish a modus vivendi. Lothian suggested the deal would best be sealed if Simon visited Hitler in person. Plans were therefore put into operation to organise a visit to Berlin. Phipps thought that Lothian's activities were likely to hinder diplomacy – a view also shared by Vansittart.¹⁸

31 January¹⁹

Lord Lothian returned to London by air this morning, and promised to give Sir John Simon a full account of his activities here. He and Mr. Evans had an interview of over two hours yesterday with the Chancellor. Last night we invited Lord Lothian to dinner we had arranged some time ago for Baron and Baroness von Neurath. The Minister of Justice, Herr Meissner, General von Reichenau, Herr von Ribbentrop, the French Ambassador and many others were also present.

Baron von Neurath, who received Lord Lothian some days ago, remarked to me rather pointedly that he had declined to be present at his interview with the Chancellor. To Lady Phipps His Excellency said during dinner that many messengers came and went, but the permanent officials remained

behind to clear up the mess after their departure. The fact is British missionaries of peace of varying shades of political thought seem to come here in growing numbers, and, after conversations with various personages, return to England with some plan of their own whereby peace is to be ensured for a given number of years.

Lord Lothian told me that he was impressed by the sincerity of Herr Hitler. What struck me most in the rapid account he gave me of their conversation was the fact that Germany's voracious appetite in the naval sphere stands revealed by the Chancellor's claim to possess a fleet equal to 33% of ours. This practically confirms the figure that he let drop to me (35%) at the end of last November, though at the time it struck me as so exaggerated that I pretended not to hear it.

If this percentage is claimed at a time when Germany affects only to require ships to defend herself in the Baltic, what may we not expect if Colonies are presented to her? It must be remembered, moreover, that this claim is advanced at a moment when the German Government have every reason to wish to astonish Great Britain by their extreme moderation, in order to detach that Power from the group of suspicious neighbours surrounding them.

After dinner I had some talk with General von Reichenau, who assured me that Germany ardently desired an Arms Convention: this would, he declared, be a great feather in Herr Hitler's cap, and set the seal on the Nazi régime. I failed to elicit what price Herr Hitler would pay for this feather.

In the course of his conversation with Lord Lothian the Führer seems, as usual, to have harped on the Russian danger, both military and economic, and on the powerful allies that the Soviet would find in the Communists in all countries opposed to them. Herr Hitler never fails to make use of the Russian bogey, though how genuine his fears are it is difficult to say. Army circles here openly declare that the *Reichswehr* would cut through the Soviet army like a knife cuts butter. Nor do they believe in any sudden galvanising of Russia into efficiency, either military or economic.

Phipps heard rumours that Hitler was about to announce plans to expand the German army to 400,000 men. Von Neurath had been, however, anxious to impress on Phipps the importance his government placed on a good relationship with Britain. The German government would not sign an Eastern Pact that contained clauses that could jeopardise close relations with Britain. Furthermore, Hitler was anxious to co-operate with the British government on a new arms convention, based on the status quo, not a revival of an earlier plan. But this would have to be negotiated outside the League of Nations. An attempt to persuade Germany to return to Geneva by abandoning Part V of the peace treaty would not work. Under the policy of Gleichberechtigung, Germany was entitled to more than a mere cancellation of the treaty. It would have to be renegotiated in its entirety with German participation on equal terms to the Allies.²⁰

To banish German fears of future Anglo-French diktats, Simon was anxious that Hitler was informed of the current air pact negotiations.²¹ Phipps was instructed to give Hitler regular bulletins about each stage of the negotiations. Therefore for much of London conference, between 1 and 3 February, Phipps found himself in frequent transit between the Wilhelmstrasse and the Reichschancellery. Nevertheless, despite Simon's good intentions, his instructions to Phipps reflected the lack of agreement between the British and French about what would constitute an acceptable level of German rearmament. Laval had insisted that a German return to the League was a pre-requisite to agreement.²² Phipps, however, was told that the return of Germany to the League would be part of a wider rapprochement on rearmament but whose general success did not depend on a German presence in Geneva.

Phipps' principal concern was that the Anglo-French air pact would be viewed as alliance against Germany. He urged and secured a moderate official response from Hitler. Unofficially, however, the Führer's view was different. He told Phipps that France made constant demands of her neighbours to enhance her security with little in return. Germany had had to sacrifice Alsace and Lorraine and had been forced to accept the Rhineland as a demilitarised zone. Now Britain had been coerced into making another commitment to protect France from attack. If this attitude continued, Germany may be forced to reoccupy the Rhineland. Although dismissed as bravado by Phipps, this conversation does reveal something of Hitler's reasoning regarding foreign affairs. It was to be more than a year before he carried out this threat. And when he did so, it created the greatest diplomatic crisis of Phipps' embassy.

A week after the conclusion of the Anglo-French air pact, German objections had become fully formed. A discussion between Phipps and von Bülow on 8 February centred on claims that the British government was bent on concluding agreements that affected German interests without active German participation in the negotiations.²³ Von Neurath believed that this reduction in trust in London and Paris could have wider implications, and affect the conclusion of the Eastern and Danubian Pacts. Such news increased Simon's conviction that he must visit Berlin as soon as possible. Phipps thought that the German response to the Anglo-French communiqué issued at the end of the London Conference might not be constructive. Anything the Foreign Secretary could do to change that was worth pursuing. But Phipps soon found his diplomatic skills severely tested. Simon's instinct was to visit Berlin immediately. However, Phipps had received intelligence that a visit before adequate time had elapsed to consider the German response would prove that the British government was trying to bully Germany. Phipps' solution was to suggest that Simon go to Paris to discuss the substance of his remarks to Hitler with Laval before making his way to the German capital. When Vansittart learnt of Phipps' tactics, he commended him for his brilliance and intuition.²⁴

On 14 February, Hitler published his response to the London communiqué.²⁵ Its focus was on the Anglo-French air pact, with only supplementary mention of the Eastern Pact. Von Neurath thought that the communiqué had neither harmed nor improved British and French relations with Germany. Only when all of Germany's diplomatic and military requirements had been met would return to the League be

contemplated. It was not the German government's intention to be party to a multi-lateral agreement on air power. Instead, a series of bilateral treaties would be negotiated. The most important would be with Britain. Phipps, however, thought that recent patterns of diplomacy suggested that Britain would not be prepared to enter into a treaty governing military capability without France.

The response to von Neurath's remarks in London was much less tolerant.²⁶ To prevent an impasse, Phipps secured approval for a meeting between himself, François-Poncet and von Neurath, which took place on 15 February. Phipps discovered that the only part of the Anglo-French convention that the Germans were likely to accept was that relating to air and that their consent was dependent on the British and French agreeing to conclude bilateral treaties with Germany. He suggested that talks be set up between the British and French governments and Germany, although they would be deliberately inconclusive. Simon, however, had said that he was emphatically against such a plan.²⁷ For each set of negotiations, there should be a clear set of parameters, especially the conversations between Britain and Germany. Furthermore, such a dialogue should only take place after Anglo-French consultation. The principal objective would be to convince the German government that a rapprochement on air power based on the Anglo-French agreement offered the best chance of success.

By mid-February, von Neurath was anxious to establish a date for Simon's visit to Berlin. Phipps now thought that the timing was right.²⁸ Nevertheless, he was not confident that Simon's presence in the German capital would lead to a diplomatic breakthrough.²⁹ The British and French were discussing alternative plans for an Eastern Pact.³⁰ It was unlikely that Hitler would accept any of them. The Führer's hostility towards a rapprochement with the Soviet Union had reached such a level that he had recalled the German ambassador to Moscow for demonstrating pro-Soviet sympathies. On 26 February, Phipps was asked to give assurances that Simon would not go to Moscow directly from Berlin. Phipps thought it unlikely that the request would be granted on the grounds that the British government was anxious to examine the broader context of European security and would therefore not rule out any diplomatic move.

In February 1935, it appeared unlikely that such an alliance would come about because it would undermine the German agreement with Poland concluded a year earlier. Ramsay MacDonald, was not convinced that Simon's visit to Berlin should go ahead because of concerns that it might result in Britain becoming embroiled in diplomatic issues that had little bearing on British interests.³¹ A visit to Moscow could have the same effect. It would be much better for German and Soviet officials to visit London as a preliminary to Simon visiting Berlin and Moscow. A compromise was finally reached. Simon and Eden would visit Berlin, while Eden would go on alone to Moscow.³²

28 February

Berlin is agog at the prospect of the approaching visit of Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden.

Hitler is, I hear, postponing his triumphal entry into the Saar until after the visit.

Despite the desire of the Germans in general and of Ribbentrop in particular that our Ministers should confine their visit to Berlin only, the German press have so far shown unusual tact in discussing the possibility of their going on to Moscow. This attitude has certainly been inspired by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, who, unlike Ribbentrop, have sufficient sense to realise that a German Press campaign to dictate to us what to do and where we should go would make a lamentable impression in England. I certainly see no reason why we should make our plans in this respect to suit German wishes, however, ardent these may be. The last utterances of Hitler and Göbbels show that Germany feels no gratitude for the change in Europe's treatment of her, but merely ascribes it to a growing fear of and respect for her strength ...

Incidentally I hear that Laval is furious with Ribbentrop owing to the latter's insertion into the German reply of the demand for Anglo-German conversations, and vows that he will not receive him when next he comes to Paris. This will, however, not be of much use as Ribbentrop generally returns here from Paris with quite accurate inside information regarding the French situation for the *Führer*. I believe his information from London is not nearly so good.

[undated] March

The visit of the British Ministers to Berlin had been fixed for March 7th, but a few days previously a White Paper³³ was issued by His Majesty's Government before the debate on the estimates, explaining why they had found it necessary to proceed to a measure of rearmament. The references to German rearmament contained nothing which was not in the Prime Minister's speech of November 28th [1934],³⁴ beyond a mention of the training of German youth and the non-condonation of Germany's violation of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles.

This aroused the Chancellor's fury, however, and he sent me a message through Baron von Neurath stating that he had an inflamed throat and that the visit must be put off. About a fortnight later Herr Hitler calmed down and, at our suggestion, consented that the visit should take place on March 24th, and the following days.

The saga of Hitler's sore throat occupied Phipps' dispatches for the next few weeks. Phipps suspected it was simply an excuse to postpone the visit.³⁵ Simon hoped that the news that Eden would be visiting Moscow and Warsaw in his stead might bring Hitler round. Phipps, however, advised against handling Hitler with kid gloves.³⁶ The reason for the Führer's change of heart had not been firmly established. Hitler's apparent indisposition offered an opportunity to monitor the situation further

before taking action. But if the delay was too long, Simon might be accused of postponing arrival in Berlin in order to make time to visit Moscow.³⁷ Phipps had also heard rumours that the German government was about to make an announcement about rearmament.

Phipps' intelligence was correct. On 9 March, Hitler announced that within a month Germany expected to be stronger in the air than France, and within a year stronger on land.³⁸ The statement was also notable for providing the first official acknowledgement that the German air force possessed military capability. This was a statement of momentous importance. Germany was now in open breach of the Treaty of Versailles. Four days later, Hitler went on to announce the re-introduction of conscription – a move designed to coincide with the passing of a similar law in France.

9 March

Baron von Neurath told the French Ambassador and myself successively this morning that Germany had a military Air Force.

I left His Excellency in no doubt as to the bad impression that this would create in Great Britain; but of course this had been a *secret de Polichinelle*³⁹ for a long time past.

More of the substance of his conversation with von Neurath was revealed in Phipps' dispatches. The Germans wished Simon's visit to take place between 24 and 30 March. Von Neurath was pessimistic about a Danubian Pact or a convention on rearmament because of the continued threat posed to German security by the Soviet Union.⁴⁰ He had also taken offence at the contents of the British Defence White Paper, especially its demonising of Germany.⁴¹ The German mood had not been improved either by recent French statements on foreign affairs and rearmament. Laval had made continuous reference to German '*potentiel de guerre*' and the need for France to possess superior air defences. Phipps agreed that no agreement would be possible unless the French were prepared to be more conciliatory.

In London, the Cabinet expressed dismay at Hitler's rescheduling of Simon's visit to Berlin. The Führer was fortunate that the British government had not called off the visit altogether. But Simon was reluctant to air his views publicly on the Defence White Paper ahead of his trip to Berlin lest they should further antagonise the Germans, leaving him exposed to accusations of having a lack of backbone.

16 March⁴²

The Prussian Minister President and Reichs Air Minister, General Göring, invited us to dinner last night ...

General Göring thus resumed the series of sumptuous repasts inaugurated by the late Captain Röhm in February 1934, interrupted by the "blood-bath" of June 30th and contemptuously described by the Führer in the *Reichstag* in July as "so-called diplomatic banquets". This occasion was more auspicious,

however, for it served to introduce to the world Frau Emmy Sonnemann as the fiancé of our host.

The memory of Captain Röhm's dinner in February 1934, though tinged with red, paled in comparison with General Göring's lavish hospitality. ... Our host informed us that he was about to build a swimming bath some 50 metres long (this had also been Captain Röhm's intention, though it was frustrated, with others less innocuous, on 30th June). He explained almost apologetically to my wife that he was only marrying Frau Sonnemann [sic] at the behest of the *Führer*, who felt there were too many bachelors in high places in the Nazi party.⁴³ Meanwhile Frau Sonnemann, next to whom I had the privilege of sitting and who did the honours for her fiancé with simplicity and charm, imparted to the occasion a delicate tinge of regret by informing us of her approaching retirement from the stage.

After dinner General Göring led the French Ambassador and myself round his vast residence and showed us a series of magnificent pictures by old masters which, he told us with pride, he had requisitioned from the Kaiser Friedrich Museum.⁴⁴ The Director had, it seems, objected to this raid on public treasures of which he is the guardian, but General Göring said that he had been implacable and had threatened to take away twice as many pictures if those he had chosen were not brought round to his "palace" (*mein Palais*) next morning.

In the course of his post-prandial peregrinations our host showed us some plans for a sea-side residence that he is building for himself on a sandy tongue of land on the Baltic. It is made of wood and thatch and looks as though it might catch fire, but General Göring reassured us by declaring that the thatch (of his own brand of reeds from his own lake) had resisted his repeated efforts to set it alight. After this supreme tribute to the non-inflammability of his latest toy General Göring replied to certain questions put to him by Monsieur François-Poncet and me. [Ernst] Torgler, he declared, was having a most pleasant time, free in all but name,⁴⁵ with his wife near him. It was of course impossible to release him for in such case he would be placed in the cruel dilemma of breaking his word to the State (if he worked against it), or to the Communist party (if he did not). We gathered therefore that to spare Torgler so painful a choice he will remain in protective custody indefinitely. [Dr] Neubauer also must not expect to be set free.⁴⁶ Communism was not to be fought with kid gloves on. Finally I inquired whether General Göring had any news of Dimitroff. Far more in sorrow than in anger he replied that Dimitroff had deeply disappointed him after all his kindness to that ungrateful man. Dimitroff actually still maintained that he (General Göring) had instigated the *Reichstag* fire. After suitable expressions of pained surprise on the part of my French colleague and myself we joined the ladies.

A concert by some of the best singers from the State Opera was followed by two films of stag life on the Schorfheide; in these our host attired in his familiar leather suit reminiscent of the advertisement for Michelin motor

tyres, was “discovered”, seated in the Wotan living room of Karin Halle, with harpoon close at hand. We then experienced the strange and two-fold pleasure of hearing at one and the same time his talking and his “talky” voice expatiating again on the beauties of primeval forest life ...

An enjoyable evening was brought to a conclusion by film scenes from the Saar in which excited and lusty school children greeted Herr Baldur von Schirach to the strains of *Deutschland über Alles, über Alles in der Welt*. In the darkened room the only other sounds I could detect were those made by impatient movements of Monsieur François-Poncet’s leg.

Sargent described the dispatch on which the above entry was based as ‘admirable’ but too candid to be seen by the Cabinet as it was too reminiscent of the notorious ‘bison dispatch’ of a year earlier. However, Phipps was not asked to modify his approach.

16 March⁴⁷

The Chancellor summoned the French Ambassador and myself in succession to the *Reichskanzlei* this afternoon to inform us of his decision to *introduce conscription* in Germany and to have an army of 35 divisions.⁴⁸

I told Herr Hitler that this fresh violation of the Treaty of Versailles would cause a lamentable impression in Great Britain, particularly just before the visit of the British Ministers to Berlin.

Herr Hitler replied that he thought it was better to be frank in this matter and to make the announcement rather before than during or after the visit. Moreover he assured me solemnly that the figure quoted would never be exceeded by Germany.

In the same conversation, Hitler assured François-Poncet of his desire to negotiate with the British government, because he thought Simon more amenable than Laval. The French Minister for Foreign Affairs was only prepared to view Germany with suspicion. A priority for the German government was now to conclude an agreement where the German navy could be expanded to 35 per cent the size of the British.⁴⁹ However, through François-Poncet, Phipps heard rumours that the Polish government was becoming concerned about Hitler’s commitment to their non-aggression pact agreement concluded in January 1934.⁵⁰ The French also had plans for a programme of rearmament. Phipps became further convinced that an Eastern Pact needed to be concluded, and advised Simon to this effect. At the same time, it would be unwise to construct a military bloc unless it was clear how that alliance would react if Hitler accede to its demands, or if he refused, prompting war. It was more important than ever that Simon’s visit to Berlin took place as soon as possible. However, it should be made clear that the visit did not constitute British agreement with the reintroduction of conscription in the German army. As a prelude to the visit, steps should be taken to dispel suggestions of a rift between the British and French governments on how to handle Hitler.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the style of European diplomacy was about to change. As tensions increased, the mood among those powers concerned by the threat posed by Germany inclined towards multilateral agreements. A three-power meeting began on 11 April at Stresa, between MacDonald, Flandin and Mussolini, and was intended to demonstrate a united front against the diplomatic and military threat posed by Hitler. Balance of power diplomacy had been used before 1914 as a means of neutralising the military strength of one or more nations. That the three Stresa powers were not natural political allies provides further indication of the gravity of the situation. And it was to be political incompatibility that was to prove to be the undoing of the alliance. As soon as the Italian Abyssinian campaign began in October 1935, the Stresa Front was defunct.

21 March⁵²

The Franco-Russian storm,⁵³ combined with the announcement of three-Power meetings before and after the approaching visit of our Ministers have had a sobering effect here.

His Majesty's Government have now, I think, a unique and perhaps last chance of concluding a comprehensive European agreement and making France and Germany see reason.

Ever since October 1933 German policy has consisted in slamming doors and banging tables. Hitler spent sleepless nights, though progressively fewer, after each of his manifestations of force or ill temper. The fact that we have treated him like a civilised being and declined to imitate his pettish behaviour gives us the right to speak to him in no uncertain tones. This right, it is to be hoped, will be recognised even by England's most bleating pacifists.

Germany should realise (and it is to be hoped British opinion too) that she now stands at the parting of the ways. On the one side reasonable and honourable co-operation with an entirely peaceful Europe; on the other isolation with all its attendant risks and financial stress. These risks are greater than Germany will admit and might even imply the end of the Nazi régime. In a word she must be brought to realise that Great Britain, who has consistently fought her battles when right was on her side, will show, and will be justified in showing, inflexible determination in opposing a German policy of force combined with a refusal to join in any concrete and collective collaboration.

I feel that if things drift much longer the situation here will get out of hand and the militarist tendency will grow apace. Experience has shown that the Barthou policy of tearing up disarmament proposals to which Germany, England and Italy are favourable⁵⁴ only plays into the hands of the militarists here. A policy of isolation might conceivably overthrow the Hitler régime. On the other hand it might only arouse a fierce spirit of self-sacrifice and give a fresh impetus to militarism particularly in the air where Germany's potentialities seem to be unlimited.

If some ideas can be obtained of the minimum requirements of the French Government and if these are within reason, I feel that the prospects of the visit will be greatly improved, particularly as Hitler and German opinion are favourably impressed by our latest show of moderation and impartiality.

Sir John Simon, Mr. Eden, Lord Cranborne, and several permanent Foreign Office officials⁵⁵ arrived in Berlin on March 24th.⁵⁶ The entertainments for them included a small luncheon and an official dinner at Baron von Neurath's on March 25th, a luncheon at the Embassy on March 26th for the Chancellor and Cabinet, and a dinner and party the same night given by Herr Hitler.⁵⁷

Mr. Eden and Lord Cranborne left after the party for Moscow, and Sir John Simon returned to London the following morning.

*Phipps, Simon and Eden had conversations with Hitler and von Neurath about the Eastern Pact, the Danubian Pact and Germany's attitude towards the League of Nations. Hitler was prepared to conclude bilateral non-aggression pacts with all powers concerned in the Eastern Pact, including the Soviet Union, but rejected the concept of a mutual assistance treaty between France and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, there was no need for Germany to be party to a Danubian Pact because he had no intention of pursuing a policy of annexation of Austria. There was little point in Germany returning to the League unless guarantees were made concerning the reinstatement of German colonies. Simon made it clear that it was unlikely that the Germans would ever be satisfied on this point, so there was little point in further debate.*⁵⁸

The most significant development was proposals for talks between British and German representatives about naval matters. The venue suggested by Simon was London. Ultimately, this led to the conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement in June 1935, under which Hitler agreed to limit the size of the German navy to 35 per cent of that of Britain, with the German submarine fleet expanded to 60 per cent of British capacity. However, the agreement had disastrous consequences for the British government. Negotiated without reference to the French and Italians, it inevitably caused offence in Paris and Rome and undermined the creation of any long-term diplomatic alliance to contain Hitler.

28 March

The following is a short summary of my impressions of the visit [of Simon and Eden].

Firstly, it may be said that it is difficult, if not impossible, for any foreigner, let alone a fanatic like Hitler, to understand an Englishman. A French friend once remarked to me that when an Englishman's roof was blown away by a tornado and his baby hurled into the courtyard he described his experiences afterwards by saying: "There was quite a draught in my house." ... How in these circumstances can Hitler ever understand us? The Secretary of State

informed Hitler at the last meeting how disappointed he felt at the German attitude. Short of banging on the table I do not think he could have acted otherwise. The British Ministers never saw during their visit the tiger that undoubtedly lurks in Hitler. He was throughout charming and even seductive. He may have been coached so to show himself, but the fact of having to speak comparatively slowly for the interpreter certainly helped. At the three consecutive meals we had with him, one of them luncheon with us, he was most friendly, civilised and reasonable, but there is the other side – the tiger side – and when it shows itself, oh Weh!

The position at present is that the Germans, as a result of the fact of the visit itself, apart from what was said in its course, are “all over” us and are delighted. Göring followed me out of the room the other day at Hitler’s party⁵⁹ with almost tears in his eyes to say how touched the Germans were that the Secretary of State should have come here after all the *Trommelfeur*⁶⁰ that there had been recently. They are certainly right to be touched because the Secretary of State in particular and His Majesty’s Government in general have treated them in a civilised and courteous manner which, after all, cannot fail to impress the German people generally in our favour and to show them, and this is important, that we are and continue to be fair-minded and decent.

The position therefore is that the Germans are for the present delighted with us. It is equally certain that if we disappoint them the reaction will be correspondingly violent, with *Gott strafe England*,⁶¹ etc. I cannot therefore pretend to be an optimist, for looking round Europe I see a welter of conflicting opinions, policies and emotions opposed to which we find our dynamic Hitler, untrammelled by electoral or parliamentary considerations, who really knows what he wants and means to get it, whose will is law, so long anyhow as the Army is with him which is now certainly is, and who, by saying a word, can hurl this united and efficient people in any given direction at five minutes’ notice. Surely in these circumstances optimism would imply folly?

I hear that Hitler told Göring at the end of the first day that Sir John was a formidable antagonist, very different to the German parliamentarian, and that it was clear that his brain never ceased working during the conversations.

Hitler had gone down in Eden’s estimation. He now thought the Führer unpredictable and that his rages detracted from the conduct of meaningful negotiations. This assessment was reinforced when Phipps reported that Hitler was sceptical about rushing into a military agreement between Britain and Germany, but favoured, uncharacteristically, a multilateral pact that would include France. Suspecting that Hitler would use such an occasion as an opportunity to re-negotiate the Treaty of Locarno, Phipps suggested that the British government issue a statement affirming commitment to the treaty.⁶² Furthermore, if Hitler thought that the Locarno pact was defunct, he might try to reoccupy the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland. Phipps was certain that Hitler ultimately aimed at war.

29 March⁶³

I accepted on March 28th the invitation of Dr Göbbels to the first night of the film *Triumph des Willens* at the Ufa Palace Theatre.

This film which has been carefully prepared under the direct supervision of the *Führer*, shows some of the more salient features of the Nazi party meeting at Nuremberg last September.

The streets leading to the Ufa Palace were for about half a mile lined with S.S. guards and police, and were filled with dense crowds of people. Rows of S.S. men standing at attention were placed from the entrance to the theatre right up to the grand tier, where the *Führer*, Herr Hess, Dr. Göbbels, Baron von Neurath, General von Blomberg, and numerous Cabinet Ministers, and party leaders, as well as members of the Diplomatic Corps, took their seats ...

The film itself was most impressive, not to say alarming, and shows to what extent the idea of robot militarism has now possessed itself of the German nation and particularly the German youth. It eclipses last year's film of the Nuremberg gathering of 1933⁶⁴ (entitled *Sieg des Glaubens*), and is clearly intended to cook up German "patriotism" to fever heat. I cannot conceive any more useful propaganda calculated to bring home to the British public the true state of affairs in Germany than the showing of this film in Great Britain. In any case no educated person should fail to see it before reaching a definite opinion on Germany and her present leaders.

1 April

Over two years have now elapsed since the electorate of this country, stampeded by the *Reichstag* fire, voted for the abolition of the Parliamentary régime and the establishment of a National Socialist dictatorship.

During these two years, Adolf Hitler, without losing the loyalty of his old followers to any alarming extent, has won over the great mass of the Opposition to himself and his policy both internal and external. He has achieved this by accomplishing in the opinion of the masses not one but several miracles. In the first place, he has obtained work (or what amounts to work so far as the individual is concerned) for 3 million people. Secondly, he has torn up Part V of the Treaty of Versailles under the very noses of Germany's former enemies. And thirdly, he has, as it were, liberated Germany from the clutches of his own National Socialist gangsters who threatened at one time to make life a purgatory for all but a privileged caste. The return to more normal conditions during the last six months has indeed been so rapid and so marked that the great bulk of Hitler's one-time opponents are now, to say the least of it, reconciled to his rule if not to National Socialism. Furthermore, it is now dawning upon friends and enemies alike that a benevolent despotism has immeasurable advantages over the Parliamentary system in the case of a defeated country. Not only has it an advantage over the travesty of a parliamentary system known as the Weimar Republic but many intelligent Germans are now of opinion that it is

preferable to the French and British systems of representative government. It would certainly seem to an unprejudiced observer that a country which is anxious to free itself from the shackles of an oppressive treaty has better prospects if it is prepared to accept a restriction of individual liberty and a concentration of all powers in one hand, provided of course the hand be firm and wise. In the case of Hitler no doubt exists in the German mind that the country's choice has been fully justified by the history of the last two years ...

For years before he came into power Hitler doggedly refused to give any explanation of his mysterious programme for coping with unemployment. Why, he asked should he betray his panacea to his rivals? The mystery is now cleared up and it is evident that Hitler was well-advised to keep his secret to himself. As we now realise, his programme consists not merely of public works of the normal kind but of the very important work of rearming Germany. Today military contracts and contracts for public works are almost indistinguishable. The provision for motor roads which serve equally as military roads is a case in point. In addition the expansion of the army and air force has absorbed large masses of men from the labour market. The simplicity of many of Hitler's basic ideas savours of genius to the public mind.

In regard to the rearmament of Germany and her return to the field of international politics on an equal footing, neither the Army, the intelligentsia nor the Ministry for Foreign Affairs conceived that the time was ripe for "calling the allied bluff". Any attempt on Germany's part to challenge the Versailles Treaty would lead, they firmly believed, to intervention and possibly to the occupation of the Rhineland. Any parliamentary government in this country would have courted disaster in the *Reichstag* had it embarked on Hitler's policy of flouting the Treaty. Even in Hitler's case the adventure was not devoid of grave personal risk. There was always the chance during the early stages that the signatories of Versailles would pull themselves together and veto German rearmament by the threat of a preventive war. In that case the Hitler régime would have come to an end and Hitler and his chief supporters would have had to choose between suicide and exile. Now that Hitler has put his bold plan into execution his influence is highest in those very quarters where it was at first regarded with most suspicion, namely the *Reichswehr* Higher Command, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, permanent officialdom and responsible circles generally.

The Germans are not disposed to minimise their difficulties. But they regard Herr Hitler as a prophet and the majority expect with calm obedience that he will find the way to the promised land. He, on his side, is more convinced than ever that fate has chosen him as its instrument just as it chose Frederick the Great⁶⁵ for the regeneration of the German people. In truth, can we wonder at his conviction? His foreign policy since my arrival at Berlin has been the reverse of that of a "good European"; it has been a crescendo of violence and has hitherto failed to evoke any stronger reaction on the part of the ex-allies than some notes of platonic protest.

Having helped himself, in defiance of the Treaty, on land and in the air, Herr Hitler now suggests, with grim humour, that the British Empire may some day be grateful for the protection of the fleet that he intends to build.⁶⁶ The size of that fleet at present seems uncertain, but if Herr Hitler adheres to his intention of attaining naval parity with France he will eventually possess a fleet half the size of our own concentrated in an infinitesimal fraction of the waters over which ours is called upon to sail.

So far as I can see, only economics and finance can be expected to counter these proud plans, but economics and finance have in the past proved so elastic as to defy all expert prophecy. Stalin, on the other hand, when he pointed at "that little island" to Mr. Eden on the map, seemed to think that we alone could finally prevent the hegemony of Germany by withholding from her certain raw materials without which she would be unable to continue her present orgy of expenditure on armaments. I do not know whether this course be feasible or not. In any case let us hope that our pacifists at home may at length realise that the rapidly growing monster of German militarism will not be placated by mere cooings, but will only be restrained from recourse to its idolised "ultima ratio" by the knowledge that the Powers who desire peace are also strong enough to enforce it.

Phipps was sceptical about any form of Anglo-German military agreement, warning Simon that Hitler may try to persuade the British government to adopt an 'isolationist' policy towards Germany.⁶⁷ He held greater store in assurances given to Eden on his visit to Moscow that the Soviets posed no military threat to Europe.⁶⁸ German claims to the contrary, therefore, were merely an excuse to embark on a programme of rearmament. Since 1918, Hitler had characterised communism as the enemy of National Socialism. It was the difference in ideology that provided the real motivation for Hitler's insistence on avoiding concluding an alliance with the Soviet Union rather than by any military danger.⁶⁹

Phipps was also unsure how much the forthcoming Stresa conference would achieve.⁷⁰ If a confrontational approach was adopted by the three powers, it could do more harm than good to relations with Germany. Hitler might take the view that as he had been branded the enfant terrible of Europe, he might as well behave like one. At the heart of the problem, Phipps believed was the need to redefine Britain's attitude towards Germany. The first step was to decide if a military alliance with France could be brought into being. The air pact was a start but the omens for a wider military rapprochement were not good. If nothing more was forthcoming, the British government should act without France. But Phipps thought it unlikely that Simon would be able to negotiate an Anglo-German naval agreement while committing Britain to a full role in any decisions reached at Stresa.⁷¹ A policy containing such inherent conflicts of interest would be seen as weak.

6 April⁷²

Since 1914 when the breach of Belgian neutrality⁷³ brought down on Germany the odium of the whole world, she has felt shy of the moral and

material consequences of a treaty violation. This sentiment, which is not always appreciated abroad, accounts very largely for the efforts of the German Government to prove that the rearmament of Germany does not constitute a violation of the Treaty of Versailles, a treaty, which moreover is not considered binding since it was imposed by force. If this be so, it may be asked, will Germany cynically violate the Treaty of Locarno? The question is difficult to answer. But the possibility must always be borne in mind that Herr Hitler will pursue the same tactics as he employed in regard to the Treaty of Versailles. That is to say, he may, despite his numerous assurances of fidelity to the Treaty of Locarno, declare it to be inoperative on the ground that the other contracting parties do not intend to abide by it.

I hear, moreover, that the Army Command objects to the demilitarised zone, not only on obvious strategical grounds, but also because the population is losing military feeling, a fact which is proved by their difficulty in obtaining the proper quota of recruits from this area. In the face of the attitude of the Chancellor and the Army, the best chance of maintaining the regime of the demilitarised zone appears to lie in making it clear that His Majesty's Government intend scrupulously to carry out their obligations under Locarno and expect the other contracting parties to do the same; and that any violation of the Treaty by Germany would, in their opinion, be a violation of solemn pledges repeatedly given by the Chancellor.

The gradual dismantlement of treaties was a theme to which Phipps returned in the latter part of the dispatch on which the above entry is based. He had heard rumours that the victory in the Saar had given Hitler a taste for plebiscites. It was, Phipps believed, Hitler's intention to press for a similar vote in Austria, which would be a further violation of the Treaty of Versailles. For the time being, Hitler was stymied by the possible Italian reaction, but it was only a matter of time before he found a way to overcome this. One possibility was to instigate a pact that would deprive Schuschnigg of all foreign support in the event of overtures from Berlin. In the present climate, it was difficult to see how that would come about. Alternatively, Hitler may concentrate on working towards a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Events were to prove that Hitler would do both, but at a time when German military strength meant that international opinion was of much less consequence to him. In the meantime, despite German bellicosity, the relatively small size of the German army meant that it was unlikely that the Rhineland would be reoccupied. Nevertheless, Phipps was not entirely convinced of Hitler's commitment to the Treaty of Locarno, but was prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt.

4 April⁷⁴

I understand from a source in close touch with the Chancellor that he is perturbed (1) by the present rather cool attitude of the majority of the British

Press towards him and (2) by the Moscow communiqué and by the warmth of the reception given by Mr. Eden in Russia. He is beginning to wonder whether he was wise to have raised such questions as the return of the Colonies and his demand for a large fleet on the top of his very negative attitude on practically all of the matters at issue. He fears that by acting this he may have caused Great Britain to adopt an isolationist policy which would by no means suit his book. On the other hand, he affects to believe that he was right to be entirely frank with us.

Phipps' dispatches during the Stresa conference contained German press speculation as to its likely outcome.⁷⁵ Hitler had dismissed the conference as inconsequential and expressed dismay at British willingness to form an alliance with France and Italy while failing to secure a naval agreement with Germany. Anxious to take the diplomatic initiative, Hitler proposed a non-interference pact to protect Austria. He once again confirmed his willingness to accept an air pact, a weapons convention and an Eastern Pact prefixed by a series of bilateral agreements between all the signatory powers.

On 12 April, Phipps received a visit from von Neurath asking for a meeting with Simon.⁷⁶ The Foreign Secretary, absorbed by the business of Stresa, had little time to consider the request, believing that nothing new was likely to be offered. But he did not wish to reject the suggestion completely. Phipps attempted to ascertain whether the offer was genuine. He believed there was some desire to negotiate but that it was based on the assumption that a more favourable deal to German interests would be brokered by the British government than if Hitler had approached Flandin or Mussolini. Phipps dismissed this as rhetoric. The delegations gathered at Stresa should have realised that Hitler was rearming for war.⁷⁷

It was during this period of worsening relations between the Stresa powers and Germany that Göring's marriage to Emmy Sonnemann was celebrated.

17 April⁷⁸

General Göring invited the foreign Heads of Missions and their wives to a gala performance at the Opera on the 9th instant, on the eve of his marriage with Frau Emmy Sonnemann, whose divorce from her first husband has recently taken place.

The best seats and boxes in the Opera were, apart from a few subscribers, filled with General Göring's guests, either private or official, and the scene was a very brilliant one.

The opera given was Richard Strauss' *Ägyptische Helena* [1927]. When General Göring and his fiancée took their places in the middle of the big centre box in which the [German] Emperor and Empress used to sit for gala performances the whole audience rose and saluted them.

After the first act General Göring and Frau Sonnemann received the congratulations of their guests in the foyer of the Opera, where a copious buffet

was set up. After the performance, a torchlight procession of S.S. and S.A. men took place to the strains of military marches, and the proceedings concluded with *Deutschland über Alles* and the *Horst Wessel Lied*.⁷⁹

On the next day took place the wedding itself and a visitor to Berlin might well have thought that the monarchy had been restored and that he had stumbled upon preparations for a royal wedding. The streets were decorated; all traffic in the interior of the city was suspended; over thirty thousand members of the para-military formations lined the streets, whilst two hundred military aircraft circled the sky, and at a given moment escorted the happy couple from the Brandenburger Tor to the Cathedral. It cannot be said that the crowds, except before the Cathedral, were particularly enthusiastic or dense, but the weather was fine and all crowds enjoy a wedding.

In the morning massed bands of eight formations played outside General Göring's house. Shortly before noon he fetched his bride and drove to the Town Hall where the civil marriage took place. Herr Hitler's car headed the procession, whilst the bridal pair brought up the rear in a car decorated as though for a battle of flowers. After a short interval for a change of costume the procession set out once more, this time to the Protestant Cathedral for the religious marriage. The Diplomatic Corps, who wore morning dress, were seated in a gallery facing the altar, whilst below were gathered all that is prominent in the Nazi world, with many of the old régime as well, such as the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, Prince Auguste Wilhelm of Hohenzollern, Field-Marshal Mackensen, and many others ...

The church was a bower of roses and other white and pink flowers. A number of weeping willows had even been installed for the occasion. The pink and white marble altar was almost hidden by flowers. It was moreover floodlit, as was the brilliant gold reredos.

The Chancellor sat in an armchair at the foot of the altar steps. When the bridal pair entered he rose and kissed the bride's hand, and shook hands with General Göring – this he did again after the conclusion of the service. Four little girls in pink satin preceded the bride; two boys of the Hitler Jugend held her train; numerous bridesmaids in various discordant shades of blue followed her.

The Opera, which is under General Göring's orders, supplied some of its best singers and a great part of its orchestra to swell the volume of sound in the Cathedral and to render tribute to its master. Reichsbishop Müller, who performed the ceremony, delivered a curious address in which God, Herr Hitler and the National-Socialist movement were inextricably confused. I caught the words: "Faith, Hope and Love, and the greatest of these is Love".⁸⁰ A reception and banquet at the Kaiserhof Hotel, at which speeches were made by Herr Hitler and others, concluded the day's proceedings which had lasted since noon and had caused the traffic to be held up for about seven hours.

At Geneva, on 15 April, Simon had persuaded the League of Nations to accept the Stresa resolution. But the Foreign Secretary was disconcerted by rumours that Mussolini was planning a campaign in Abyssinia, and enlisted the assistance of Austen Chamberlain, who had known the Duce since the Locarno Conference in 1925, to help keep him on side. Simon also faced a crisis closer to home. Eden, who had always favoured using the League to contain Hitler, and who had been sceptical about the Stresa Front, disagreed with Simon's desire to court Mussolini.

Eden's argument that dealing with any fascist dictator was fraught with danger was born out by the news from Berlin. On 17 April, von Bülow, acting on instructions from Hitler, summoned Phipps to issue the British government with an official protest against Simon's speeches at Geneva. The German government had come to expect such unhelpful behaviour from the French, but not from the British. But Phipps' mood was not confrontational. The Geneva resolution dealt with the past but the door remained open for future negotiations. He advised Simon to offer assurances to Hitler that the British government had not abandoned hope for a peaceful resolution of the growing diplomatic tension in Europe. And, it had been unfortunate that the League had been used as a venue to denounce Hitler when it was a British aim to secure German return to that body. In all likelihood, the Führer would try to capitalise on this.

Phipps was right. The late spring and early summer of 1935 were dominated by British and German diplomatic posturing over what became the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. The Germans were anxious to dictate the pace of the talks. On 26 April, Phipps was summoned by von Bülow to hear that the negotiations, due to start at the beginning of May, would be postponed until the middle of the month to make way for a major statement on German foreign policy. Simon agreed to the request, but gave as his reason a potential clash with King George V's Silver Jubilee celebrations.

The Admiralty thought that Simon was stalling. Their desire to press on with the negotiations was fuelled by reports from Admiral Raeder that the Germans were expanding their submarine fleet as well as their fleet of ships. Embarrassment had been caused because this information had not been passed to the British government with the original figures detailing the proposed German expansion. With a General Election looming, this provided the MacDonald government with the clearest evidence yet that a pact concerning Germany's military capability would have public support. Phipps also urged that the negotiations begin as soon as possible to take advantage of the favourable German responses to the information from the Admiralty. The German press, he reported, viewed the debate as proof of British sincerity in wishing to conclude a naval agreement with Germany. Although he urged Simon not to be too confrontational in making the British case when the negotiations began, Phipps was far from happy about the general course of German foreign policy. In a continuation of 'The Times' article of 1 May, von Neurath had said that he was not convinced of the need for a naval pact. When challenged by Phipps, he denied the remarks.

2 May⁸¹

Baron von Neurath only returned to Berlin yesterday and suggested that I should come to see him today as we had not met since the Stresa Conference.

His Excellency began by asking me what had happened in regard to the submarine question and I gave him a fairly full account of what had passed. I pointed out that our Naval Attaché, Captain Muirhead-Gould, had been placed in an awkward position on his arrival in London owing to the omission of the German *Marineleitung*⁸² to inform him on the 12th April of the inclusion of submarines in the German naval building programme handed to him on that day. In fact Captain Muirhead-Gould had specially enquired whether any submarines were to be built, but was informed that that was not the present intention. The German official concerned had even given his personal assurance that this statement was correct. Captain Muirhead-Gould had, on arrival in London, so informed the First Lord of the Admiralty and Baron von Neurath could therefore well imagine the bad impression it had created in England when it was known that the Naval Attaché had been told by Admiral Raeder's liaison officer on April 25th that orders had been given for the construction of twelve submarines of 250 tons each.⁸³ I then informed Baron von Neurath of the explanation given by the *Marineleitung*, to the effect that the orders had been given in three parts, of which the third had not been actually issued until after Captain Muirhead-Gould's departure for London. His Excellency replied that he was very glad indeed to learn the true facts of the case and greatly deplored the behaviour of the German Naval authorities, who should certainly have included the submarines in the original list of contemplated ship construction handed to Captain Muirhead-Gould on April 12th. The excuse regarding the division of the orders into three parts was not a valid one and in such matters frankness was absolutely essential. He added that he would explain the matter to the Chancellor who, for his part, had been annoyed at the publication of the German programme in the British press, but the reason for this now seemed to be perfectly clear.

I then spoke with the utmost frankness to Baron von Neurath, setting forth the successive unpleasant surprises sprung upon us by Germany since my arrival here, namely her departure from the League of Nations, the announcement of a large air force, followed by that of an enormous conscript army and then the submarine affair, all these unpleasant surprises announced during or just before the beginning of friendly discussions. I referred to Sir John Simon's visit, undertaken despite the Chancellor's postponement and the announcement of a military air force and of conscription. I knew the certain circles in France had been anxiously wondering what Germany might have to offer our Ministers.⁸⁴ These conjectures had proved vain for, far from offering anything, the German Government had merely repeated its negative attitude regarding the East and Danube Pacts, or a limitation of armaments on any reasonable basis, and had in addition put forward

demands for a relatively very big fleet and for colonies. The disappointment Sir John Simon had expressed was therefore only too natural.

Baron von Neurath did not deny my facts but merely expressed regret that Germany had nothing to offer and could only claim what she considered to be her due. He was not a naval expert, but thought 35 per cent. of our fleet a reasonable figure as Germany must be able to keep the Baltic open. I replied that that percentage was in effect an extremely high one in view of the fact that Germany's coast-line in the North Sea and Baltic was so very short compared with the enormous extent of sea over which the British fleet was called upon to sail.

I here pointed out that Germany could make a very considerable contribution towards a general settlement by adopting a helpful attitude at the approaching Rome conference⁸⁵ next month and by agreeing to some reasonable pact there. His Excellency said that he had heard this morning from the Italian Ambassador that Germany would be invited to Rome, but the date of the conference had not yet been fixed and the agenda had not been drawn up. When he received it he must study it with great care and consider all its possibilities for it would be worse to go to Rome and then to be unable to sign a pact than to decline to go there in the first instance. He added smilingly that he still awaited some satisfactory definition of "non-interference".

Passing to the possibility of concluding a convention for the limitation of armaments, I remarked that what rendered this seemingly hopeless was the continued German insistence on referring to the astronomical figures in the Russian air force and army. No one could really be expected to believe that Russia, in her present state of fear, and with her deplorable means of communication, contemplated attacking Germany or any other Power. If discussions could be resumed leaving Russia out of account, there might still be a chance of agreement. This Baron von Neurath did not entirely rule out, but of course I have no reason to suppose that the Chancellor has in any way altered his views in the matter.

Baron von Neurath then said that just before my visit he had received that of General von Fritsch, who had told him, as proving the present state of panic existing in France, that the French now had actually got 14 divisions massed on the German frontier. This was sheer madness since Germany did not dream of attacking France.

Reverting to the subject of a convention for the limitation of armaments, His Excellency said that Germany now had only 20 divisions altogether and that even they were not all fully armed. The figure of 36 divisions was a maximum only to be reached in two or three years' time. In reply to a question of mine he said that the German Government would be ready to reduce the maximum *pro rata* that other Powers reduced their present figures. I again objected to Russia being always dragged in whenever questions of effectives or air forces were discussed, and Baron von Neurath replied that, without

any consideration of Russia, the armies of France and Italy alone were sufficiently formidable.

Baron von Neurath then argued that negotiations should proceed at once over the air pact, the conclusion of which would do so much to pacify a distracted and frightened Europe. I pointed out that it would be essential to reach some parallel agreement limiting the numbers of the respective European air forces and to this His Excellency did not demur. He pointed out that it was only fair to remember, in attempting to assess the relative air strengths, that Germany counted most of her military aircraft as "first-line" aeroplanes, whereas Great Britain, he believed, counted the majority of hers as only "reserve" aircraft. He admitted, however, that he was not an expert in these matters and as I also have no pretensions in this respect we desisted from a further discussion of figures regarding which even the greatest experts seem to differ. I did point out, however, that in assessing strength it was important to remember how many obsolete machines the French air force possessed, whereas Germany's were all brand-new and up-to-date. His Excellency rejoined that the life of a military aeroplane was only approximately of two years duration and that therefore in less than two years from now Germany would have no advantage in this respect.

Baron von Neurath then turned to the Geneva resolution.⁸⁶ He said that he had, after that resolution had been passed, immediately joined the Chancellor at Munich and had had five most disagreeable and agitated hours with him there. He had at length persuaded the Chancellor not to take any sudden and violent decision but it must be admitted that the resolution, coming close after Herr Hitler's helpful reply to the question put to him from Stresa in regard to the Eastern Pact, had been a great blow to him. I here remarked that I could not understand Germany's violent reaction to the passage of the Geneva resolution or her affirmation that it was another case of discrimination against her. Put into homely language, the resolution in effect meant that Germany had on March 16th⁸⁷ murdered her grandmother; in doing so she had been guilty of a most reprehensible act for which, however, no sanctions were to be imposed; in future, on the other hand, anybody else who stole a penny bun would receive the appropriate punishment. Where was the discrimination against Germany? Baron von Neurath laughed and said that the Geneva resolution had failed to point out, as it should have done, the extenuating circumstance that the grandmother was a wicked and cruel old woman who had tortured her grandchild.

His Excellency informed me that the present arrangement is that Herr Hitler will make a declaration in the *Reichstag* on foreign policy on May 15th.⁸⁸ He had wished to do this on May 8th but Baron von Neurath had persuaded him to postpone it until after the Silver Jubilee celebrations. I said that I hoped that this did not imply that the declaration was going to be a disagreeable one but His Excellency reassured me on this point. Our conversation was throughout most friendly and His Excellency agreed that every

effort must be made to reach some satisfactory solution of the various points at issue.

Conversations between Phipps and Göring in early May were dominated by German wishes to reassure the British government of the peaceful agenda behind German foreign policy. Phipps took advantage of the warming of diplomatic relations to educate him about British views about the military threat from the Soviet Union. Göring accepted that Soviet land forces did not pose a danger, but the principal concern was the size of the Soviet air force. Phipps advised that it would be impossible to conclude a western air pact if the Soviet Union had to be taken into account. Göring claimed that if the British government were to offer Germany assurances of assistance in the event of a Soviet air attack, his government would be prepared to reduce the size of the German air force. Phipps thought this acceptable. The reduction in the size of the Luftwaffe would have to be seen to be under-way before the British government would entertain such an idea. Referring to Baldwin's Commons' speech of November 1934, Phipps thought the onus continued to be on Hitler to prove his peaceful intentions.

But Phipps accepted that Hitler's task was not easy. Attempts by François-Poncet to convince Hitler that the pact was not aimed against Germany had fallen on deaf ears. The history of Franco-German relations since 1918 had been one of mutual mistrust. Phipps believed that the French were not doing enough to break this cycle. The British government also still had a long way to go to convince the Führer of a willingness to negotiate an armaments agreement irrespective of French participation. The Stresa conference had proved that Britain's first loyalty was to France.

15 May⁸⁹

Herr von Papen and Herr von Ribbentrop⁹⁰ called on me successively yesterday afternoon.

Herr von Papen bewailed his fate at Vienna, filled with good intentions towards Austria as he was, but unable, owing to Austrian unhelpfulness, to carry them out. He does not believe that Germany will be able to sign a Danubian pact in the form that will be suggested by France and Italy. He declares the proposal to allow the Austrian Government itself to decide what constitutes "non-interference" to be quite unacceptable. He says that the only States willing to sign a mutual assistance pact with Austria are Italy and Czechoslovakia and that the Austrian Government would not dare to sign with such partners only, for fear of being swept out of existence.

Herr von Papen then deplored the Franco-Russian pact and tried, without success, to convince me of his genuine fear of Russia. He declared that Great Britain's part in world affairs was of vital importance and would probably be decisive. He seems anxious about the growth of anti-Catholicism in Germany amongst the extremists, despite recent assurances given to him by the Führer.

Herr von Ribbentrop called, soon after Herr von Papen's departure, to deliver a message regarding the postponement of the Chancellor's Reichstag declaration.⁹¹ We then had some conversation on current affairs.

Herr von Ribbentrop also referred to the importance of Great Britain's attitude towards the big questions at issue and to the influence she could bring to bear on others "less reasonable than herself".

He sought to justify what I described as Germany's recent bombshells by declaring them to be merely quite natural steps away from the hated and impossible Treaty of Versailles. (His language recalled rather ominously that used by the *Börsen Zeitung* yesterday when it advocated the tearing up of the whole Treaty.) He expressed the opinion, which I contested, that the Franco-Soviet pact rendered Locarno valueless from the German point of view.

I used practically the same arguments to both my successive visitors. I reproached Germany for not taking advantage of the presence at the Quai d'Orsay⁹² of so reasonable and well-disposed a man as Monsieur Laval.⁹³ Germany, far from facilitating his already difficult task of a Franco-German *rapprochement*, had gone out of her way to render his task impossible. Despite all this, however, I knew from my French colleague that Monsieur Laval was still hopeful and desirous of bringing about more friendly relations between the two countries and of inducing Germany to take her proper place in the ring of collective security. I reminded them of Monsieur Laval's lengthy, and seemingly successful, efforts to render the Franco-Soviet pact as anodyne as possible. I pointed out that its conclusion in its present form should be regarded as the natural sequel to the reply given to our enquiry from Stresa, and that the next step might reasonably be the expansion of this pact into a multilateral one of non-aggression and consultation.

I also reminded both Herr von Papen and Herr von Ribbentrop of the public appeals lately addressed to Herr Hitler by Sir John Simon, the Prime Minister and Lord Stanhope to make proposals for a constructive and concrete nature.⁹⁴ The world in general, and Great Britain in particular, awaited his speech with deep interest, not to say anxiety.

Herr von Papen promised that he could convey my remarks to the Chancellor, whom he is to see more than once during the next few days. It is at first always a relief to talk to Herr von Papen after months of intercourse with such as Göring whose mentality is of the schoolboy-gangster order. But agreeable, civilised and man of the world though he is, insincerity oozes from Herr von Papen like water from a sponge.

As for Herr von Ribbentrop, few things depress me more than a conversation with him on subjects other than the weather. He emits a woolly feeling of resistance without consistence, and imposes an unfair strain on the temper. ... From what he said, however, and from his manner I fear we must not nurture many hopes in regard to Herr Hitler's declaration of May 21st.

Phipps' sense of foreboding was partly caused by reports of a conversation between the British Military Attaché in Berlin, Andrew Thorne, and von Reichenau in which

the latter had spoken of the expansion of the German population eastwards towards the Soviet Union. It was possible that a rapprochement could be made with Stalin on this matter, but this was unlikely. If war were to break out, Phipps now feared that it might result from a clash between the Soviet Union and Germany.

Simon, however, continued to think that the greatest threat to Europe peace lay in a rift between Germany and France. After Hitler's speech of 21 May, the Foreign Secretary sent Phipps a series of questions about its contents. What would constitute evidence that Germany had achieved parity with other nations in military capability? Was Hitler's undertaking that Germany would respect all areas of the Treaty of Versailles still in force? Was the negotiation of non-aggression pacts to start immediately? Lastly, what schemes were there to limit the German air arm to parity with other nations? Simon was mindful of the firmness with which Hitler had made British recognition of the 35 per cent relationship a condition of negotiation. His instinct was to reject a rigid negotiating position, but Simon came under pressure from his Cabinet colleagues to tie Germany down to a precise figure. Phipps agreed with the Cabinet view. This way, it would be easier to prove breach of agreement. Nothing else would contain Hitler.

*23 May*⁹⁵

I cannot after all help feeling a certain relief that Herr Hitler has now bound himself definitely to a navy limited to 35% of ours. He had mentioned this figure to too many people and it had been quoted too often in the Press and elsewhere for it to be in the least likely that he would capitulate in this respect. Moreover Herr Hitler told our Ministers on March 26th that he "did not see any heavenly or earthly authority who could force Germany to recognise the superiority of the French or Italian fleets." He has now publicly recognised that the German fleet will be 15% below the total tonnage of the French fleet, so I think that not only we but the French and Italians should feel thankful for small mercies, and that we should not miss opportunities in the naval sphere, like we have done on land and in the air, owing to French shortsightedness. It would therefore be advisable for His Majesty's Government to place on official record their acceptance of the Chancellor's offer.

Phipps was also optimistic that a multilateral agreement on air armaments would soon be forthcoming. If the Anglo-German naval negotiations proved successful, it might persuade the French of German trustworthiness. His reports of articles about Britain in the German press seemed to confirm growing good will. Even the speech made by Baldwin on 27 May, on the eve of the annual conference of Conservative women's organisations, in which he defended the British programme of rearmament, was favourably received.⁹⁶ The speech emphasised the importance to Britain of good relations with France. It demonstrated a parity of thought between Britain and Germany as Hitler also placed great store on a good relationship with the French.

There were other reasons for not viewing the German press reports as mere rhetoric. On 28 May, von Hoesch presented Simon with plans for an air pact

between the Locarno powers. Despite his desire to play a part in resolving the growing international tension in Europe, Simon was reluctant to pursue the proposal without consultation with the French and Italians. A plan affecting all of the Locarno powers but which was only sent to the British government for comment could appear divisive. Simon's caution was well founded. During the same conversation, von Hoesch also presented him with a copy of the recent Franco-Soviet rapprochement. Hitler, the ambassador stated, did not think that that agreement and the Treaty of Locarno were compatible. Therefore as Simon prepared for Sir Samuel Hoare to replace him at the Foreign Office, it was clear that despite all the protestations of friendship from Berlin, the German negotiating position had not changed.

Hitler's speech of 21 May prompted Simon to draft a memorandum outlining British attitudes to German foreign policy based on the answers to the questions he had asked Phipps. Both men thought the Führer's speech ambiguous, and so the document was never completed. Phipps wanted Simon to attach the most favourable interpretation possible to the speech. He sent German newspaper articles that suggested that whatever happened, Hitler would always recognise Britain's naval superiority. But Phipps' task was not aided by Hitler issuing two decrees in early June fixing the duration of military service and transferring some of the powers of the Ministers of War and Interior to himself.

The change of government in Britain was not good timing. Furthermore, the natural interests of the new Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, did not lie in foreign affairs. However, Baldwin's solution to the growing complexity of the role of Foreign Secretary was visionary. While Hoare was to replace Simon at the Foreign Office, Eden, who had considerable experience of dealing with the European situation, was to head a new ministry devoted to Britain's relationship with the League of Nations and to ways of giving the League teeth when faced with breaches of international law.⁹⁷ Baldwin was anxious that the transition between Simon and his successor at the Foreign Office be as seamless as possible. On 10 June, Baldwin made a radio broadcast outlining his view of Britain's role in European affairs. Phipps reported that Hitler had been gratified to hear that the British government intended to promote disarmament and collective security. A new League ministry under Eden was also to be welcomed as long as its purpose was not to bully Germany into returning to Geneva. The British government should realise that it was possible for a country to be committed to the cause of peace while not being a member of the League.

12 June⁹⁸

Despite Herr Hitler's White Paper hoarseness and the successive announcements of the existence of a German military Air Force and Germany's return to universal conscription, the postponed visit of Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden to Berlin finally took place as arranged.

The visit was probably necessary from the point of view of British public opinion which began to wonder why British visits to Rome and Paris, together with constant meetings at Geneva, should not be followed up by a

heart to heart talk between responsible British and German statesmen. Our public opinion was perhaps right and the visit certainly produced a good psychological effect. It removed from Germany any excuse for maintaining her attitude of hurt feelings, which, combined with raucous Teutonic cries, table-banging and treaty breakings, was truly hard to bear. Indeed my chief fear was lest the visit should produce too good an effect, with all the danger of subsequent violent reaction. At first the Chancellor did in fact attach exaggerated hopes to its eventual results. He had never encountered before two such civilised and courteous adversaries as Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden. Their mere presence in Berlin after the pettish White Paper postponement was a lesson in manners. But it was only some time after their departure that he realised that listening to his claims did not necessarily imply the granting of them.

And then, after a couple of weeks or so, came Stresa and the long hoped for and altogether desirable Anglo-Franco-Italian front. This constituted the high-water mark in the affairs of the Powers whose hope it is to contain Germany. But, as a result of Ethiopian tension, these refreshing waters soon receded and now we can only regretfully look up at the distant white line.

It is curious that, whereas the blame pronounced at Stresa by the three Great Powers was salutary and caused the Germans furiously to think, that pronounced a few days later at Geneva⁹⁹ merely caused them furiously to vociferate. Stresa made Hitler scratch his head, Geneva made him lose it, and Germany as a whole followed suit. This attitude is illogical, it is regrettable, but it is a fact. It can perhaps partly be explained by German hatred of and contempt for the League. Blame from three strong adversaries, of whom two at least have shown a reasonable understanding for the German case, is one thing. Blame from the institution containing Bolsheviks, Czechs and Latvians, not to mention other racially impure weaklings, is quite another, and was unbearable for the fair Nordic man, and seemed, moreover, in his blue eyes, to be the height of hypocrisy. I hear that Herr Hitler, directly he heard of the Geneva resolution, summoned Baron von Neurath by telephone to Munich and raved at him for five hours without stopping to eat or drink. General Göring and Dr. Göbbels urged the Chancellor to double the Air Force at the earliest possible moment. Baron von Neurath and Father Time, working together, finally took the edge off all this sound and fury, and then, after some beneficial delay, came the Chancellor's speech which now confronts us ...

It would be easy to make a list of instances when Herr Hitler broke faith in the past. By rummaging Herr Hitler's actions or writings in his past of greater freedom and less responsibility we can doubtless find events and tendencies alike disquieting. To conclude therefrom that no faith can be attached to his signature in the future would condemn us to a policy of sterility.

His Majesty's Government may decide that it is now undesirable to conclude any convention with this country; they may prefer to maintain their

liberty of action. If, however, they feel that advantage should be taken of the presence of M. Laval at the head of the French Government and of his notorious desire to come to some reasonable understanding with Germany, I earnestly hope that they will not allow themselves to be deterred by the mere contemplation of Herr Hitler's past misdeeds or breaches of faith. After all, he now leads nearly seventy million of industrious, efficient and courageous, not to say pugnacious, people. He is, like most men, an amalgam, and he may, like many men, have evolved since the old, somewhat gangster-like days at Munich. His signature once given will bind his people like no other could. It need not bind Great Britain to any state of undue weakness: it need not blind her to the undoubted dangers lying ahead. And if the worst befall, and Hitler decide to break his freely-given, solemn pledge, surely our battleground would be all the firmer from having put him to the test?

Phipps' private mood was much less positive. On 15 June, three days before the signature of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, he described the German situation as dangerous and expressed concern at continuing German rearmament. In the long-term, it was unlikely that Germany would adhere to an armaments agreement. Alternative strategies needed to be developed to contain the German threat as well as through use of international treaties.

This was also Laval's opinion. While Eden was dispatched to Paris to persuade him to lend his support to the agreement, Phipps sent a list of reports charting German reactions.¹⁰⁰ The consensus of opinion in Berlin was that the naval agreement was a major diplomatic breakthrough in the German search for equality of rights. While excluding the possibility of Anglo-German naval rivalry, the Nazi government had acknowledged Britain's status as a global naval power with which Germany could not compete. In return, the British had undertaken to recognise the complexity of Germany's diplomatic position, with a military and ideological enemy in the east and a mistrustful neighbour in the west.

Hoare thought the latter point an overstatement of the British position and was anxious to place the initiative on Hitler to implement plans for the 'air Locarno' that he had outlined in his speech on 21 May. Pressure was brought to bear on von Ribbentrop, as he prepared to leave London, that Hitler should move swiftly onto the next stage of negotiations. The Führer's reply, given to Phipps on 20 June, expressed renewed enthusiasm for a multilateral air pact and contained a promise that he would defend it against its German critics. But as ever, the message was mixed. Hitler hoped that this statement of goodwill might result in a reciprocal gesture from the British government in the form of an announcement that the Franco-Soviet agreement was a breach of the Treaty of Locarno. Phipps' advice was to ignore this. It was part of the same game of diplomatic blackmail that included sending a dispatch to Paris claiming that the negotiation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement had been so successful that the British and German governments intended to extend it to cover air power. Furthermore, intelligence from the new British Military Attaché in Berlin, Elliott Hotblack, suggested that Hitler was much

less confident of Germany's military and diplomatic position. The naval agreement with Britain was important to the Führer because it offered a basis for preventing what he feared most, a war on two fronts. If a general rapprochement could be reached with Britain and extended to France, that would neutralise the threat in the west, leaving the Soviet Union to be dealt with at a later date. But Hitler was concerned that the French intended to use the League of Nations as a means of keeping Germany in check. The composition of the Council of the League was now such that it was almost impossible for Germany to find an ally in Eastern Europe. This had been the position for some time and despite Hitler's efforts, showed no sign of changing. It was from a desire to alter the status quo that Phipps reported on 22 June that the German government wanted to postpone the negotiation of a multi-lateral air pact until sufficient assurances of support had been reached from France and Italy. The agreement of Laval and Mussolini had been very slow in forthcoming because neither was taken into the confidence of the British and German governments during the negotiation of the naval pact. This resulted in the creation of an unlikely bond between Laval and the Duce that produced a joint statement on 15 June reaffirming their commitment to the Stresa resolutions.

24 June¹⁰¹

... M. François-Poncet tells me that M. Laval is still determined to pursue his efforts throughout the summer towards reaching a better understanding with Germany, but within a system of collective security. M. Laval would not be allowed by French public or parliamentary opinion to conclude any kind of separate arrangement with Herr Hitler, nor, indeed, would M. Laval himself dream of attempting this. He feels, however, that he must make the most of the French parliamentary recess to push on his negotiations as far as possible before the Chamber of Deputies meets again about the middle of October, when anything may happen.

M. Laval, it seems, has some hope that Germany will eventually consent to join the East Pact on the lines suggested in the question put to her at Stresa. He feels, however, that it is essential to show all possible consideration for Soviet susceptibilities in replying to the German memorandum on the relations between the Franco-Soviet pact and the Treaty of Locarno.¹⁰²

I called today upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs and upon Herr von Bülow to take leave of them before proceeding tonight to England. From my conversations with them I gathered as follows:

(1) Eastern Pact¹⁰³

Baron von Neurath told me that the German Government could not answer the French note of 3rd June¹⁰⁴ before receiving the replies of the Locarno Powers to the German memorandum regarding the effects of the Franco-Soviet Pact on the Treaty of Locarno. His Excellency remarked that it was impossible to exaggerate the importance of those replies. Any indication that the full force

of Locarno had been in the slightest degree impaired by that Pact would not only prevent Germany from contemplating a possible adherence to an Eastern Pact of Non-Aggression, but would oblige her to reconsider her own position in regard to Locarno. I enquired whether, if those replies were satisfactory, Baron von Neurath could hold out good hopes for the Eastern Pact, and he replied in the affirmative. He indicated, however, that it would be necessary for Lithuania to mend her ways, and not to allow herself to be egged on, as at present, against Germany by Russia. He objects strongly to the numerous Memelland naturalisations of Lithuanian citizens, carried out lately with a view to the elections in September. He also urges that Czechoslovakia should not proceed any further with her flirtation with Russia, whereby Germany risks encirclement.¹⁰⁵ His Excellency said that he had had a talk recently with the Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs,¹⁰⁶ who had expressed the readiness of Estonia to enter into a multilateral non-aggression pact, provided Germany and Poland were parties, in view of the protection it would afford her against Russian aggression.

Baron von Neurath admitted that the Chancellor's speech had not made very pleasant reading for the Russians, but it has merely indicated the difference in *Weltanschauung*¹⁰⁷ that existed between Germany and Russia, it did not in any way imply the intention of the former to attack the latter, and it should not be taken too tragically.

Herr von Bülow, always more outspoken than his master, told me when I saw him later on, that he would keep the French note of June 3rd in his drawer until the replies of the Locarno Powers were received. If those replies were satisfactory, it might be possible to begin considering the numerous technical difficulties in the way of an Eastern Pact, and how it could be brought into harmony with the already existing, vast net-work of pacts converging on Moscow, Berlin and Warsaw respectively.

(2) Air Pact

Baron von Neurath said that the German Government did not contemplate giving their draft to the other Locarno Powers, with whom they had had no detailed conversations on this subject. The German Representatives in the capitals concerned, however, possessed copies of the German draft, and could answer any questions that might be put to them.

Herr von Bülow explained that the Germans were not particularly enamoured of their own draft, which had been drawn up when it had been suggested that the Air Pact, the limitation of air-forces, and the prohibition of bombing behind the lines should all be in separate instruments. The idea now seemed to be to include them in one only. The German Government had not particular preference, except that they would deprecate holding up the Air-Pact itself if the technical difficulties of the other questions should prove to necessitate really inordinate delay.

(3) Danube Pact

Baron von Neurath smilingly remarked that this was a sleeping dog that he preferred to let lie. Both he and Herr von Bülow think that Signor Mussolini

himself feels the difficulties in connection with this pact are at present practically insuperable and that it is postponed *sine die*.

(4) Limitation of armaments and effectives on land

Baron von Neurath repeated the oft-stated readiness of the German Government to abstain from amounting to the *plafond* announced on March 16th, viz., 36 divisions of 550,000 men, provided the other Powers make corresponding reductions in the effectives they had on that date. Again, however, he expressed scepticism as to the possibility of reaching such an agreement and again he remarked that it would be preferable, anyhow as a first step, to aim as a qualitative limitation by abandoning the heaviest tanks, guns, etc.

(5) Return of Germany to the League

As neither Baron von Neurath nor Herr von Bülow referred to this, I felt that in my turn I had better let this particular dog lie. In any case he sleeps at the end of a long and muddy lane, and when he wakes will presumably open his mouth very wide indeed for Colonies and other dainty morsels. Until we see clearly what Italy's intentions are in regard to Geneva¹⁰⁸ it would seem better to avoid this subject.

Baron von Neurath and Herr von Bülow admitted satisfaction at the conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement.

Hoare endeavoured to persuade the French to participate in the negotiation of an 'air Locarno'. Eden was asked to lead the negotiations.¹⁰⁹ Any suggestions made by Laval should be filtered through the Foreign Office before being made known in Berlin. This would ensure that only constructive suggestions were made to Hitler. The increasing tension concerning Mussolini and the future of Abyssinia also influenced Foreign Office thinking about fascist dictators. If the Duce's African ambitions could not be contained, was there any possibility that Hitler could be restrained, especially as German military capability was greater than that of Italy? What would be the consequences if they joined forces against Britain and France? It was unlikely that League sanctions would repel such an attack. It was with these questions in mind that Eden was asked to ensure that the negotiations with Laval included all recent suggestions for multilateral agreements aimed at diffusing the German threat. Laval, who now combined the role with that of Prime Minister, should know that the British government would be prepared to arbitrate between the interested parties in both an Eastern and Danubian pact. Eden left for Paris on 30 July.¹¹⁰ However, his conversations with Laval were rapidly overshadowed by the Frenchman's concerns about Mussolini. Eden thus left the French capital with nothing new, except a resolve to bring the full weight of the League to bear in resolving the Abyssinian crisis.

A significant feature of British diplomatic tactics regarding the 'air Locarno' was that Hoare's preferred method of bringing this about mirrored that favoured by Hitler for the conclusion of an Eastern Pact. The signatory powers would sign bilateral agreements with each other and come together to conclude an umbrella treaty in which general principles governing the appropriate use of air capability would be agreed. This tactic of playing the Führer at his own diplomatic game marked a departure from the

multilateralism usually favoured by Simon.¹¹¹ Unfortunately, it was not to be a tactic that worked well, as the disastrous Hoare-Laval Pact of December 1935 was to show.

Eden was anxious to assure Laval that the British government had concluded the Anglo-German Naval Agreement in the interests of European peace, and not through a desire to draw closer to the Germans. Through Newton, he also attempted to persuade Hitler to take a more favourable view of the Franco-Soviet treaty. Failure to do so would bring into question German desires to move the European diplomatic agenda forward. On 5 July, Hoare took a step that Simon had been reluctant to take. He told von Hoesch that as far as the British government was concerned there was nothing inconsistent between the Franco-Soviet treaty and the Treaty of Locarno. There was therefore nothing to prevent the conclusion of an Eastern Pact. But Hoare's decisiveness did not bring about a change of heart in Berlin. Von Bülow described Germany's relationship with Poland as satisfactory that further thought needed to be given to containing the threat posed by the Soviet Union. Newton's conclusion was similar to that of Phipps – that the linking of the Eastern Pact and the Franco-Soviet treaty did not have any intellectual foundation in the mind of the Führer. German prevarication was simply a ploy to buy time to secure concessions on areas of real interest to Germany, such as relations with the Soviet Union.

On 11 July, Hoare made a speech in the Commons. He appealed to Hitler to build on the success of the Anglo-German naval negotiations by promoting the conclusion of Eastern and Danubian pacts, which in turn would give greater impulse to an air pact.¹¹² But Hitler thought that Germany had made enough gestures of goodwill to the British and French since the end of the First World War Allies, without being required to take the initiative on the air pact. Undeterred, Hoare pressed on, spending much of July seeking the support of the Belgian, French and Italian governments. On 23 July Hoare saw von Hoesch in the hope of soliciting a reply from Hitler to his Commons appeal. Hoare argued that what the British and German governments wanted could not be achieved unless the air pact was concluded. Furthermore, if the idea of an Eastern Pact was now defunct, why should it continue to stand in the way of a multilateral air pact?

The Foreign Secretary's task, as he saw it, was to 'stir waters that were becoming hopelessly stagnant. ...'¹¹³ However, further conversations with von Hoesch in early August showed that the gulf between the British and German negotiating positions was broadening. Hitler returned to his argument that the Franco-Soviet agreement was in breach of the Treaty of Locarno and that an Eastern Pact existed only to force Germany to sign a non-aggression treaty with the Soviet Union. Hoare understood this to mean that Hitler no longer wanted to sign a multilateral pact and would only consider bilateral pacts with countries that bordered Germany. This was unacceptable. The original undertaking given by von Neurath to Phipps on 13 April 1935 was that the German government would sign a collective security pact with all interested parties, not just neighbouring states. Hoare was certain that Laval would not agree to anything less.

On 5 August, Newton saw von Bülow to put the British position to him. Hoare's instructions had been that the Eastern Pact should be concluded along the lines set out by Simon during his visit to Berlin in March – a series of bilateral agreements under the umbrella of a broader treaty. The German response however, continued to revolve around French motives for signing a treaty of non-aggression with the Soviet Union. Hoare failed to understand why Hitler could not see how a general non-aggression pact in Eastern Europe would promote anything other than peace in the region. The British government was doing all in its power to persuade the German and French of the merits of this argument but came up against unreasonable demands on each occasion.

In London, Hoare was increasingly occupied with the Abyssinian crisis.¹¹⁴ Hoare was confident that he would be able to persuade Mussolini not to go to war. He hoped that Eden's offer, made during his visit to Rome in June 1935, of providing Abyssinia with an outlet to the sea by ceding a tract of British Somaliland in return from Abyssinian concessions to Italian demands might placate the Duce.¹¹⁵ Although approved by the Cabinet, the plan was opposed by the House of Commons and left Hoare exposed to accusations of making concessions to dictators. In this climate, the Eden initiative failed; a situation not aided by Mussolini's insistence that Italy had a right to annex Abyssinia and by Laval's failure to decide whether to support or condemn either the British or the Italian position. Hoare's reputation as Foreign Secretary is linked with the debacle surrounding his attempt, along with Laval, to bring an end to the Italo-Abyssinian war, the diplomatic tactics he employed in the period leading up to the outbreak of hostilities showed him to be a man of insight and determination. Phipps, who frequently complained that the arguments made by British foreign secretaries lacked real force, was impressed by Hoare's League speech. Diplomatically, for once, the British government was leading rather than following events.

18 September¹¹⁶

The following may be taken as an authentic account of Hitler's reactions in the Abyssinian affair.

He is at no pains to conceal his *Schadenfreude*. Indeed, *Schadenfreude* is felt throughout official circles more and more as the plot develops. But this is tempered with extreme caution and Hitler's instructions are that neutrality and reserve are to be shown in the press and in diplomatic conversations. Though his sympathies are with his brother dictator on the merits of the case he has never forgiven Mussolini for his sabre-rattling on the Brenner¹¹⁷ last year in connexion with the Dollfuss murder which compelled him (Hitler) to climb down. The reference in his last *Reichstag* speech to the international press treating German friendship as an object at the disposal of every statesman who feels a need to reach out his hand for it was meant as a snub to the Duce in reply to Signor Gayda's hints that Abyssinia might bring about an Italo-German *rapprochement*.

Before leaving for Nuremberg¹¹⁸ Hitler discussed the situation briefly and remarked in conclusion that Germany had nothing to lose and probably something to gain from a quarrel in which three of the participants (the League, France and Italy) were Germany's enemies, while the fourth (England) was a doubtful neutral. The quarrel could only end in an armed clash or the permanent estrangement of two if not more of the quartet. Furthermore it was a welcome diversion during this stage of "German reconstruction" (of the air force and army). As for sanctions the Chancellor thought that Germany might profit materially by the occasion if Geneva adopted economic measures.¹¹⁹ The question should be studied attentively.

He was a little mystified by the attitudes of the participants, as reported by his diplomatic missions. Paris and Geneva, it seems, reported that the attempt to mobilise the League against Italy was merely a general rehearsal in case the League should ever be called upon to deal with Germany as an aggressor.¹²⁰ The German Embassy in London, on the other hand, reports cynically that the British attitude is prompted by internal electoral considerations, and by the intention to open an early campaign for rearmament.¹²¹ Rome reports that Mussolini is at the mercy of circumstances over which he has no control. His plans have been elaborated to a point whence he cannot withdraw and his boats may be considered as burnt. He cannot retire gracefully like a parliamentary government. Defeat in his case means disgrace. Ever since the cessation of Italian emigration to North and South America¹²² his thoughts have been turned to Abyssinia as an outlet for his ever growing population, and the intervention of the League so late in the day came as an unpleasant surprise ...

To resume, Hitler is chuckling (and arming) on his fence, where he means to stay as long as possible. In the event of an Anglo-Italian conflict he will only come down, armed to the teeth, at the time he considers the most favourable for Germany, and the price of his friendship or even of his neutrality will be a heavy one.

The anti-Bolshevik outbursts by Hitler, Göbbels and Göring at the Nuremberg rally were provoked by the speeches delivered during the Comintern Convention at Moscow.¹²³ The text of those speeches, as reported to Hitler, surpassed in violence any previous Russian attacks on Germany ...

The attendance at Nuremberg of Herr von Bülow and all the higher officials of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was due to the Chancellor's feeling that they required to be impressed by this display of party pomp and power; their attitude towards Nazidom is too cold and fish-like to please the party.

Three days later, however, Phipps reported that German Schadenfreude was little more than bravado. Hitler was actually concerned that if the Abyssinian crisis did lead to war, it may engulf the whole of Europe. And Germany was not prepared for war. Phipps encouraged Hoare not to take these remarks seriously. The Führer was

jealous that Mussolini was now seen as the enfante terrible of Europe. Attempts by Hitler to take the moral high ground over Mussolini's actions should not be seen as evidence of a change of heart.

25 September

I fancy Schacht is anxious to obtain a credit or loan from the Bank of England. Any credit of Schacht, whatever its ostensible purpose, would in effect mean that we were helping Germany to rearm. The coming winter will be uncomfortable, to say the least, for the Germans in regard to food supplies, etc. Why should we help them over these difficulties and thus enable them to devote further funds to provide themselves with shells, ammunition, tanks, etc.?

Schacht is very honeyed when he wants funds from us and inclined to be vinegary when he has got them. I prefer him in the permanently honeyed state.

26 September

From all accounts the last party meeting at Nuremberg was a great personal success for the Führer. ... It seems he hit exactly the right note with the German women, the Hitler Youth, the Labour Front, etc. The women he considers especially important for he thinks that it was primarily owing to their complaints that the German resistance weakened at the end of the war.

Complaints are of course rife at the rising cost of living, but this has not yet attained such proportions as to be really serious, and the party machine grinds on.

Although Phipps was convinced that Hitler posed the greater long-term threat to European peace, he did not underestimate Mussolini's capacity to undermine the efforts of the British and French to prevent war. It was the Duce's intention to control the whole of north-east Africa, including Egypt and the Suez Canal. Hoare's instincts were to continue to exercise pressure on the Italians, while Eden favoured a more confrontational approach.¹²⁴ Hoare's view eventually prevailed, primarily because it was unclear whether Britain possessed sufficient military capability to defend territory that was of vital importance to British interests in the Asia. American military aid was vital to the British cause.

2 October

I learn from good sources that, in the event of economic sanctions, Hitler will probably await the decision of the United States before taking any decision himself.

On the general question he is still undecided. While anxious on the one hand to draw Italy's teeth and enable his Austrian followers to set up a

government in Vienna, he is apprehensive lest the defeat of Fascism might recoil on his own position ...

To sum up, the *Führer* does not want the *Duce* to be squashed too easily and is not quite sure whether he wants him defeated, at any rate before a couple of years. The success of a League policy of sanctions would be most distasteful, and he might elect to help the Italians economically in order to thwart it.

5 October

The German Press and public opinion, such as it is, remain convinced that the Abyssinian conflict is a purely Anglo-Italian one. I had Paul Scheffer, the editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt* to tea the other day and did my best to correct this erroneous impression. Scheffer is that white blackbird, a *fin* German, but his mind is too subtle and complicated and full of brackets, question marks and hypotheses. However, he tells me that we shall see more and more as time goes on that anti-British propaganda will take the line that Great Britain purposely waited to declare herself clearly until Mussolini was so heavily engaged that he could not draw back without his régime toppling over. I of course scouted this Machiavellian theory, but Scheffer declares it will often be aired, so it might be worth watching at Geneva and elsewhere. Scheffer has gone back to Geneva for the opening of the [League] Council meeting.

It seems that the Wilhelmstrasse is expecting any moment a *démarche* by me enquiring as to Germany's attitude in regard to economic sanctions. This shows how general the idea is that this is an Italo-British conflict. Nothing one can say seems to shake this belief. The Wilhelmstrasse admit that they do not know what line Hitler will take in this matter; but they confirm that he will probably take his cue from the United States of America.

Two English visitors have been here for some days. We have done our best to dispel some of their happy illusions. For instance, they firmly believed that if Italy were frustrated as a result of "sanctions" it would make Germany a good little boy in the future. The fact is, of course, that the Germans consider that one German equals at least ten Italians, and they know that Germany is not a vulnerable peninsula conveniently lying under the guns of Sir William Fisher.¹²⁵

Hitler still sits on his fence. He will perhaps enjoy some discomfiture of Mussolini, but he will not welcome the complete collapse of the latter: such things are catching.

8 October¹²⁶

General von Blomberg lunched with us today and I had some conversation with him afterwards.

He said that what Mussolini felt especially bitterly was the fact that all Communist and extreme Socialist elements throughout the world were banded against him;¹²⁷ this made it peculiarly difficult for him to extricate

himself from his present position. General von Blomberg deplored this anti-Fascist wave, although he remarked that the mobilisation on the Brenner had been a childish and quite unnecessary proceeding. He added that Mussolini complained that he had not been sufficiently warned regarding the real feelings of H.M. Government or of the British public.

I replied that public opinion in Great Britain was unanimous in condemning the attack on Abyssinia, but the reason was, apart from the extreme left, anti-aggressor and anti-war, not anti-Fascism. As for insufficient warning, Mussolini had been solemnly and repeatedly warned from February onwards both in London and in Rome.

General von Blomberg thinks that Italy has undertaken a task beyond her powers, and that the very large number of troops that she has thrown into East Africa may prove fatal for her, owing to the possibility of terrible and widespread epidemics amongst them. He remarked, however, that Mussolini's real excuse was the vital need for expansion, and that applied to Germany as well as to Italy. If Germany were not allowed to expand the "kettle would some day burst". He recalled Sir Samuel Hoare's words at Geneva regarding raw materials,¹²⁸ but said that was not enough. Germany must have colonies again. I reminded my guest how little raw material Germany had drawn from her colonies before the war, and how few colonists, apart from officials, she has sent there. The reply of the Minister for War was that Germany had not been sufficiently long in possession of those colonies to be able to develop them to the full: it was, moreover, intolerable for her to be considered unworthy to possess them now.

General von Blomberg repeated, as he usually does when we meet, that the Chancellor's one wish is to cultivate friendly relations with Great Britain. Moreover, I would remember that that was what he advocated in *Mein Kampf*. I agreed, but pointing to the French Ambassador, who was in earnest conversation in another room with Herr von Ribbentrop, I observed that the French never forgot the violent hatred of France contained in that work. General von Blomberg replied that *Mein Kampf* was written in 1923 [*sic*], in very different circumstances to the present; but new editions appeared, I observed, and its sale continued. The reply was that Herr Hitler could not alter it by a series of postscripts or sequels. He therefore allowed its sale to continue, as showing his innermost thoughts at the time. His present thoughts would shortly appear in a volume containing a selection of his recent speeches, and these were full of genuine offers of reconciliation with France, but they had hitherto fallen on deaf ears. The last French note to Great Britain,¹²⁹ for instance, was not agreeable reading for Germany, as it was so evidently directed against that Power.

It will be noticed how convenient, and indeed soothing, a text-book *Mein Kampf* has become; its bellicosity and fanaticism faded away with the autumn roses of 1923, and only such sweet reason as it may have expounded is to remain to us as a joy for ever.

Meanwhile, as I heard afterwards from the French Ambassador, he and Herr von Ribbentrop were reproaching one another for the German-Polish Agreement of 1934 and the Franco-Soviet Pact of 1935 respectively. Herr von Ribbentrop told Monsieur François-Poncet that the French should never have allied themselves to a Communist and Asiatic Power, to which my French colleague replied that Russia had evolved since Peter the Great,¹³⁰ she was as much European as Asiatic, and the French pact with her was merely the reply to the unfortunate German-Polish Agreement, which, concluded in an atmosphere of undue secrecy, had sown suspicion and distrust throughout Europe.

On 9 October, the British Cabinet gave final approval to the adoption of sanctions against Mussolini. Phipps reported that Hitler was contemplating limiting the sale of arms to Italy but had not yet taken a final decision on the matter. The Italians were mistrusted in Berlin because of their lack of military discipline and because of their betrayal in 1915 of the Triple Alliance.¹³¹ The absence of an ethical foundation to Italian foreign policy, Hitler believed, left Mussolini justly open to international condemnation over Abyssinia. At the same time, there was little to trust about British policy towards the crisis. Eden's desire to push ahead with League condemnation of Mussolini so soon after Stresa suggested that the British government was not a loyal ally and was searching for a reason to rearm.¹³²

Throughout October, the divisions between Hoare and Eden increased. Hoare thought Eden too forthright and was anxious to scotch rumours about British desires to bring down Mussolini and of an intention to declare war on Italy. Although Laval had expressed the need for a unanimous rejection of the invasion of Abyssinia by members of the League, Hoare wished to be guided instead by the Treaty of Locarno. The Foreign Secretary faced difficult questions at Geneva about whether that treaty was still in force, given the withdrawal of Germany from the League. Under Article 17 of the Covenant, the articles relating to the Locarno treaty could be applied to disputes where one of the parties was no longer a member of the League. Phipps was also asked to remind Hitler of this point.¹³³ Hoare weathered the storm, and on 18 October, the League of Nations, led by Britain and France, decided to impose sanctions on Italy. But his instincts lay in finding an alternative solution to the crisis. To this end, he embarked on a process of negotiation with Laval that resulted in the politically disastrous Hoare-Laval Pact signed two months later, that was to wreck his career as Foreign Secretary.

30 October

I hear that that part of General Göring's recent speech dealing with religion is pure eye-wash for internal and external use. General Göring, it seems, some time ago declared to his friends that it would take about twenty years to wipe out two thousand years of Christianity ... and all that.

If General Göring now affects to renounce Wotan and all his works it would be interesting to learn whether he has removed the latter's effigy from

his shooting box on the Schorfheide and whether he has replaced it by that of some better authenticated deity.

I believe that whereas all leading Nazis, including Hitler, agree in hating and despising Christianity, which after all is the antithesis of Nazi doctrine, they differ strongly as to the best method of destroying it.

In this particular instance, General Göring's personal antipathy to Herr Rosenberg must moreover not be left out of account.

7 November¹³⁴

I learn from a reliable source that Hitler expects the Italian adventure to end badly, chiefly because of the military difficulties ahead of Mussolini. His military advisers tell him that the conquest of Abyssinia would require half a million German troops.¹³⁵

There is a divergence of view between Herr von Ribbentrop's Department and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Herr von Ribbentrop would indulge without delay in a mild flirtation with the Italians, with an eye to a subsequent compromise between Germany, Austria and Italy.

The Ministry on the other hand strongly favour neutrality. Though Herr von Bülow will have nothing to do with the "Versailles" League of Nations he will not oppose the British doctrine of collective security. Germany's neutrality must not involve her in any breach with England.

Hitler himself remains undecided as before ...

According to the latest memorandum drawn up on the basis of information available at the *Reichskanzlei*, American businessmen are ignoring the President's wishes, and continuing to trade generally with Italy. Opinion outside the women's clubs is not favourable to the League or to the British attitude. When the British press adopts a tone of high moral rectitude American opinion always gets restive. Some British newspapers are oozing too much unction, and the Church of England is too militant. Thoughtful Americans are asking why England has wrested the leadership of the League from France. It is altruism, arising out of sated imperialism or pure expediency, or a combination of both? The report adds that Father Coughlin, the Radio lecturer, is loading the scales against the League and in favour of Italy.

The focus of the international community on Italian rather than German foreign policy gave Phipps the opportunity to offer a more detailed examination of the domestic impact of the Nazi revolution. The Nuremberg laws on citizenship and race, brought into effect two months earlier, marked the start of a three-month process during which Hitler sought to define the legal status of Jews.¹³⁶ They deprived Jews of German citizenship and led to an escalation of violence against Jewish property. When accounts of anti-semitic attacks reached the international press, a mass boycott of Germany was urged. Most damaging would have been a trade embargo, but, as Phipps was also aware, the Nazi regime's desire to court the

approval of the world by staging the Winter Olympic Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the summer Games in Berlin, would also be jeopardised.

11 November

The difficulty of giving effect to the Nuremberg resolutions regarding the status of Jews continues to give Hitler sleepless nights.

Kügler's memorandum emphasised the unfortunate results to Germany of an attempt to enforce the resolutions by legislation. Among other things it pointed out the danger of an international boycott of the Olympic Games.

It is this argument which most impressed Hitler, who hopes to utilise the Games for world-wide propaganda. A boycott would be disastrous financially now that the German preparations are so far advanced and would be a severe blow to Hitler's prestige.

The memorandum also emphasised the heavy loss in "Devisen" should the Jews in the Saar avail themselves of existing International agreements and leave the country taking 50,000 marks per head, as they are entitled to do.

The German Government have officially denied Kügler's arrest. He was not arrested in the literal English sense but he was much more effectively arrested in that the Secret Police gave him orders to stay indoors. No sane German would ignore such an order.

Phipps was mindful of Hoare's concerns about Laval's unwillingness to extend the Anglo-French air pact. The Abyssinian crisis had revealed the League's inability to deal with an act of aggression. If efforts to diffuse international tension by peaceful means failed, it was essential that Britain be ready for war. German militarism was not simply directed at dismantling the Treaty of Versailles but, through Nazi doctrine, was becoming a way of life for the civilian population. There was much to commend this social and economic revolution, but it was with the bellicose image of Germany that the rest of the world was most familiar. Levels of German armaments were too low for war to be waged at present, but the economic and social apparatus was in place for that figure to be achieved in the fullness of time. It only remained to be ascertained where Germany would strike first, either by reclaiming German colonies or an expansion through Eastern Europe. But Phipps paid little attention to recent statistics that suggested that the German economy had slowed down by the autumn of 1935 leading, potentially, to the Nazi regime's most severe social and economic crisis since coming to power.¹³⁷ Hitler was receiving regular reports from local party officials about the possibility of food shortages leading to civil unrest. The Nazi dream of economic self-sufficiency with full employment therefore appeared to be some way off.

13 November¹³⁸

It is clear that the salient features of German social, economic and political life is the reconstruction of the armed forces. It is difficult to drive along any

road in this country without seeing striking evidence of the truth of this statement. On every side giant military establishments are springing up there are few towns of any importance where barracks or military schools are not being built, some of them still far from completion. Enormous aerodromes either finished or under construction march, sometimes for miles, with the main road. The armed S.S. entries at the gate of many factories and the high barbed wire fence surrounding them proclaim their military character. The streets of provincial towns are gay with uniforms; military cars and lorries painted in camouflage colours mix with civilian traffic. In the air the ceaseless hum of aeroplanes bears witness to the expansion of the German air force.

In every German circle military service is a staple subject of conversation. Friends and relations are being called up for short courses or, in the case of young men, for their regular period of service. The relative merits of the respective arms or of garrison towns are eagerly canvassed. The press plays its part in stimulating public enthusiasm. The departure of recruits for their new units is written up. Photographs of smiling soldiers in the barrack rooms advertising the jollity of the military life. Articles describe the material prosperity which has descended on the garrison towns; farmers, cobblers, barbers, butchers and tradesmen of every kind gleefully welcome the incoming troops. Bands play on the market square, and military displays are organised for the grateful townsmen. The armed forces and their creator, Herr Hitler, are the heroes of the day.

Germans complain that English public men, in particular Mr. Winston Churchill,¹³⁹ are apt to concentrate their attention exclusively on German rearmament. They never, it is said, refer to the social achievements of the German Government, to the reduction of unemployment, for example, or to the improvement in labour conditions or to the work of the *Kraft durch Freude*¹⁴⁰ organisation. To depict the German Government as engaged solely in rearmament shows a lack of balance and sense of proportion. The error, if error it be, is one of which the Nazi leaders are almost equally guilty. Since March of this year the members of the Government have not ceased to exploit to the full the enthusiasm of the people for their new toy. Relatively little has been heard of social policy; the trump card has always been the crowning mercy of German rearmament. At Nuremberg and Bückeberg the army topped the bill. In the admonitions of Dr. Göbbels on the food shortage, in General Göring's recent speeches at Breslau and Saarbrücken¹⁴¹ and in the press the nation is urged to endure all for the sake of rearmament. You cannot have butter and an army, says Dr. Göbbels; be grateful that the Government have made the decision for you and given you the army.

It is not disputed even by Government spokesmen that rearmament will require serious sacrifice on the part of the population. There is no published budget and it is impossible to make a reliable estimate of military expenditure. A foreign military attaché, who occupies a somewhat special position here, states that the barracks for the German army and air force this year

were estimated to cost two milliard *Reichsmarks* (one hundred millions sterling at par). This sum, he says, has already been exceeded, apparently as a result of the cost of the new Air Ministry with its two thousand five hundred rooms. The *Daily Telegraph* correspondent has received information from what he believes to be a good source to the effect that the military estimates, exclusive of capital expenditure on buildings, etc., amounted this year to two and a half milliard *Reichsmarks* (one hundred and twenty five millions sterling at par). The Naval Attaché [Muirhead-Gould] calculates the cost of new construction for this year on the basis of the normal programme at two hundred million *Reichsmarks* (ten millions sterling at par). This programme does not represent even half the total required to bring the German fleet up to full strength under the London agreement, even supposing that England builds no new ships. In addition there is the normal "Recurring Expenditure" to be met. In 1934 the vote for this item was one hundred and thirty million *Reichsmarks*. There are now more ships and more personnel and it would be surprising if this sum had not been doubled. Finally there is the air force. Here it is impossible even to hazard an estimate. All that can be said with certainty is that the air force is large and that money, material, and indeed human life, are being prodigally spent. The army complain of General Göring's extravagance and the air force openly demand a special standard of comfort in view of the dangerous character of their peace-time occupations.

Except that battles are not being fought, Germany may be said without exaggeration to be living in a state of war. Everything is subordinated to the needs of the defence forces. The government controls the distribution of raw materials and the output of the factories. The military chiefs are in complete control of the armed forces; there is no parliamentary or civilian interference. A high degree of secrecy is still preserved. To quote the words of the liaison officer at the War Ministry, officers may not enter the houses of foreign diplomatists except by special permission, which in principle is not granted. The American Service Attachés now ring up the War or Air Ministries to ask if so and so can come to lunch or dinner before they approach the officer in question. The discussion of military matters is prohibited. It is high treason to impart information even of a nature not considered in the least confidential abroad. The death penalty is inflicted for the betrayal of official secrets; it is also inflicted on Communists and may be inflicted on all who obstruct "the work of national regeneration". The political police is powerful, numerous and as well supplied with funds as secret services usually are in wartime.

It is not surprising that in these conditions discontent caused by the food shortage and the rise in prices cannot be articulate. Perhaps the most discouraging feature of the position is the fact that, so far as I can ascertain, the populace are prepared to make considerable sacrifices to rebuild the army. The army citizen remarks ruefully that so long as Germany fulfilled the stipulations of the treaty [of Versailles] she got nothing but kicks and cuffs. No

sooner had she taken matters into her own hands than Berlin began to enjoy the visits of foreign statesmen. References to Germany today by European political leaders are respectful and guarded. In a word there is general agreement with General Göring that the sacrifice of a quarter of a pound of butter in order to recover the "national honour" is not only good sentiment but good business. How long the docility of the country will continue depends on too many unascertainable facts. During the war German opinion withstood the strain for at least two years longer than foreign observers expected. But even then the Government was hampered by the latitude given to the parliamentary parties and later to persons more or less openly promoting disaffection. Dr. Scheffer, discussing this very point with a member of my staff, remarked that with the present government in power Germany would never have been driven into surrender. Herr Hitler made a somewhat similar observation during his conversations with Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden. At Munich on November 9th last Herr Hitler said in his speech¹⁴² that in 1914 the outbreak of war involved no difficult decision on the part of the individual in Germany; on the contrary it involved the decision to march out, "to the infinite joy of millions". If war were to break out today, I have little doubt that the order to march would be received with infinite joy again. In any event if public resentment at the present state of affairs were to increase and if the Nazi party were to fail in its task of maintaining internal peace, the Army, for whom the nation is tightening its belt, would see to it that there was no effective interference in the execution of its plans.

That military expansion will be followed by territorial expansion goes without saying, though Germans in private conversation often say it. The question asked is where and not whether Germany should expand. Dr. Schacht, ostensibly reasonable and moderate as ever, confines himself, for the present at any rate, to demanding that Great Britain and France should present Germany with Togoland and the Cameroons,¹⁴³ in order that he may be able to buy raw material with Marks instead of Devisen. He deigns to recognise (always for the present) that there might be difficulties in the way of a return of "South West [Africa]" or of Tanganyika.¹⁴⁴ General von Reichenau, however, and other military authorities advocate expansion in the East of Europe, with a transfer of populations. General von Blomberg told me last month that if Germany were not allowed to expand "the kettle would some day burst."

All Germans agree in considering any attempt, whether by the League of Nations or by general pacts of "collective security", to stabilise the status quo and to prevent Germany's expansion as highly reprehensible and indeed immoral. Such attempts, they hold, can only end in war and in a war waged by Germany at any rate in the most righteous of causes.

It will be seen that the present Ethiopian imbroglio is mere child's play compared to the problem that will in some not very distant future confront His Majesty's Government.

The consensus of opinion in the Foreign Office was that Hitler would be unwilling to accept the return of Germany's colonies in return for an assurance not to expand into Eastern Europe. The German economy and military were too strong. Nevertheless, war with Germany in the near future was not likely, although there may be a show of military strength followed by a demand for treaty revision. But, as Vansittart noted, the situation could change very rapidly. In a petulant note to Hoare, he pointed out how he and Phipps had been warning of the dangers posed by Germany 'for years' and yet British preparations for war were still in their infancy.

On 19 November, Phipps had had a conversation with François-Poncet about the Franco-Soviet alliance.¹⁴⁵ The French ambassador had been anxious to emphasise Laval's desire to reach a rapprochement with Germany as well as with the Soviet Union. Laval would welcome any German proposal to resume negotiations about collective security on the basis of the London declaration of February 1935. Phipps also believed that it was important for Britain and France to present a united front against Germany. There was still some way to go, but progress had to be made fast. German military calculations were usually based on estimates of French capability that were far in excess of reality. Figures from Muirhead-Gould suggested that the Germans intended an expansion to a force of 1,500 first line planes, that is, approximately that of Britain after the latest round of expansion was complete. Phipps thought that a further expansion of 2,000 should be reckoned on in the near future. Once that stage had been reached, it was unlikely that the Germans would agree to a reduction. Therefore it was important that an air pact be concluded in the near future, while it was still possible to do so.¹⁴⁶

21 November¹⁴⁷

The following is a summary of the impressions of [François-Poncet]:-

French public opinion had been completely nonplussed by what it considered to be the sudden "conversion" of Great Britain to the Covenant after years of fruitless French efforts to bring it about, after the recent British condonation of German treaty violations by the hurried conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, and after repeated British exhortations to France to make friends with Italy.¹⁴⁸ It was strongly felt in Paris, moreover, that British methods had been too imperious, not to say brutal. France had, so to speak, been kept plunged in an icy pool by Great Britain, who for years had declined even to contemplate sanctions, and was then expected suddenly and without due preparation to express intense pleasure at her rapid transfer into a bath of boiling water. When the French Press howled with rage at this treatment Great Britain was shocked and angry. Nor was this surprising in view of certain French articles, such as the monstrous one by Béraud in *Gringoire*,¹⁴⁹ though perhaps ridicule rather than anger should have been roused by so grotesque a production.

All this, however, belonged to the unfortunate past. Now all sensible French people realised how essential it was for France to adhere to the Covenant in close co-operation with Great Britain. The two countries had had, and doubtless would again have, differences of opinion as to methods. In essentials they were of one mind: that is to say, in all things that made life worth living, in their conception of liberty, of freedom of thought and speech and living and belief.

The French internal situation could be described as follows, though it was of course liable to sudden change through some incident such as the recent conflict at Limoges.¹⁵⁰

The Socialist-Radicals in general and M. Herriot in particular would like M. Laval to remain in office till the next elections so that he and not they might bear the odium of enforcing the necessary but unpopular measures for the balancing of the budget, etc. Should they take office now they realised that they would be confronted with the painful choice between enforcing those measures themselves or causing the currency to collapse by failing to do so. Meanwhile, however, they would, cat-like, watch M. Laval, keep his nose to the Russian grindstone and try to prevent any attempt at a *rap-prochement* with Germany.

M. Laval was fully aware of Socialist-Radical intentions towards himself, and was disinclined to wait for his slow strangulation to be completed next spring after months of humiliating inaction. He was determined to die, if die he must, fighting for the following programme of pacification:-

- (a) Ratification of the Franco-Soviet Agreement, (from which he had carefully extracted all anti-German sting) without, however, letting both his hands be tied. The free hand is to be extended to Germany in a final effort to bring that Power into the collective circle.
- (b) Close collaboration with Great Britain in pursuing a League of Nations policy towards the Italo-Abyssinian conflict.
- (c) Continuation of his strenuous efforts to bring about peace in East Africa, with a view afterwards to re-establishing cordial relations between Italy and the Western Powers.

If M. Laval fell, M. Herriot would doubtless be his successor and would doubtless follow a very pro-British policy, but it would likewise be very pro-Soviet. It would involve undue and unfortunate Soviet influence on French policy and affairs. It would be anti-Mussolini, but it would also be anti-Hitler. In fact it would be the reverse of that policy of collective security and collaboration which M. Laval, and, he believed, His Majesty's Government, desired to pursue. It would result in Germany being left to chew, first in solitude, and then perhaps in company with Italy, the bitter cud of suspicion and revenge.

The present moment was perhaps favourable, and perhaps it was the last opportunity, for making a serious attempt to bring back Germany into the collective fold, not yet at Geneva indeed, but somewhere else and by some other method, anyhow in the first instance. Germany was by no means happy either internally or externally just now. She saw the sanctions screw being applied to Italy, and felt it to be a kind of general rehearsal for what would some day be applied to her. She saw "those damned English" at last going the whole hog for the hitherto rather neglected Covenant. She saw the United States sympathetic, surprisingly sympathetic, to the fifty covenanters,¹⁵¹ and finally she felt Poland slowly cooling off. Only Italy showed signs of wishing to make up to sanctions-free Germany; but Italy was disliked, despised and distrusted here. Surely now was a good time to have another try with Hitler?

The basis on which all this edifice must rest, however was the closest possible Anglo-French understanding and collaboration. French friendship would offer no attraction to Hitler if he felt there was a rift between the two Western Powers. Indeed, he would, if only he could separate them, probably proceed quickly to overrun and fortify the demilitarised zone.

I do not altogether disagree with the above description of German uneasiness, though I cannot feel much confidence that that uneasiness will generate sufficient reason to render a satisfactory and comprehensive arrangement likely. I agree, however, that the attempt should be made without undue delay.

Only on 16th November Baron von Neurath remarked to me in the course of conversation that the German Government would welcome, now that our elections were over, a resumption of the air-pact negotiations. He felt great scepticism, however, in regard to the possibility of reaching any agreement on land armaments. In this connection he expressed satisfaction at the National Government's big victory,¹⁵² and regret that no equally strong Government showed any sign of emerging in France. Public opinion in that country, he thought, would welcome an understanding with Germany, but no French Government was ever strong enough to venture the attempt ...

German enthusiasm for the resumption of air pact negotiations was, however, short-lived. On 22 November, Hitler summoned Phipps and François-Poncet to express concern about a potential war between Britain and Italy over the imposition of economic sanctions.¹⁵³ Only when the threat of war had been removed could negotiations proceed. Once again, the Führer was anxious to portray Germany's former enemies as the largest threat to European peace. The French were not much better, seeking an alliance with the Soviet Union, a power that sought to engulf Europe in bolshevik revolution. Phipps thought this simply rhetoric. On 25 November, Hoare produced a memorandum for the Cabinet on German rearmament.¹⁵⁴ He concluded that Hitler might not wait until the completion of a programme of rearmament before demanding satisfaction in other areas of controversy concerning the Treaty of Versailles. The British government should recognise that war could come sooner rather than later.

27 November¹⁵⁵

The following is a very brief resumé of the situation as I see it from here:-

- (a) German rearmament This of course is proceeding fast and furiously but despite speed and fury it cannot, I think, be concluded before another two or three years, anyhow sufficiently to enable Germany to act as an aggressor.
- (b) German expansion (i) This can be divided roughly into two categories, i.e., Schacht and Co., who desire colonial expansion for industrial purposes with perhaps a certain amount of prestige thrown in, and the army who dream of expansion in the East. (ii) I fear that any satisfaction, partial or even entire, of the desire for colonial expansion will not necessarily prevent subsequent efforts for expansion in the East. It would therefore, it seems to me, be useless and unwise to offer back on a silver platter any of her former colonies to Germany. This should be held in reserve as a possible contribution by a generous Great Britain towards a really satisfactory comprehensive arrangement with Germany.
- (c) League of Nations This in a way is the crux of the whole question. If the League can be entirely overhauled and, as the Secretary of State said, made "elastic",¹⁵⁶ and if Germany can be given influence in it not less considerable than that of France or England, she would certainly be tempted back and the situation would be greatly eased. At present she believes, and is confirmed in that belief by the League's policy over Abyssinia, that the present League is merely an instrument for maintaining the *status quo*.
- (d) British rearmament This is of course a vital matter entirely out of my competence, but it seems to me clear that here at any rate speed is essential, for after all the burglars are arming, and the butler of the commodious, not to say luxurious, English country house must clearly provide himself and the staff with proper blunderbusses.
- (e) Russia We can take it for granted that for the present there is no danger of a return to Rapallo.¹⁵⁷ Hitler and his Nazis have made Russophobia a cardinal principle of their policy. The army may have hankerings after Rapallo, but both Hitler and the army desire an understanding with Great Britain, and they will not go back to Rapallo until they see that an understanding with us is out of the question.¹⁵⁸

Hitler feared that economic sanctions may be used against Germany in the same way as they had been used against Italy. As suggested earlier, his diplomatic response was one of dismay at being branded an aggressor like Mussolini and had led him to re-rehearse his rhetoric about economic autarky. These points are alluded to again here, but as the down-turn in the German economy continued, the Führer was also aware that an international commercial embargo would have

had disastrous consequences for Germany. The effect was to increase his resolve to make Germany an economically self-sufficient state as soon as possible to make sure that German foreign policy aspirations were not stifled by a lack of resources.

The importance of adequate oil reserves to waging a successful military campaign had been brought to the Führer's attention by recent Anglo-French diplomacy.¹⁵⁹ On 18 November, the British and French had imposed 'soft' sanctions against Italy, so named because they did not include an embargo on oil – a vital commodity to the military and to the working of an industrial state. By the end of November, it was becoming clear that Mussolini's activities were not being curtailed, resulting in debates in London and Paris about the imposition of further sanctions or the use of other tactics. On 29 November, Eden, Simon and Neville Chamberlain met to discuss the imposition of oil sanctions.¹⁶⁰ The consensus was that an oil embargo would only be pursued if the French agreed to it and offered military support to Britain in the event of the outbreak of war. To this end, Hoare was dispatched to Paris on 2 December.

30 November¹⁶¹

In addition to extra consumption and to purchases made by the Anglo-Persian Co.¹⁶² for use in Germany, it is quite possible that Germany is laying in reserve stocks of petrol for her own use.

The Chancellor admitted to the French Ambassador at their recent interview that the lesson he meant to learn from the League policy of sanctions was to make Germany as independent of them as possible.

Meanwhile I hear on excellent authority that the order has been given to certain leader writers of the German Press to come down gradually rather more on the Italian side. This was the policy advocated by Herr von Ribbentrop.

The new Italian Ambassador here has, ever since his arrival, been making superhuman efforts to curry favour with the Germans, and these efforts are doubtless beginning to bear fruit. The Chancellor, however, has not yet forgiven Mussolini for the latter's mobilisation on the Brenner last year, and in private conversation he strongly condemns Mussolini's folly in embarking upon the Abyssinian adventure, and maintains that if he (Hitler) had been consulted he would have strongly discountenanced it.

The above-mentioned order does not, moreover, imply that the Chancellor has in any way modified his principal aim which is to reach an Anglo-German understanding.

On 2 December, the Cabinet met for the last time before Hoare left for Paris to discuss the Abyssinian crisis with Laval. The debate was dominated by reports from the Committee of Imperial Defence about the threat to British interests in the Far East should the Royal Navy be forced to concentrate operations in the Mediterranean. In

addition, it was suggested that Hoare explore ways of securing an assurance of French military assistance in the event of war. He need only consult the Cabinet during his discussions with Laval if no settlement appeared to be forthcoming.¹⁶³ Hoare's instinct was to avoid the imposition of oil sanctions if possible, believing that they might provoke Mussolini to declare war on Britain and France. Much was expected from Hoare's conversations with Laval. But the Foreign Secretary was not a natural statesman. Indeed, the next entry reveals that Hoare's awkwardness on the international stage was also apparent to the German government.

3 December

I lunched with Dr. Schacht yesterday and we had some conversation afterwards.

Dr. Schacht expressed sympathy for Mussolini's expansionist aims although he did not actually defend his methods of attaining them. On the other hand he condemned the "egotistical" attitude of Great Britain. I replied that if Dr. Schacht ascribed Great Britain's attitude in the Abyssinian affair to egotism he was making a grave mistake: it was due not to egotism but to the very opposite, i.e., idealism, hatred of war and a practically unanimous determination on the part of the British people to try to render war impossible in the future, or at least unprofitable for the aggressor.

Dr. Schacht said that it was not only towards Italy that Great Britain has displayed egotism, but also towards Germany, who absolutely needed colonies in order to have a chance of overcoming her economic difficulties and of leading the decent life to which she was entitled. I reminded my host, as I had General von Blomberg, how little raw material Germany had drawn from her colonies before the war and how few colonists, apart from officials she had sent there. Dr. Schacht replied, as the Minister for War had done, that Germany had not been sufficiently long in possession of her colonies to be able to develop them to the full. This, Dr. Schacht added, she would under the present régime be able to do, and it would, moreover, be of great value to her to be able to send overseas a number of her Nazi extremists in order there to work off their superabundant energy.

I indicated that I was of course speaking in a purely personal and private capacity and enquired what were, in Dr. Schacht's considered opinion, the minimum colonial requirements that would be of real practical assistance to Germany. I pointed out that the whole question literally bristled with difficulties, that the more reasonable Germany's demands the better chance there was of their being taken into consideration, and I therefore urged that it would be a mistake to ask for the moon. Dr. Schacht replied that he never liked making minimum demands (this is only too true), he preferred maximum ones, and in fact would like to ask for the moon. To this I retorted that I feared in that event he would be as unsuccessful as the babies who frequently asked for that pallid planet but had hitherto been unable to obtain it. In subsequent conversation, however, it transpired that

Dr. Schacht had chiefly in mind the Cameroons, for this was the only name he mentioned, and he declared emphatically that if they could be returned to Germany he would be able to extract from them the 70% of the German requirements of fats, etc., which he was now obliged to import from abroad, to the great injury of his *devisen* position. Then, siren-like, he indicated that colonies would only be for Germany's guarantees for her future good behaviour, as Great Britain would always be able in case of need to take them away again.

Dr. Schacht admitted that the Führer had originally not favoured any demands for a return of the colonies, and I expressed regret that he had thought it necessary to convert Herr Hitler. Dr. Schacht did not deny this, but took credit for having converted the Chancellor in the still more important matter of German expansion towards the East. He had, he declared, pointed out the folly of any such idea. Any lands in that direction, viz., Poland, Russia, etc., into which Germany might be tempted to expand, were already thickly inhabited. It was therefore towards the colonies and not the East that German efforts for expansion must be directed.

Dr. Schacht said that unless Germany's wishes in this matter could be met, either grave internal troubles brought about by communism or a war would result. Upon my expressing profound scepticism as to the likelihood of any serious outbreak of communism in Germany, Dr. Schacht shook his head solemnly and declared that if I could read the German secret reports I should see that that danger was a very real one; but not in certain industrial regions as I suggested, but much more generally than it was possible to imagine.

It is always easier to whet the German appetite than to satisfy it. I am therefore doubtful whether any recognition of Germany's colonial claims would cause her to relinquish ideas of expansion in the East so dear to the hearts of the *Reichswehr*. Presumably, however, such recognition would only be granted in return for certain definite undertakings of good behaviour on the part of Germany.

Meanwhile Dr. Schacht's "conversion" of the Führer seems to be spreading, for the French Ambassador was button-holed on the subject by the Minister of the Interior and by Herr Hess on December 2nd. Dr. Frick and Herr Hess, however, opened their mouths even wider than Dr. Schacht, and declared that the return of German East Africa¹⁶⁴ would be welcome and eminently desirable.

At the close of our conversations I told Dr. Schacht that I had followed with sympathy and interest his efforts on behalf of the Jews.¹⁶⁵ Dr. Schacht spoke to me with surprising frankness. He said that he had only a few days ago again attacked the Führer on the subject, urging how essential it was that no separate action or persecution of the Jews should be indulged in outside the recent legislation [the Nuremberg Laws]. Herr Hitler had given him assurances in this respect and he therefore hoped, though evidently without much conviction, that such action would cease. Dr. Schacht pointed out to me that, apart from the fact that anti-Semitism was a cardinal principle of

Herr Hitler's policy, it was practically impossible for him to enforce moderation on all his subordinates. For instance, he knew for a fact that a certain Gauleiter who had recently been admonished by Herr Hitler in the sense of moderation had told their subordinates that they felt certain, despite the Führer's orders, that they would be interpreting his true wishes if they contained their persecution of the Jews.

Another person present somewhat naïvely enquired whether Herr von Ribbentrop did not give good advice to the Chancellor in this matter, but Dr. Schacht naturally scouted the idea, declaring that Herr von Ribbentrop never told the Führer anything that was not agreeable hearing or was not flattering. With his usual modesty Dr. Schacht added: "I am the only man in Germany today who dares to tell the Führer the truth on any subject. The result is I have countless enemies and the Führer himself, I know dismisses many of my warnings with the remark that I am a hopeless old Liberal."

I need hardly add that Dr. Schacht's solicitude for the Jews is inspired solely by financial and economic considerations in which humanitarianism plays no part.

During his conversation with François-Poncet on 2 December, Hitler had announced that the time was not yet right for discussion of arms limitation. Phipps, however, saw little reason for delay, especially regarding an agreement over air power. Hoare concurred and urged him to make representations to Hitler as soon as possible. Any war that might result between Britain and Italy from which Germany might profit was not going to take place. The sooner Hitler accepted this, the better the chances of a successful diplomatic resolution of the tensions between Britain, France, Germany and Italy.¹⁶⁶ To this end, if Hitler was disposed to resume negotiations, he should realise that no progress could be made if French demands for a link between an air pact and other bilateral disarmament agreements continued to be ignored in Berlin. Hoare realised that the diplomatic situation had moved on since the proposed air pact had been first discussed. Hitler was anxious to play off the close relationship between Hoare and Laval by seeking a closer relationship with Mussolini. The Duce's policies could work to Germany's advantage without the commitment being made of German assistance to the war with Abyssinia. Furthermore, German willingness to bring an errant power to the negotiating table would provide clear evidence of Germany's desire for peace. But the moment at which this process could begin would have to be chosen with care. Phipps thought that the plan would probably work because he suspected that the Italians were already prepared to discuss naval armaments. These could be extended to include air power.

Phipps approved of the strong line the British government was taking on the maintenance of peace. He does not refer to the appeasement of Germany, but it is doubtful that the consequences of such a policy were far from his mind. The date of the next entry coincided with the first of two Cabinet debates about the British government's apparent willingness to capitulate in the face of pressure from a fascist dictator – in the form of the Hoare-Laval Pact. Under its terms, three provinces of

Abyssinia would be ceded to Italy, with an additional zone, totalling 160,000 square miles, designated an Italian zone of expansion. Eden and Baldwin realised that the plan was likely to be rejected by the international community. At the Cabinet meeting on 10 December, however, Eden was anxious to demonstrate his loyalty to Hoare, and in a general show of solidarity, it was resolved that Haile Selassie be asked to accept the proposals.¹⁶⁷ Phipps saw Mussolini as an opportunist, unlike Hitler who had a series of long-term objectives. It was likely that the Duce would be easy to placate, but the Führer would not. The key to understanding Hitler's foreign policy agenda was to unravel his strategy.

10 December

Since Herr Hitler outlined his policy in *Mein Kampf* circumstances have changed, even if the principles have not. Germany has rearmed and is fast becoming the most powerful military nation in Europe. Relations with Russia have degenerated to such a pitch that speeches are made here almost every day which might before the war have constituted a *casus belli*. The fist shaken at France in 1923¹⁶⁸ has become the outstretched hand. But it is perhaps in regard to relations with England that the greatest change has occurred. Every effort is being made to cultivate good relations, and the Naval Agreement is regarded as a substantial sacrifice to that end, but circumstances have compelled the Chancellor to abandon the idea of English co-operation for, or tacit assent to, a war of conquest in the East. He has also had to give up the ancillary plan of renouncing Germany's colonial aspirations.

The admission of Russia into the League of Nations,¹⁶⁹ Great Britain's public attachment to the principles of the Covenant and finally the strong attitude of His Majesty's Government in the matter of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict have demonstrated to Germany that there is no hope of forming an alliance with England on the basis of a war of aggression against Russia. This being so the question of paying a large price for such an alliance does not arise. Furthermore, other circumstances have forced the colonial question more into the foreground. Full equality of rights, a battle-cry invented since *Mein Kampf* was written, is not consistent with the permanent exclusion of Germany from the colonial Powers. More important, the currency crisis and other motives have induced Dr. Schacht and many others to demand colonies where Germany or German chartered companies can produce raw materials without paying for them in foreign currency. Rightly or wrongly, sincerely or disingenuously, Dr. Schacht and the vast mass of the German people claim that the colonies to which Germany is morally entitled will assist her materially in solving the currency crisis. A guarantee of the open door and the abolition of all monopolies in raw materials are of little interest to Germany. There is no complaint of monopolies, no complaint that raw materials cannot be obtained, only that they must be paid for in foreign currency, which Germany has not got.

It will be seen from the above that the aims of German foreign policy are ...

1. Absorption of Austria and other German peoples.
2. Expansion in the East.
3. Recovery of colonies.

The question of practical importance which must arise is: how and when does Germany propose to realise these aims? Neither Herr Hitler nor his Government would, I think, be able to answer these questions. For the moment their energies are devoted towards forging the instrument of their foreign policy. How it is to be used can only be determined later. It may, however, be of assistance if I attempt to give an account of the various currents of opinion which are perceptible today.

The watchword of German foreign policy is "good relations with England". This desire, expressed by almost every German in every walk of life, springs not from affection, nor from a sense of racial affinity, but from the lively hope of favours to come. A careful trial will be given to this policy and it is unlikely to be abandoned until it is clear that England is unwilling or unable to make a contribution towards the satisfaction of German aspirations. By concluding the Naval Agreement and definitely renouncing naval competition, Germany, it is thought, has taken the first step and has smoothed the path for England. All eyes are now looking for a sign from the other side of the Channel. Some interest was aroused by the Secretary of State's statement at Geneva on September 11th that "something must be done to remove the causes from which war is apt to arise"; and by the Prime Minister's statement in his speech to the Peace Society of October 31st that "if the League only exists to keep things living as they are, it will become desiccated and crumble into dust ... it must be capable of development and change."¹⁷⁰ But the Germans profess themselves weary of words. They want to know what concrete proposals His Majesty's Government have to give practical affect to these admirable sentiments. They feel themselves held down by the weight of a world alliance seemingly determined to maintain the *status quo* for ever. Is England prepared to take any action to redress this situation or must the boiler eventually burst? The Military Attaché [Hotblack] informs me that he notices a growing tendency amongst German officers to ask where England wishes Germany to expand.

Many thoughtful Germans recognise the practical difficulties facing His Majesty's Government. The Covenant of the League, as it now stands, precludes German expansion in Europe; the return of sufficient colonies to satisfy German requirements is a unilateral sacrifice which England can perhaps not be expected to make; and the reform of the League and the modification of the Covenant with the precise object of enabling Germany legally to acquire territory in Europe cannot be brought about in the face of

the opposition of the interested parties. Hence the policy of understanding with England is held by these circles, no matter how Anglophile, to be fruitless. (This view was expressed with great frankness to a member of my staff by a leading German journalist.) He argued that only one course was open to Germany in the long run, namely, an understanding with Russia, or a return to Rapallo in other words. The National Socialist party would, he argued, have to swallow it, just as they have swallowed the agreement with Poland,¹⁷¹ and the inevitable bankruptcy of the policy of understanding with England would make the change of course easier than was now imagined.

Many leading members of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and of the General Staff favour a return to Rapallo. They never really approved its abandonment. Yet it is the opinion of all observers here that German military plans are being laid with a view to operations in the East. *Siegreich wollen wir Frankreich schlagen*¹⁷² is sung in the streets, but so far it has apparently not been translated into active military preparations. It is still the official policy to renounce all territorial claims against France.¹⁷³ More important, the Germans have a healthy respect for the defensive value of modern weapons and for French military prowess. During a discussion with the Military Attaché on the efficiency of modern defence, General Keitel, General von Reichenau's successor: "Yes, that is what Hitler is always saying. War under modern conditions is not worth while." At the same time it must be stated that there appears to be a school of thought in the Air Ministry which believes that France can be brought to her knees cheaply and quickly by means of intensive air warfare. General Milch, possibly expressing the opinion of his bellicose chief, said as much not long ago to a member of my staff. But the fact remains that so far as German military preparations are concerned, these are being made with a view to operations East not West of the Elbe.

As regards Union with Austria, opinion is gaining ground that Germany's recent policy has been a mistake in that it has brought no advantage, but only the hostility of Italy and the whole world. It is felt that Germany can well afford to be patient and that sooner or later a movement towards union will be made from Austria itself. (Recent signs of estrangement between Great Britain and Austria in connection with sanctions did not pass unnoticed in Berlin). In that event the Powers, including Italy, would find it hard to justify intervention. Speaking on this topic, a member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remarked that the Italians were justifying their invasion of Abyssinia by invoking the voluntary surrender of Ras Gugsä¹⁷⁴ and other chieftains they would, he hoped, have nothing to say when hundred of "Rases" from Austria and even the Italian Tyrol flocked to the German colours.

The fact that the Austrian question is in cold storage does not mean that Germany has in any way renounced her aims. It only means that she intends to realise them less clumsily. At any moment, however, events may occur

which will bring about a reversion to the more brutal methods of the past. Such an event might, conceivably, be the collapse of Italy under the pressure of sanctions. And here it may not be out of place to examine briefly the impression made on Germany by the Italo-Abyssinian dispute and the application of sanctions by the League.

A display of force is always impressive to the German, and the attitude of His Majesty's Government has therefore enormously increased British prestige in this country. A nation accustomed to think of England as incapable of any initiative and as following unwillingly but meekly in the wake of France now sees the situation suddenly reversed. The press, deaf to the explanations of British spokesmen, declares that England has awakened because the Empire has been touched on a vital nerve. The announcements of British rearmament and Sir Samuel Hoare's statement that England is not going to play a second class rôle are read as signs of a revival of British power.¹⁷⁵ In press articles and in conversation England is often spoken of as the most powerful nation in the world today. A responsible German, discussing the prospect of an Anglo-German understanding, remarked gloomily that it could now with difficulty be brought about because "England is so powerful that Germany has nothing to offer her." This, however, is not the general view and so long as British prestige stands as high as it now does the policy of Anglo-German understanding will be abandoned only with the greatest reluctance.

As regards sanctions themselves, the general opinion seems to be that so long as sanctions remain a weapon in the League armoury, important countries will be obliged in self-defence to render themselves immune therefrom. A fresh impulse has been given to German autarchy, and active steps have already been taken to re-examine the whole question in the light of the Italian experience in order to render Germany invulnerable. For over four years, it is pointed out, Germany, without any advance preparations, withstood the severest sanctions during the Great War. The progress of science, past experience and careful preparations should now enable her to hold out for any measurable time. In fact, although the man in the street may perhaps regard the action of the League as a dress rehearsal for eventual sanctions against Germany, responsible circles seem not ungrateful for the experience gained at another country's expense in the art of circumventing sanctions and elaborating counter measures. "There will never again be recourse to sanctions" was the cryptic comment of an important member of the Government.¹⁷⁶

For the rest the Chancellor, congratulating himself on his wisdom in leaving the League in time, is finding his seat on the fence a comfortable and convenient post of observation. He does not at the moment think much of Italy's prospects, but he can afford, whilst energetically pursuing his rearmament, quietly to await developments. In any event, whatever the issue, he fervently hopes and trusts that the Stresa front has been irretrievably shattered.

Secure from sanctions and relieved from the threatened pressure of the Stresa front, he feels that events in Europe are slowly untying his hands. The internal and especially the financial and food position still cause grave anxiety, but from the point of view of foreign affairs the outlook is brighter than it has been since the war.

Despite the folly of prophecy we must try to reply to the question: "What will Germany do?" So far as the immediate future is concerned much will depend on the development of Anglo-German relations, on the policy of Italy when the Abyssinian conflict has been decided and on the development of German relations with Poland. During the years now in sight Germany's internal policy of protecting agriculture and restricting her foreign trade in a desperate effort to make herself self-supporting seems calculated to weaken her striking force. Can this country support the burden of a reconstituted Army, Navy and Air Force of vast proportions on a much more restricted basis of internal and foreign trade than before the war? These and other problems are occupying the German Government at the moment more than question of foreign policy.

Will Herr Hitler plunge Europe into war? I believe him to be sincere in declaring that he does not want war. But did he for a moment want the events of June 30th, 1934? Circumstances were then too strong for him and they may be too strong again. Faced with the choice between quitting the German stage or plunging Europe into war, the trio¹⁷⁷ who control destinies of this great country would not hesitate. In the first case their lives would be forfeit. In the second there would at least be the chance that fortune might favour the brave. The *Reichswehr* here, however, may, I think, be trusted not to permit war until they are really ready.

If then we look further ahead the prospect becomes less and less reassuring. Germany cannot wait indefinitely for the rectification of her Eastern frontier. Moreover, if Herr Hitler pursues his present policy of forcing up the birth rate, the German people will indubitably become what he so stridently bewails in *Mein Kampf*, namely a *Volk ohne Raum*,¹⁷⁸ an over-populated country, entitled *ipso facto* to expand into the *Raum*, or territory, of less fruitful populations. Already there are two births in Germany for every one in France. Inevitably an explosion must eventually take place as a result of this item of German internal policy, even if nothing caught fire on the field of foreign affairs ...

To sum up, I would say that Germany has no hard and fast foreign policy at the moment. I can easily envisage a reversal of her present inclinations *if*, for instance, reform of the League proved illusory and friendship with England, or with France and England, proved unattainable or nugatory. The army might, in conjunction with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, reverse the helm and put the ship back on the Rapallo course, or any other course that seemed propitious. But it is more likely that Hitler, if left to himself, will ... prefer the policy of waiting for something to turn up. This is not, to the German way of thinking, such a bad policy in human affairs. Who would

have said in 1918 that the vanquishers of Germany would be reduced to such a state of apathy by internal political and economic developments that she would be allowed in 1935 to burst her bonds and force the gates of her Versailles prison house? The British Government today may speak with a strong voice in world affairs, but a Pacifist Government may come into power in England. The United States Government today may agree to an oil embargo, but will a Republican government tomorrow be equally amenable? The average German feels that Germany's opportunity will occur during one of these phases of weakness. In a speech at Hamburg last month [20 November] Dr. Göbbels expressed this view when he said: "The world is again on the move. That happens about once a century, and when such a displacement process (*Umschichtungsprozess*) is over it is no good coming along ten years later and saying that we were not on the spot because we happened at the time to be busy with our confessional disputes. No: we must be ready to hand; and he is safest who has a united nation behind him." After all he argues, was not Hitler's rise due to some inexplicable paralysis of the Weimar system, and has his subsequent success not been due to some equally inexplicable inertia on the Versailles camp? All that can be said with certainty about the firmament of foreign affairs that the constellation is for ever changing. But the German Micawber, who resembles his feckless prototype merely in his capacity for waiting, will be found in all other respects to be a formidable and ruthless opportunist. If Hitler's heart could be searched today his policy would doubtless be found to be very simple. He will keep his powder dry, bide his time and put his trust partly in Wotan, ...

British efforts to negotiate with Hitler were still falling victim to German suspicions about the close relationship between Britain and France that the Hoare-Laval negotiations appeared to suggest. Furthermore, the Führer had received reports from François-Poncet about the ratification of Franco-Soviet treaty and of Laval's attempt to reconcile Britain with Italy, thus restoring the Stresa front. Hitler therefore regarded British insistence on French involvement in future negotiations between Britain and Germany over the limitation of armaments as stalling tactics, designed to foster an Anglo-French alliance against Germany.

13 December¹⁷⁹

I had a long and most unsatisfactory interview with the Chancellor today.

I opened the conversation by saying that it was a very long time since I had had the honour of seeing Herr Hitler and that His Majesty's Government would be glad to learn from him personally his views on the possibility of further conversations respecting the London declaration of February 3rd¹⁸⁰ and particularly the question of the air pact and air limitation.

The Chancellor, who struck me as being in a not very amiable mood, muttered something to the effect that he could hardly consider these continual

requests for his views as being made completely *bona fide*. He was still waiting, he said, for a reply to a note that he had addressed to His Majesty's Government regarding the air pact last July. To this I replied that it was on the contrary Sir Samuel Hoare who expected an answer from the German Government to suggestions which he had made to the German Ambassador in London on August 1st last. At this Herr Hitler looked blankly at Baron von Neurath, who was present throughout our interview and who murmured something inaudible. I therefore thought it best, in order that there should be no further misunderstanding, to read out a German translation of the gist of those suggestions. Before doing this, however, I reminded the Chancellor of his oft expressed opinion that a general understanding must be achieved step by step. In this connexion I reminded him of the last sentence in point 5 of his *Reichstag* speech of May 21st, and suggested that we had all seemed to be agreed that the first step should be to conclude an air pact and an air limitation agreement. When I had finished this perusal I added that the agreements that we contemplated were based upon the spirit and principles of Locarno. They would not interfere with the Locarno equilibrium and they would not be used to the disadvantage of any of the Locarno Powers. That was our conception of the agreements. Such agreements were regarded as both safe and useful, and the German Government could rely upon us in the negotiations to maintain this position. This being so, it seemed to His Majesty's Government entirely safe for the German Government to enter the negotiations on these lines.

Herr Hitler, despite these explanations, expressed the strongest objection to the conclusion of any bilateral arrangement within the air pact, and no arguments of mine could shake him. He then made his usual, though on this occasion somewhat more violent, outburst against what he described as the Franco-Soviet "military alliance" directed against Germany, declaring that it had rendered any air pact out of the question, for the bringing into the picture of Russia had completely upset the balance of power in Europe. He referred to Russia's enormous strength on land and in the air and remarked that Berlin might easily in a few hours be reduced to a heap of ashes by a Russian air attack before the League or any other body had even begun to discuss the question of how to deal with it. I pointed out that it was for the very purpose of putting the air pact into speedy execution that the French wished for the conclusion of these bilateral arrangements, without which the air pact itself might prove useless for the reason he had himself given. What indeed seemed to be in the general interest was to extend the Treaty of Locarno to the air and to come to some rapid arrangement of air limitation.

Baron von Neurath here made his only intervention and declared that if the French persisted in their wish for bilateral arrangements it might be pointed out to them that in that event the demilitarised zone would have to be abolished for Germany could not consent to keep her light machines behind the zone whilst France (and England too in the event of a conflict)

would be able to keep hers right on the frontier. At this stage Herr Hitler complacently observed that he could quite well have proceeded to re-occupy the [Rhineland] demilitarised zone on March 16th without provoking war. He had, however, been content with Locarno and had therefore abstained.

The Chancellor then painted the Russian picture in ever blacker shades and in ever louder and sharper tones. He abused the French for their folly in concluding this military treaty and blamed Great Britain for thinking that by currying favour with Russia she would set up that Power as a counterweight to Japan.¹⁸¹ I denied any such intention on the part of Great Britain, and remarked that we were all living in the same house and that it would be useless to try to ignore the presence of one inhabitant, viz., Russia. That had been M. Clemenceau's idea after the war (i.e., a *cordon sanitaire*) and it seemed to us a mistaken and negative policy. By entering into conversations with Russia we hoped that she would gradually evolve in a more moderate direction, and indeed it was possible that she was already doing so. This the Chancellor hotly and indignantly denied. He said that Russia was a foul and unclean inhabitant of the house with whom the other dwellers should have no political truck whatever (he admitted that he had entered and would again enter into various commercial and economic transactions with this inhabitant.) In fact the Russians were noxious microbes who should be politically isolated. I retorted that it was Germany who was originally responsible for the instalment of the most dangerous microbe of all, Lenin, by giving him special facilities during the war to pass through her territory. Herr Hitler bitterly admitted the truth of this, and said that Germany had been the first to suffer and had regretted it ever since. If he, Hitler, had been in power such folly would never have been committed. (Baron von Neurath grew rather restless at this shot among the old German ducks).

The Chancellor then dilated on Russian infamy, remarking that the oath of Russian recruits included a vow to foster world revolution (what would the world say if his recruits had to take any such oath?); he declared that it was owing to Russia that no pact of "non-interference" was worth concluding, for she was continually guilty of the most aggressive and insolent underground interference in the affairs of all civilised States, not excluding the British Empire. No air limitation pact, he declared, was possible that did not allow him to take into account Russia's enormous strength in the air. Supposing he had just concluded a military alliance with Russia directed against France, what would not the French requirements in the air be? In denied the fairness of the analogy and remarked that in view of the Chancellor's notorious hatred for communist Russia such a *volte face* would arouse far greater suspicion than the Franco-Soviet agreement need do; I added that that agreement was due to France's fear of Germany, partly owing to the secret manner in which the Polish-German agreement had been concluded.

The Chancellor referred to the reply that he had given to the question addressed to him from Stresa, respecting the Eastern Pact, and declared that

he had not at that time realised the full meaning of the Franco-Soviet alliance. He even implied that an attempt had been made to deceive him on that occasion. His main objection to the alliance is the fact that each party reserves to itself the right to decide in the last resort who the eventual aggressor is. For instance, in the event of war between Russia and Poland, if Germany came to the latter's assistance she would be dubbed the aggressor by France and treated as such. This even impaired the efficacy and value of the Treaty of Locarno.

Faced with this completely negative attitude I referred to the statement issued by the *Deutsche Nachrichten Büro* on December 6th to the effect that the German Government were still ready to discuss the question of an air pact and air limitation. At this the Chancellor looked blank and evidently attached no importance to, or was even unaware of, this statement which was issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at the instigation of Herr von Bülow, probably with a view to throwing dust in our eyes and in those of the German public. He then remarked that we were even now engaged in a race in air armaments, and in this connexion I reminded Herr Hitler of the Prime Minister's declaration in the House of Commons regarding our determination to have an air force equal to that of any potential aggressor.¹⁸² The Chancellor indicated that this would be an unfortunate attitude to maintain. There could be no question of an air race between Great Britain and Germany.

I then enquired whether the Chancellor could not make some constructive proposal in the matter and he informed me that the German Government would be quite ready to exchange confidentially information with His Majesty's Government regarding their respective air strengths and requirements. Such information must on no account be passed on to the French for [if] it were Moscow would immediately be informed by them. War between England and Germany ever again was unthinkable, hence the Anglo-German naval agreement which Herr Hitler would loyally respect for all time. He himself, he declared, and all his men, for he was mortal, favoured a close understanding with Great Britain. The two great "Germanic" peoples must never again fight one another; he had been pressed to demand 50% of our fleet but had declined for he wished to show beyond doubt his determination to remain on the most friendly terms with us.

I promised to report the Chancellor's remarks to His Majesty's Government but observed that I knew they would be greatly disappointed at his negative attitude over the air pact and air limitation.

Herr Hitler then remarked that if he demanded the return of the colonies it was not with the wish to injure anybody's interests or to be unfair. He was only demanding the return of what really and truly was Germany's property. He must have them back, otherwise where could he put his people? He added bitterly that Great Britain's present prosperity was merely due to her "Empire".

At one moment Herr Hitler referred savagely to Lithuania, declaring that neither that country nor the Baltic States in general would present any obstacle to a Russian attack on Germany. (This was contradictory to a statement he had previously made in the course of our conversation to the effect that he really did not know how he would be able to attack Russia even if he wished to). Russia, he said, with two divisions could wipe that rotten little State out of existence. When I pointed out that Lithuania had recently behaved better over the Memel question, he grudgingly admitted that this was true.

It was only at the end of our interview that the Chancellor referred spontaneously to Abyssinia. He declared that recent developments in that affair gave him furiously to think. Supposing East Prussia, he said, were overrun by Russia, the League would presumably impose sanctions in a leisurely manner and would then propose to hand over not only East Prussia but part of Silesia also to Russia. Moreover, sanctions had proved ineffectual and the moral to be drawn was that only one's own strength would defend one from attack. I pointed out the difference there was from a cultural point of view between Germany and Abyssinia and remarked that time had not yet been given for the full force of sanctions to come into play.

Herr Hitler said that he had no particular reason to love Italy after her hostile attitude and absurd anti-German press campaign of last year, but nevertheless he felt uneasy at the anti-Fascist behaviour of Great Britain throughout this affair. After all, if Mussolini disappeared chaos and Bolshevism would ensue in Italy and would certainly spread. I replied that the Chancellor was making a great mistake. His Majesty's Government felt no hostility towards Fascism in other countries, and indeed would indefinitely prefer it there to chaos. Herr Hitler then went so far as to hint that we had led Mussolini on with a view to his destruction. I scouted this idea and thought it advisable to say that [a] month ago Sir Eric Drummond had warned the Duce that Great Britain, if forced to choose between her loyal obligations under the League and her traditional friendship for Italy, would be obliged to choose the former. Moreover, our constant efforts for a peaceful solution and our latest Paris proposals showed that we were not hostile to Mussolini. Herr Hitler at one stage remarked that he thought Mussolini had behaved foolishly over the Abyssinian affair. He himself (Hitler) would have come to some previous arrangement with Great Britain in the matter before embarking upon it. He expressed his conviction that Mussolini would accept the Paris proposals.

From time to time the Chancellor muttered sentences such as "Germany is a very great country and always will be. She was great in a military sense under the Hohenzollerns and is great now. Prussia was also great as a military Power under Frederick the Great." Even when pretending to fear a Russian attack, he spoke of Russia with supreme contempt, and declared his conviction that Germany was vastly superior to her both militarily and technically. At times he ground the floor with his heel, as though crushing a worm.

*Phipps' conversation with Hitler was not initially reported in the German press. However, hostile reports in British and French newspapers persuaded Hitler to issue a communiqué, stating that he had received Phipps the previous day and that a productive discussion had ensued about the proposal for an air pact. Opinion within the Foreign Office was that Hitler had proved to that when it came to stating his diplomatic position, he was his own worst enemy. If the British government were to negotiate a general settlement with Germany, Britain needed to be better prepared militarily and must not become isolated politically from the other European powers.*¹⁸³

14 December¹⁸⁴

The following are certain impressions that I have derived and certain conclusions that I have drawn from my last conversations with the Chancellor:-

(1) Russia

Contempt was too much mixed with professed fear to carry conviction: the more so since I know that the German Ambassador at Moscow [Count Friedrich Werner, Count von der Schulenberg], who is now here, saw the Chancellor recently and told him that the one obsession of Russia was peace at almost any price, and a craven fear of Germany.

(2) Locarno and the Demilitarised Zone

Herr Hitler's attitude and manner when referring to these questions made a very bad impression. He was patronising in regard to Locarno, and struck a cynical note of regret at having failed to reoccupy the zone on March 16th last. It seems probable that he will proceed to that reoccupation whenever a favourable opportunity presents itself. This will hardly be, however, before he has made a final effort to "square" Great Britain.

(3) Colonies

The Chancellor referred to their return as a matter of course. No trace remained of the deprecating smile with which he indicated to Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden that colonies would be welcome. On this occasion it was a sharp summons to disgorge our loot: in fact I was almost made to feel that I had stolen his watch.

(4) Abyssinia

This subject was only mentioned casually by the Chancellor at the end of our conversation. His conviction, however, that Mussolini was bound to accept the Paris proposal showed, I think, (a) that he felt he must base his refusal to discuss air pacts or air limitation upon something more permanent than the conflict, which, on the day of our conversation, he thought was drawing to a close, and (b) that, in order to forestall any possible re-formation of a really cordial Franco-British Entente, he must seek to divide Great Britain permanently from France by offering her a secret exchange of information on the respective air strengths and air requirements of herself and Germany.

It is clear, moreover, that the likelihood of an early settlement of the Abyssinian imbroglio would account in some measure for Herr Hitler's ill-humour when I saw him. As I have since reported, he fears above all things a resurrection of the Stresa front and any undue increase of Mussolini's prestige. (The *Duce's* downfall would not suit him for other, but no less obvious, reasons).

(5) The Secret Proposals

Herr Hitler's manner in making the above and in brushing aside the Prime Minister's declaration in the House of Commons regarding our determination to build up to parity in the air with any possible aggressor had something patronising about it. In effect it was an invitation to Great Britain to content herself with a mere fraction of the German air force.

It now seems evident that Germany means to arm on land and in the air at her own sweet will and to the limit of her capacity. I have frequently called attention to various aspects of Germany's determination to attain great military strength. I earnestly trust that Great Britain will not take any hasty action calculated to help her even indirectly to satisfy that ambition. To whet the German appetite is easy, to satisfy it impossible. The return of the colonies would not only act as a stimulating *hors d'oeuvre* to the German gormandiser, it would enormously increase Hitler's prestige and power. Such a reward for present iniquity would be positively dangerous; and how then could we ever show our approval of some possible emergence of any future German virtue?

To rearm is, I firmly believe, our most urgent task: but its urgency would only be increased by the display of any signs of weakness towards this régime. It is only force that Nazidom admires: generosity spells weakness in its eyes, and is therefore despicable.

After all the situation may be black, but it is not desperate. Nazidom is not yet ready to shoot, anyhow on a big scale. Meanwhile we can become strong again, and renew our somewhat tattered friendships on the sound basis of a great common danger. The closer those friendships again become the less the danger will be, and in any case Nazi Germany is now beset with numerous difficulties, financial, economic, social and religious, from which it would be folly for us, for any reason whatever, to help to extricate her. She has taken the road to Endor: she may turn away in time or she may pursue her course up to that dark terminus.¹⁸⁵

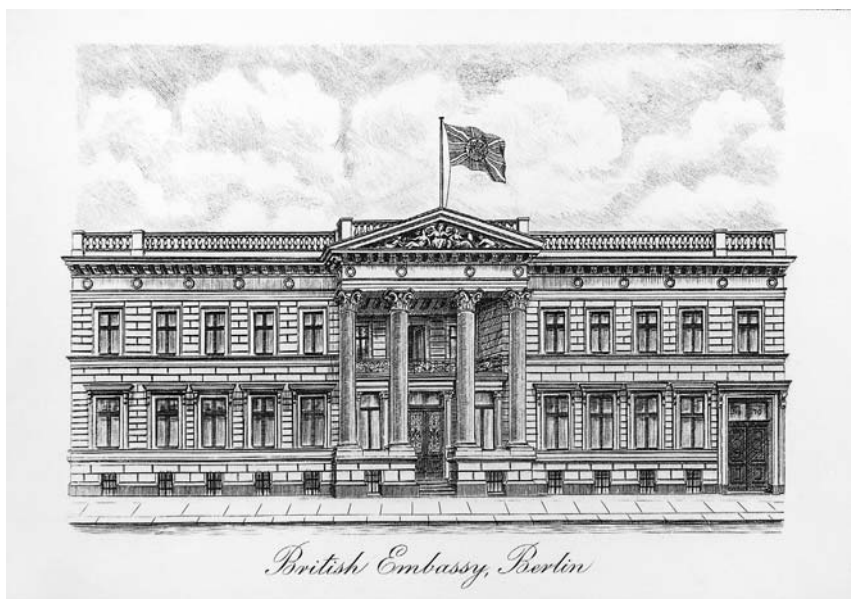
Whenever the light returns to her we can always, if need be, assist her genuine resurrection even by the sacrifice of some British interest to the cause of general peace.



1. Phipps with Anthony Eden in Berlin, February 1934.



2. Calling cards presented to Phipps by Hitler, Göring, von Blomberg and Goebbels.



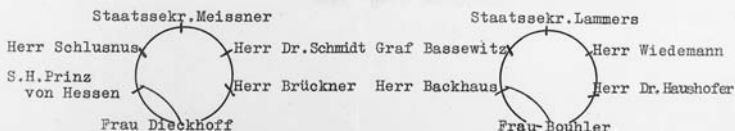
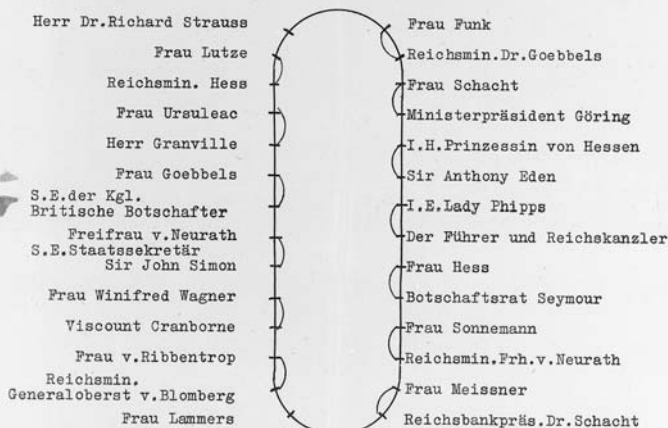
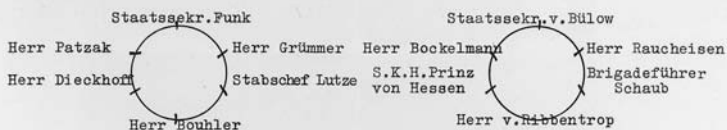
3. A postcard illustration of the British embassy building in Berlin as it would have looked during Phipps' embassy. The building was destroyed by Allied bombing during the Second World War.



4. Phipps' invitation card to a dinner held to mark the visit of Sir John Simon to Berlin in March 1935.

Abendtafel
am Dienstag, dem 26. März 1935.

Eingang



5. Seating plan for a dinner held on 26 March 1935 to mark the visit to Berlin of Sir John Simon.



6. Lady Phipps presenting commemorative medals to the children of British embassy staff to mark the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935. Phipps is seated to her left.

Der Führer und Reichskanzler

Berlin, den 22. April 1936.

Eueren Exzellenzen

beehre ich mich, zur glücklichen Geburt Ihres Sohnes
meine herzlichsten Glück- und Segenswünsche auszusprechen.

Ich verbinde damit meine besten Wünsche für
das Wohlergehen von Lady Phipps und bitte sie, als
Zeichen meines Gedenkens den beifolgenden Blumengruss
freundlichst entgegennehmen zu wollen.

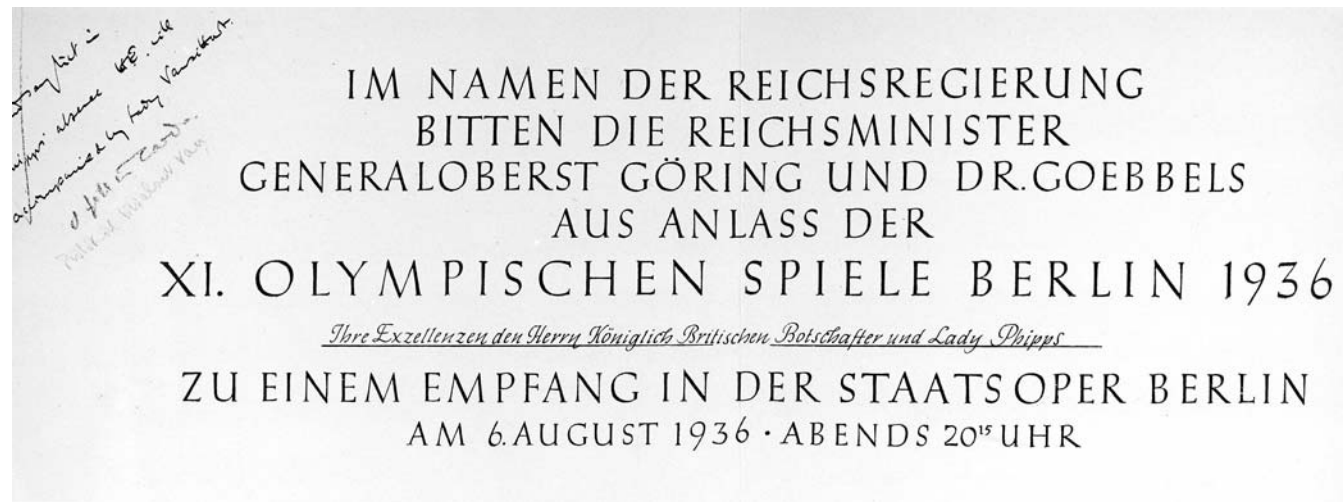
Mit dem Ausdruck meiner ausgezeichneten
Hochachtung bin ich

Ihr ergebener



Ihren Exzellenzen
dem Herrn Königlich Britischen Botschafter
Sir Eric P h i p p s und Lady Phipps,
Berlin W.8.

7. A letter of congratulation to Phipps from Hitler on the occasion of the birth of his son in April 1936.



8. Phipps invitation card to a concert to mark the opening of the Berlin Olympic Games, August 1936.



9. Departure from Berlin, April 1937.

In 1935, the prevailing diplomatic culture had been for bilateral alliances designed to defend the interests of individual states in the event of war. The first two months of 1936 marked a continuation of this pattern through the Anglo-French staff talks on maintaining the Rhineland as a demilitarised zone. Strong German press criticism of the discussions led Phipps and François-Poncet to conclude that this was the start of a propaganda war that could culminate in the German reoccupation of the Rhineland.¹ François-Poncet was particularly anxious that his government should warn Hitler that if the integrity of the demilitarised zone was violated, the consequences would be severe. Eden was reluctant to sanction such an uncompromising approach.² He had some sympathy with Mussolini's argument that the Anglo-French staff talks could undermine the Treaty of Locarno, but was unsure how much notice he should take of a dictator whose invasion of Abyssinia had undermined his credentials as a peacemaker. Eden's preferred course of action was to reinforce the Locarno treaty with an Air Pact.

As indicated earlier, the Central Department of the Foreign Office spent the early weeks of 1936 digesting Phipps' meeting with Hitler on 13 December 1935. Sargent and Wigram's responses that Hitler had shown himself in his true colours had given way to a wider consideration of the implication of the Führer's intentions. Eden, who had taken over as Foreign Secretary from Hoare in December 1935, thought that the Führer was committed to concluding an air pact with Britain. But the negotiations would not take place in secret and would involve full consultation with the French. It was unlikely that Hitler would object to this as he had indicated a willingness to consider such a plan in May the previous year. Phipps was asked to investigate whether Hitler had any plans for further expansion of the German air force.³ But when he spoke to the German dictator on 8 January, he found him more interested in the future of the Rhineland.⁴

12 January

Last night I attended the banquet given by the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft to the Anglo-German Fellowship. It took place in the newly

opened Aero Club, a most palatial building formerly the Prussian Landtag.

The opera ball afterwards was a triumph of organisation for General Göring. Everything was the perfection of taste and carried out regardless of expense. The opera was closed altogether for five days to enable the arrangements to be made. This of course added considerably to the cost of the evening. The red plush hangings, etc., of the house were completely concealed by white satin covers and draperies, the stage was thrown open and decorated with pink satin, with numerous luminous fountains. The finest parquet flooring had been extended right over the auditorium and stage. Countless flunkies in brand new scarlet liveries with white breeches stood at intervals in the staircases and passages, holding chandeliers. First of all dances from Johann Strauss [II's]⁵ operettes were played by the opera orchestra, then choruses from the same operettes (*Fledermaus* [1874] and *Zigeunerbaron* [1886]) were sung by the stars of the opera company; (it seems the prima-donna grumbled at being herded together in an amorphous mass from which their talent, charm and beauty could not emerge); the *Blue Danube* [1867] waltz was then played, and finally, before the ball began, the *Kaiserwaltz* [1888] was danced in the auditorium by the whole corps de ballet. All this Viennese music was played with perfect Vienna 'wing' by Herr Clemens Krauss, who led the orchestra. The evening may therefore be considered a triumph for Vienna as well as for General Göring.

Hardly any brown shirts were to be seen, but the uniforms of the military aviators were much "en évidence". The thirty English guests of General Göring may well have returned to London under the impression that the old régime had returned to power. The out and out Nazis are much annoyed at the proceedings, and no description thereof appeared in the Press, but stress was laid on the fact that all the material and objects used would serve again. This was to stifle criticism regarding waste, which, however, is one of the beauties of the régime, whether it be applied to General Göring's aeroplanes, the new monster Air Ministry with 2,500 rooms, guns, tanks, tiaras for Frau Göring or other such trifles. The day of reckoning will come though, and when it does I earnestly hope that the City will not come to the rescue.

Phipps saw von Neurath on 14 January.⁶ Eden was anxious that Phipps pursue Hitler's suggestion for an exchange of secret information between the British and German government about air capacity.⁷ Phipps was sceptical, but when discussing the Führer's statements on 13 December 1935, von Neurath assured Phipps that the signature of the Franco-Soviet pact had rendered an air limitation agreement impossible for the present but that Hitler might consider an air agreement with the Locarno powers. Phipps concluded that von Neurath was unclear what was going on in Hitler's mind.⁸ Eden was disappointed that Phipps had not mentioned the possible exchange of secret information about air defences to the German foreign minister, believing that the omission could lead Hitler to claim that the British government

did not take his diplomatic plans with other powers seriously. Phipps was asked to seek a further interview with von Neurath to convey the British point of view.

15 January

Last night we dined with Baron and Baroness von Neurath and I had some conversation afterwards with General von Blomberg. He had just seen a German merchant who has lived for twenty years in Abyssinia, and seemed to think the real problem was how to stop the war before the Italians are irretrievably beaten and weakened. The Abyssinians, it seems, have the greatest contempt for the Italians, who allow most of the fighting to be done by their black troops, whereas the Italians themselves construct roads, etc., in the rear. The Abyssinians, as at present minded, will not look at any peace proposals, for they believed they can completely defeat the Italians and intend to do so. General von Blomberg scoffed at any possible Italian attack upon the Sudan or from Libya upon Egypt. General von Blomberg feels sure a real Italian defeat must mean Bolshevism in Italy.

It is practically settled that Count von Welczeck, the German Ambassador at Madrid, will be transferred to Paris. He is related to the Talleyrands⁹ and Castellanes, and is, I believe, most un-Nazi. It is sensible of Hitler to realise that his brown-shirts are not for exportation, but the result is that Germany's representatives abroad do not represent the present regime in Germany.

On 17 January, Eden circulated a collection of reports with a covering memorandum by Phipps entitled 'The German Danger', for the attention of the Cabinet.¹⁰ Phipps concluded that Hitler's foreign policy was to destroy the Treaty of Versailles and to secure the re-establishment of Germany as the dominant power in Europe. This could only come about if Germany became militarised internally, and through economic and territorial expansion. The evidence thus collected from Germany proved that this was Hitler's course of action. Britain should therefore hasten her rearmament while trying to come to a modus vivendi with Germany. The Cabinet's recommendation, when it met on 29 January, was that Eden should secure such an understanding immediately.

Phipps viewed recognition of the status of the Sudeten Germans as one of Hitler's priorities, when hitherto most of his discussions about the Führer's priorities in foreign affairs had centred on relations with Britain, France and the Soviet Union. Phipps' observations about the Czech question proved to be prophetic, although he would have had little reason, writing in 1936, to anticipate how central it would become to the Anglo-French policy of appeasement two and a half years later. Phipps did not believe that a League of Nations divorced from the Treaty of Versailles might contain Hitler. His thoughts reflected those who felt that recent events in Abyssinia and the diplomatic impasse caused by German rearmament had revealed the weakness of the League. But unlike many of its critics, Phipps did not think the idea of an international body dedicated to the preservation of peace was defunct. A separation of the League Covenant from the peace treaty would also

have involved a renegotiation of both documents. While this would have given the opportunity to reappraise Allied policy towards Germany since 1918, the negotiations would also have thrown the spotlight onto the fraught relationship between Britain, France and the United States. On balance therefore, the British government took the view that the status quo represented the lesser of two evils.

22 January¹¹

From various sources inside and outside, the Chancellor's desiderata in their latest form may be tabulated as follows:-

- I. Full cultural autonomy for the German minority in Czechoslovakia: certain British "travellers" have been assured that no territorial changes are demanded there.
- II. A referendum in Austria under British supervision.
- III. Greater economic possibilities for Germany in South Eastern Europe.
- IV. The return of the colonies.

In return for the above, 5 would be granted and this would be complete stabilisation in the West, including Holland. No mention was made of Locarno or the demilitarised zone.

This must not be given as the order of priority.

The first of these aims appears reasonable enough, but I am by no means sure whether in the long run the Germans will be satisfied with less than the complete Nazification of the Germans in Czechoslovakia. In any case it is primarily a matter for Mr. Benes and does not concern His Majesty's Government directly. The Nazi leaders maintain stoutly that they would be satisfied with reasonable autonomy for Henlein's followers and I believe that Henlein on his side is averse from anything more than cultural relations with Germany. He does not want to convert Sudeten Deutschland into a couple of Nazi Gaus and to take a back seat himself after his recent triumph.¹²

Point 2 presents obvious difficulties. Even if the French and British Governments agreed to a referendum in Austria in such conditions are then expected to exercise pressure on Mussolini to follow their example? It is clear moreover that neither Government could bring any positive pressure to bear on the Government of Austria in a purely internal affair of this kind.

With the third point I do not propose to deal. The German claims that whenever they seek an economic opening in S.E. Europe they find the door closed and a Frenchman near it holding the key. Apparently they wish the French to desist from attempts to resist German economic penetration. This is primarily a French question rather than a British one.

The fourth point – the return of the colonies – is not an urgent question at the moment.¹³ Unfortunately recent British visitors such as members of the Anglo-German Fellowship encouraged by Ribbentrop to such an extent that

he made Göbbels include in his speech [in Berlin] of the 17th January categorical demand for the return of the colonies.

So far as I can ascertain the Germans, in return for these concessions, might, in addition to (5) be prepared to return to a new League in which the Covenant is divorced from the Treaty of Versailles revised with their co-operation. They maintain that a position would then be reached beyond which they would have no desire to advance. Europe might settle down to a period of tranquillity which would not be disturbed by further German demands.

Hitler is at present inclined to the policy of a friendly understanding with England. What *arrière pensée* he has it is difficult to say. Apart from him sentimental views on racial affinity and his genuine admiration for our achievements (mainly on the field of battle) he has always taken the view, as *Mein Kampf* shows, that Germany for political reasons should cultivate cordial relations with England. He admits that Great Britain is dependent for her food supplies on the freedom of the seas and that to ensure that freedom her fleet must be the most powerful in Europe, if not the world. Hence his naval agreement [of June 1935] with us. He will not abandon his policy of an understanding with England until he is satisfied that he is pursuing a chimera. He may try for a long time if necessary to achieve his end.

Should approaches to England fail, he may embark on a campaign to reconcile France and Germany. If he fails in this in turn, he will revise his policy fundamentally. He may even turn to Russia or Japan or decide to plough a lonely furrow.

So far as Russia is concerned, his hostility to Bolshevism is shared by the Army, who do not, however, draw the same conclusions. The Army does not desire hostilities with Russia or even hostile relations with Moscow. On the contrary it is hankering after a return to Rapallo, more particularly since the Russians have given signs of embarking on a programme of rearmament. Hitler is reproached in the highest circles for having by his unmeasured language converted the Russians from being harmless theorists into dangerous militarists, especially in the air (see Molotov's recent speech).¹⁴

In Germany's attitude to Poland, there is a similar deviation in policy. While the Chancellor, obsessed by his Bolshevik nightmare, wishes to keep Poland intact and to place the problem of the Corridor somewhere near the bottom of the long list of Germany's remoter aspirations, Eastern Germany does not take this view, nor do military or Junker circles. German intentions regarding Poland are therefore obscure and a surprise cannot be ruled out.

Hitler's attitude to the Czechs will depend considerably on the closeness of the relations established between Prague and Moscow. If he obtains autonomy for the German minority, he might stay his hand so long as Prague observe genuine neutrality and ceased to interfere in Austrian matters.

His attitude in regard to Austria is sufficiently well known. He wants a plebiscite while Mussolini is in Abyssinia and this may be regarded as the first of his aims in point of time.

In regard to Italy, there is again a divergence of view, this time not with the Army but with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. While Hitler does not wish to see Fascism sustain a serious reverse or sanctions prove triumphant and is therefore neutral in the present conflict, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs definitely want Italy's downfall. The reasons are obvious. The Ministry have no interest in bolstering up Fascism or National Socialism; they wish to weaken Italy once and for all so as to gain control in Austria and to make such things as the Stresa front an impossibility in the future.

The German attitude to the League remains hostile as before. But Hitler is prepared to help draw up a new Statute [Covenant] and build a new League, not out of any belief in its usefulness but to placate Great Britain and the European neutrals. He regards the League as a myth; in his eyes it consists of Soviet Russia, France and the Little Entente, the British Empire, a few European States who, to avoid invasion, must observe neutrality in any future conflict between the big Powers just as they did in 1914–1918. The neutrals outside Europe have no decisive economic or military value. All the neutral countries which could safely do so joined the Allies in the last war but had not the slightest influence on the battle fields or on the issue of the conflict. There is no reason in his opinion to think that in a fresh European war the influence of South America would be felt. Consequently the League of Nations is merely a *Begriff*, a conception, rather than a reality so long as only three of the Great Powers belong to it.

The German attitude to Japan remains unchanged. Hitler's racial prejudices make him hostile to an understanding with a yellow race, especially as such an understanding would put him in an awkward position vis-à-vis of the United States with whom he is most anxious to be on good terms. Whether ultimately the unsatisfied countries – Germany, Italy and Japan – may be driven to some form of *Interessengemeinschaft* is a matter for speculation. It is a contingency which must not be ruled out.

As regards America, the recent declaration of neutrality was welcomed here and the general feeling is that there is much less likelihood that America will ever again intervene in European affairs. The experience of the last war – or rather the last peace – have so alienated American public opinion that neutrality will be observed more strictly than in the last war.

23 January¹⁵

General Göring called this morning to present his condolences.¹⁶ Having done this he proceeded to tell me of all the inventions that were submitted to him as Air Minister. Among them some of course were no use and were consigned to the waste-paper basket. Others, on the other hand, were truly wonderful. In case of war Germany would make use of such inventions even at the risk of being accused of barbarity; but that could not be helped – *Krieg ist Krieg!*¹⁷

General Göring's tactful efforts to give me the "jitters" after condoling with me on the death of my Sovereign were typical.

Before taking his leave, General Göring looked out of the window of my study into the Wilhelmstrasse, where a big crowd had collected, and remarked with satisfaction: "It is curious, but wherever I go it is always the same thing!"

The dispatch on which the above is based also reported Göring's belief that Germany would go to war if the wrongs done by the Treaty of Versailles were not put right by peaceful means. Again Phipps stated that the optimum way that would be achieved was through a far-reaching arrangement between Germany, France and Britain. Göring was adamant that such an agreement, if reached, would not be brokered by the League. On the issue of the Anschluss, the British government should oversee a plebiscite to decide the matter. The Nazi party was confident that it would secure a 70 per cent vote in favour of a union between Germany and Austria.

28 January

This morning we had a Funeral Service at the British Embassy Church. This was attended by Herr Hitler, the principal members of the German Government, the Diplomatic Body and many others, including the ex-Crown prince and Crown Princess and some of their sons.

I met Herr Hitler at the door of the Church and accompanied him to the arm-chair that had been placed for him below the rails of the choir. I sat in an arm-chair placed in a similar position on the other side of the aisle. The members of the German Government and German officials were in the pews behind Herr Hitler whilst the Diplomatic Body were in the pews behind me ...

At the end of the Service I accompanied Herr Hitler to his motor-car: but he strode out so quickly that I had some difficulty in keeping up with him.

In the afternoon we had another Service for members of the British community. The church was packed.

After the ceremonies, Phipps returned to London for a period of consultation about how to broker a diplomatic agreement between Britain, France and Germany. The views that Phipps expresses in the next entry were broadly consistent with Foreign Office attitudes towards Germany. On 3 February, Vansittart produced a memorandum announcing that the Treaty of Versailles was now defunct and that any agreement reached with Germany would take the form of a bargain that would be achieved at a high price.¹⁸ Phipps agreed with his brother-in-law that ideally a comprehensive settlement would include the return of Germany to the League of Nations and include an agreement limiting arms production. But this was unlikely as the League did not currently possess the means to contain Hitler's territorial ambitions. He did, however, stop short of supporting Vansittart's proposal for

reversing some of the territorial concessions made by Germany under the Treaty of Versailles, and for the granting of colonial possessions in Africa and Asia.¹⁹

Eden agreed with Phipps rather than with Vansittart. On 5 February, he told the Cabinet that he favoured meeting the threat to European security through rearmament while continuing to negotiate a diplomatic settlement with Hitler.²⁰ Eden's colleagues asked for a more detailed account of how this would be brought about. In the intervening week between the presentation of his second report, on 12 February, the exchange of views between the Foreign Secretary and Phipps helped forge an amicable relationship that was to last the remainder of Phipps' embassy in Berlin. Eden was confident that his method of dealing with Hitler would work. However, experience had taught Phipps that the Führer was much too erratic to make this a certainty.²¹

5 February

I returned last night from London, where I went on the evening of January 28th. During my stay there I had talks with King Edward [VIII], the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and others.

It seems to me that we should work for:-

1. No isolated approaches from us to Germany with offers of colonial, financial or economic help.
2. A waiting game till after the French elections, and indeed till the formation of a Government in France sufficiently strong to move with us towards some comprehensive plan for a settlement with Germany.
3. A waiting game for a final and open discussion of that plan till the end of the Abyssinian affair.

As regards (3) we can always reply to our own panic mongers who may call for an immediate settlement with Germany by pointing out that on November 21st and on December 13th the French and British Ambassadors respectively offered Hitler the two dishes from the menu of February 3rd, 1935, that he pretended to like best (viz., air pact and air limitation), and that both Ambassadors were politely sent away with fleas in their ears.

The principal debate in Berlin concerned the effect on German interests if the League of Nations imposed oil sanctions on Italy.²² The possibility had increased as Mussolini's fortunes in Abyssinia had improved considerably in recent weeks. A League committee was appointed to consider the imposition of sanctions, and it was due to report on 12 February. It was anticipated that Mussolini would avoid an oil embargo by trying to deflect British and French attention away from his own activities on to Hitler.²³ Italian pressure was brought to bear in Berlin by Aloisi, leader of the Italian delegation to the League concerning whether the Italian and German governments would be able to adhere to the Treaty of Locarno if the Franco-Soviet pact was ratified. During this debate, it became apparent that Hitler had decided to order the re-occupation of the Rhineland before the start of Mussolini's diplomatic game.²⁴

In London, British policy was running along different lines. Eden was anxious to assure Hitler that the signature of the Franco-Soviet pact need not, if viewed in conjunction with a pact between Britain, France and Germany, mean that some German diplomatic demands could be met.²⁵ The Cabinet shared his view that this was policy to be worked on over the long term, and it could perhaps wait until the final resolution of the Abyssinian crisis before being implemented in earnest.²⁶ But Eden did not want to convey this impression to Phipps.²⁷ Hitler was to be convinced that the British government regarded the settling of these issues as urgent. If the Führer realised that the British would have to work hard to ensure that the French were on their side, he may lose interest. Eden was also anxious to buy time ahead of the publication of a Defence White Paper that could sour Anglo-German relations by advocating a massive programme of British rearmament.²⁸

However, there were those in the Foreign Office whose view proved to be much closer to that contemplated by Hitler. Ralph Wigram, head of the Central Department, advised Eden that Hitler intended to reoccupy the Rhineland at the first opportunity and that the Führer would use the ratification of the Franco-Soviet treaty as an excuse to declare that the Treaty of Locarno was now void.²⁹ Initially, Eden disregarded Wigram's warning, but by the third week of February his concerns had been aroused sufficiently to call for reports on the military importance of the demilitarised zone from the ministries of war and air. Their findings and dispatches from Phipps outlining Hitler's likely response to the Franco-Soviet agreement persuaded Eden that the British government could not afford to sanction a slow response to the threat to European security posed by Hitler.³⁰ Furthermore, conversations between Wigram and von Hoesch had suggested that the German government was still receptive to the possibility of an air pact with Britain and France. But it was necessary for action to be taken before Hitler took the diplomatic initiative himself.³¹

The continuing crisis over Abyssinia provided a backdrop to Anglo-French diplomacy. The only tactic left open to the League of Nations was the imposition of oil sanctions on Italy, but Flandin was reluctant to agree, arguing that it would further undermine French relations with Italy. Eden nevertheless believed that there was little choice, and he secured the support of the Cabinet, and on 26 February, the official announcement was made.³² The next three weeks were dominated by increasingly terse exchanges between London and Paris about the British decision, culminating in a summit between Eden and Flandin in the French capital on 2–3 March.³³ Flandin's contention was that further sanctions would lead to war and the withdrawal of Italy from the League. Furthermore, it would present Hitler with a justification for remilitarising the Rhineland. In order for the French government to agree to sanctions and feel confident that France's diplomatic and security interests would be protected, Britain would have to offer guarantees to this effect.

29 February³⁴

Such information as I can obtain here confirms Signor Mussolini's denial of any political engagement between Germany and Italy.

It is of course essential to re-form the Stresa front with a quickly arming England. A reasonable and comprehensive settlement with Germany would then be probable instead of a dim possibility.

If Italy, definitely hostile to Great Britain, left the League, thereby sowing perhaps permanent discord between us and France, it would clearly encourage Herr Hitler in a policy of unreason, and even force. The formation of the Stresa front, not for the purpose of encircling Germany, but of compounding with her, seems to me so vital as to be worth serious sacrifices, which would be light indeed compared to those that we should have to make without it.

I learn that Hitler was at first disposed to exploit Italy's entanglement by engineering a *coup* in Austria and establishing a parallel Nazi Government there. The Army Chiefs objected resolutely. The Army, they said, would not fight on Austrian soil with the same enthusiasm as on German soil in the Rhineland. In the demilitarised zone they would repel any attack. In Austria they would feel to some extent interlopers. This was one of the decisive factors in Hitler's choice.

Orme Sargent was not convinced that Phipps understood the relationship between an Italian withdrawal from the League and the collapse of the Stresa front.³⁵ To treat the two issues together, as Phipps had done, would not work. Eden agreed. If the British government brokered a general settlement with Germany, it would be easier to achieve in the absence of Italy. But there was greater congruity between Phipps and the Foreign Office over Hitler's likely policy towards the Rhineland. It was unlikely that the region would remain a demilitarised zone for much longer, but Hitler's act of reclaiming it could be used as a basis for negotiation between Britain, France and Germany.³⁶

Eden had other considerations. The main difficulty was Flandin's insistence on linking support for sanctions against Italy to a British commitment to uphold the Treaty of Locarno. This would mean that if the demilitarised zone was violated, Britain would be obliged to go to war to protect it. Eden and the Cabinet thought that Flandin was asking too much, but an outright rejection of the French position could lead to difficulties at the forthcoming meeting of the League Council. Eden's solution was to set up a Cabinet Committee to examine how the British government would respond should Italy or Germany infringe the Treaty of Locarno. In the meantime, French fears could be placated through discussions with Germany and the other Locarno powers about the whole issue of European security. These negotiations, in turn, could be developed to include consideration of an Air Pact.³⁷

These plans formed the basis of a conversation between Eden and von Hoesch on 6 March.³⁸ But they were about to be overtaken by events. On 2 March, von Blomberg had told the heads of the army and the air force to prepare for movement into the demilitarised zone. Five days later, von Hoesch presented Eden with a memorandum announcing that in the opinion of the German government, the recent ratification of the Franco-Soviet pact was in contravention of the Treaty of Locarno.³⁹ Therefore, Germany no longer felt bound by the treaty and would take

immediate steps to remilitarise the Rhineland. To sweeten the pill, the document also contained a commitment to collaborate with Britain and France in the pursuit of a common security policy.

The next entry coincides with the dispatch of a joint dispatch to Berlin by the British, French, Italian and Belgian governments denouncing the German breach of the Treaty of Locarno. However, it was not Eden's instinct to adopt a confrontational approach to Germany. While Phipps clearly thought that Hitler was an opportunist who had seized his chance to reclaim the Rhineland by exploiting the infighting between the other Locarno powers over the Abyssinian crisis, Eden argued that it had long been part of British policy to oversee an eventual return of the demilitarised zone to Germany.⁴⁰ Hitler had already shown a willingness to negotiate with Britain and France over an Air Pact and had already concluded a naval agreement with Britain. While acknowledging that Hitler had pre-empted the situation, the return of the demilitarised zone to Germany could now be made a condition of a German return to the negotiating table over wider security issues. On 9 March, the Cabinet approved Eden's plans, and to placate the French, he made a statement in the Commons reaffirming the British government's commitment to the Treaty of Locarno.⁴¹

12 March⁴²

I have always felt that Hitler was bound, sooner or later, to exploit the situation which had arisen at Geneva. England and Italy, the two policemen stationed outside the "Locarno Arms" to see that France and Germany keep the peace, proceed to pass the time by quarrelling themselves. One could hardly expect Hitler to watch the two policemen rolling over and over in the village street without utilising the opportunity to wipe out at least one old score.

Hitler had, I am informed, several ideas in mind; (a) a rising in Salzburg followed by a general rising in Austria; (b) a rising among the Sudeten Germans; (c) seizure of Memel; (d) the Rhineland. He dismissed Memel first because it is at best a sprat which might bring him nevertheless into conflict with the League and the Guarantor Powers. He dismissed the Sudeten Germans because they too are only small fry and not worth a European war at this juncture. There remained Austria and the Rhineland. He chose the latter for the reasons given above.

About the middle of February it looked as though oil sanctions had been dropped and Hitler talked to his cronies about nothing but Anglo-German friendship. The Gustloff⁴³ murder kept him busy until the debate in the French Chamber on the [Franco-] Soviet⁴⁴ Treaty roused his attention to more important matters. While the Ministry for Foreign Affairs suggested an appeal to the Hague tribunal or a conference of the Locarno Powers, Hitler felt inclined to issue a statement denouncing Locarno, which would clear the way for a reoccupation of the demilitarised zone if the time ever came.

Then came the decision to take oil sanctions at Geneva on the 2nd of March,⁴⁵ for which Hitler seems to have been quite unprepared. Herr von Hassel came from Rome and explained the Italian attitude, namely that Mussolini was not prepared to make any advances to Germany but that it was quite on the cards that he would have to leave the League and Locarno. It was then that Hitler put on his thinking-cap. If Italy threatened to leave Locarno, it was more likely that France would ask Great Britain without further delay whether the Locarno Pact became null and void by such one-sided denunciation. If Germany followed Mussolini's example and denounced Locarno, the French would be faced with a *fait accompli*. Further reflection showed Hitler that danger might arise even before Italy denounced Locarno. There was nothing to prevent M. Flandin putting a question to Great Britain and drawing a statement from the Secretary of State in the House of Commons that a violation of the demilitarised zone would be regarded by Great Britain as a violation of Locarno, irrespective of any repudiation by Italy of Locarno.

On 2nd and 3rd March Hitler talked the position over with Göring and Göbbels in the *Reichskanzlei*. Göring pressed strongly for immediate action lest Germany should be stymied by a British declaration. The German Embassy in London must have telegraphed that Paris had asked us for an assurance that we would intervene should Germany declare Locarno invalid.⁴⁶ It was then obvious to Hitler that he must act without waiting for Mussolini. The ratification by the Chamber of the Soviet Pact gave him exactly the stick he wanted to beat the dog. There was no time to be lost, the Army Chiefs were summoned on the 6th March. They advised strongly against the military occupation of the Rhineland before the legal situation had been cleared up by a public statement on the part of the Chancellor and a notification to the Powers concerned. To this Hitler replied that it was essential to create a *fait accompli* by sending in troops before notifying the signatories to Locarno. To this the Generals replied that if Germany were ordered by the Powers to remove her troops war would be inevitable. Hitler answered that he hoped he could rely on the German army to defend German soil, particularly the Rhineland, if called upon to do so. He then gave orders for the occupation of the zone to begin at 5 a.m. on the following morning, promising to make a statement to the contrary a few hours later.

13 March⁴⁷

I learn privately from a sure source that two of the senior Generals strongly deprecated the sudden decision of the Chancellor to move troops into the Rhineland. No arrangements had been made because that was practically the only territory which the Army Command had ignored in their calculations, knowing that they would not attack and that France would not attack them. Everything therefore had to be improvised.

The Chancellor justified his action to the Generals by pointing out that a new situation had arisen as a result of information from the German Embassy at Rome forecasting Italy's defection from Locarno as a result of oil sanctions.⁴⁸

There is still the greatest uneasiness in high military and business circles.

The army feels that even if this coup succeeds without a war Germany gains no compensating military advantage, whilst she risks intensifying the suspicion and hatred of all European countries. The Army also feels that it is being forced to run an unnecessary risk merely to enhance the prestige of the Nazi party and provide a favourable election platform.

It must of course not be concluded from the above that the army would not fight to the bitter end if hostilities break out.

The Locarno powers, with the exception of Germany, had met in Paris on 10 March to consider a European security pact. Flandin had not been willing to entertain the notion until German troops had been withdrawn from the Rhineland.⁴⁹ If Hitler refused, sanctions could be imposed under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Eden had returned to London fearful that war was inevitable because he believed that the Führer would not be deterred by economic sanctions.⁵⁰ His greatest concern was that the French government wanted to adopt a policy of confrontation rather than conciliation towards Germany.

Nevertheless, Eden remained convinced that attempts to browbeat Hitler would be counterproductive. Talks with his Belgian opposite number, Paul van Zeeland, yielded a proposal to put to Flandin suggesting the replacement of the Treaty of Locarno with a general security agreement that could be extended to include assurances of military assistance.⁵¹ In return, the Germans would be asked to garrison a minimum number of troops in the Rhineland and agree not to consolidate their position during the negotiation of the security treaty. Flandin acceded to the plan, but made it clear that no other concessions to Germany would be granted. French misgivings made the immediate start of negotiations unlikely. Eden's mood was darkened further when he learnt that Hitler refused to sanction the withdrawal of any troops. Nevertheless, he went ahead with plans for a raft of non-aggression pacts between France, Germany and Belgium, guaranteed by Britain and Italy. A second tier of pacts between France, Belgium and Britain would be created, along with co-operation agreements between the General Staffs of these countries. Eden's proposals met with Cabinet approval on 16 March.⁵²

However, when they were presented to the French and Belgian governments, Flandin rejected the idea of a common military strategy. The forthcoming French elections, he warned, were likely to yield a government that favoured a Franco-German rapprochement, rather than an agreement that included Britain.⁵³ On 18 March, Eden predicted a complete breakdown in Anglo-French relations to the Cabinet. To prevent this, he recommended discussions between the military chiefs of staff of Britain, France and Belgium as soon as possible. He also found support in reports made by the Committee of Imperial Defence concerned that the commit-

ment of British forces in the Mediterranean could jeopardise an ability to deal with a threat from Germany.

The debate among the Locarno powers of how to deal with the Rhineland crisis also concluded that military sanctions against Germany were unlikely to work. By the end of March, Eden had good grounds for believing that he had secured a diplomatic breakthrough with the French. But for the plan to work, Hitler's co-operation had to be secured. It was unlikely that he would readily agree to the arrival of an international force in the Rhineland, or undertake not to fortify the region.⁵⁴

The task facing Eden and Flandin was enormous. The mood in Germany after the reoccupation of the Rhineland was buoyant. Hitler believed that he had secured the diplomatic initiative and that, as a result, he could negotiate with the British and French on his own terms. Nevertheless, Phipps was anxious to emphasise the importance that the German government continued to place on good relations with Britain. Any rift created between the powers by the Rhineland crisis was likely to be short lived.

28 March⁵⁵

Germany is now a furiously "expanding universe" and I cannot see any present limits to the real implications of *Gleichberechtigung*. The return of her former colonial Empire will only be a first step towards this goal. Even before the war that Empire was considered inadequate. Hitler, as Germany grows stronger, will certainly point at small countries, such as Portugal and Belgium, with large and rich colonies. He may possibly omit the Dutch possessions so as not to fall foul of Japan.⁵⁶

This is not all, however, for Germany considers that His Majesty's Government have given an undertaking that she, amongst other countries, shall receive a full share of raw material at an early date. Sir Samuel Hoare's speech at Geneva⁵⁷ made a deep impression here, and, although it did not contain any specific promise, it is held by the Nazi Party to have constituted an undertaking in the above sense just as the Treaty of Versailles promised disarmament of the victors.

So long as Germany is anxious for an understanding with Great Britain she will hold her hand, but once that understanding proves unattainable she will agitate for full *Gleichberechtigung* in the colonial and raw material spheres. I fear the true meaning of that blessed word is not yet understood abroad.

The unique tension in the European diplomatic situation in the spring of 1936 persuaded the French and British governments that Europe was closer to war than at any time since 1918. The next entry considers the German response to one of the most radical solutions proposed in Paris and London – the possible dispatch of an expeditionary force to France. Baldwin felt that Eden's pursuit of a common Anglo-French approach to the threat posed by Germany should have as its first stage, military

*dialogues. His resolve was increased when on 1 April, Hitler rejected British plans to negotiate a new Locarno-style security pact.*⁵⁸

7 April⁵⁹

I hear privately that the approaching Anglo-French General Staff conversations have intensified the feeling of pessimism in responsible circles in the Army, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and among businessmen. Even in the Nazi Party itself doubts are being entertained for the first time about the wisdom of Hitler's sudden decision to denounce Locarno. The chief blame is placed on Ribbentrop's shoulders. It is asserted that before his return to London⁶⁰ on the 31st March he gave the Chancellor to understand that he could stave off the Staff conversations. He is also said to have assured the Chancellor in the first instance that the offer to return to the League would sweep English public opinion off its feet and compel the Government to disregard the breach of Locarno. There is considerable *Schadenfreude* in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at the achievements of the new diplomacy, particularly as Herr von Bülow was unaware of the German proposal to return to the League until he read the final draft of the Chancellor's memorandum.⁶¹ In addition the Wilhelmstrasse is disturbed by the Polish attitude which is distinctly less amenable than a month ago. Herr Hitler himself is well aware of the critical attitude of military and official circles, but adheres to his view that he was forced to act as he did. Otherwise the French Government would have obtained from the British Government early in March an assurance that Italy's defection would not invalidate Locarno and that the British Government would regard the occupation of the Rhineland as a deliberate violation calling for immediate steps. Any such declaration would have blocked the way for the restoration of German sovereignty for a fresh term of years. It was idle to imagine that France would ever agree by negotiation to the fortification of the Rhineland zone. Even if she were prepared, her allies, especially Russia, would veto such an idea. He (Hitler) only acted at the eleventh hour to safeguard Germany's future freedom of movement in years to come.

The Army, however, fears that the Italian victory in Abyssinia will soon lead to reconciliation between Italy, England and France and a re-formation of the Stresa front.

However, the Anglo-French staff talks further illustrated the lack of congruity between British and French policy towards Germany. In Paris, they were viewed as evidence that Britain and France were united in their determination to stand up to Hitler. In London, they were viewed as a sop to placate the French to buy time to pursue a wider policy that included Germany in a security agreement. In order to move the negotiations along the desired route, Eden was anxious to include the Belgians in a tripartite pact that would be extended to include Germany. But progress was

checked when Flandin demanded an immediate meeting of the Locarno powers to discuss the imposition of sanctions on Germany.⁶² Parallel to this, he proposed that the British, French and Belgian government should reaffirm their commitment to the Treaty of Locarno by signing a pact of mutual assistance. Eden agreed to the meeting of the Locarno powers but held fire on Flandin's second proposal. At a meeting in Geneva on 9 April, Eden successfully persuaded the Frenchman to defer the Locarno powers' response to the reoccupation of the Rhineland, and proposals for a security pact that excluded Germany. Phipps reported that Hitler was unhappy that negotiations of this type were contemplated. Nevertheless, despite Hitler's very vocal protests, Eden proceeded to initiate the talks.⁶³ They took place on 15–16 April, and, although only concerned with the exchange of technical information, sent a message to Hitler that Britain and France, if constantly challenged by German aggression, would act together to remove the threat.

Eden's task was not helped by the death of Leopold von Hoesch. An experienced and shrewd diplomat, von Hoesch had earned the respect of the British and French governments in the Weimar period, before Hitler's assumption of power. His death was viewed as one of the milestones in German foreign affairs. His successor, von Ribbentrop, lacked insight and tact, and did little to facilitate what his political masters so often claimed they desired – good relations with Britain.

19 April

I represented The King yesterday at the funeral at Dresden of the late German Ambassador in London, Herr von Hoesch.

The whole town seemed to have turned out to view the funeral procession, and the streets and cemetery were lined with S.S., S.A., police and troops, not to mention numerous Hitlerjugend, who looked blue with cold as the day was icy. One of my foreign colleagues expressed his conviction that the Nazis felt bound to arrange so elaborate a funeral in order not be outdone by His Majesty's Government, who had made such wonderful arrangements for the return to Germany of the late Ambassador's remains.

I hear on good authority that towards the end of March Herr von Hoesch reported to his Government that Germany would be making a big mistake if she counted on gaining the friendship of Great Britain.⁶⁴ That country, despite superficial appearances to the contrary, was more inflexibly opposed to Germany's aims than even France or Russia. She only differed from France as to the methods to be employed to keep Germany down. Germany should try and reach an agreement with France direct, and not allow British meddling at every stage as she had done in the past. It seems that this report angered not only Herr Hitler but also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and that if Herr von Hoesch had survived his days as German Ambassador were numbered.

A member of my Staff was told by some Germans that they felt sure that we had paid special honour to England to the late Ambassador in order to annoy Herr von Ribbentrop. This remark is typical of German mentality.

Eden was further persuaded to review his plans for a security pact by the political situation in France. On 22 April, he secured Cabinet support for a temporary halt in diplomatic exchanges until the outcome of the French General Election was known. He was not alone in thinking that Flandin was adopting an uncompromising approach to Germany as a ploy to secure re-election.⁶⁵ Baldwin, however, was not as patient. Phipps was concerned that a speech made by the Prime Minister on 18 April, in which he had declared that while Hitler had it in his power to secure peace, Britain would meet the challenge if he chose war, could scupper Eden's efforts for a rapprochement with the Führer. While Phipps did not believe that a deal should be struck with Germany at any price, Eden's strategy offered the most promising opportunity to break the present diplomatic deadlock. Through Sargent he urged Eden and the Cabinet to pay more attention to his assessment of the German mood than to anything offered by von Ribbentrop.⁶⁶

*Hitler devoted much of the spring and early summer to paving the way for an agreement between Germany and Austria. He continued to offer assurances of friendship to Mussolini in an attempt to persuade him that the concerns about German conduct that had led to the formation of the Stresa front were now without foundation. German intervention in Austrian domestic politics increased, especially promotion of the *Freiheitsbund*, a right-wing trade union movement known for its anti-semitism and pro-Nazi sympathies. Hitler's promotion of an *Anschluss* combined with the recent re-occupation of the Rhineland provoked condemnation from the former Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain. As one of the architects of the Treaty of Locarno, his attacks on Hitler's foreign affairs strategy had a particular resonance. He called for a tough stance against Germany if an *Anschluss* was forced on Austria. If Austrian integrity was not preserved, then Czechoslovakia would become vulnerable to attack. Consequently, there would be little to stop the creation of a German-dominated bloc in central Europe. Phipps thought that the British and French would take radical steps to prevent this coming about. But the policy of these powers, as events would reveal, would be very different.*

25 April

I hear from an excellent source that the Chancellor is still deeply preoccupied by the Austrian solution. The outcome of the recent meeting of the League has disturbed him and he is told that the journeys of Sir Austen Chamberlain⁶⁷ are causing anxiety in Austrian Nazi circles who fear a Hapsburg restoration in consequence.

In fact he fears that he has been outwitted by Mussolini.

When his rival undertook his African expedition Hitler counted on a four-year campaign which would keep Italy busy while he perfected his own plans for dealing with Austria. He counted primarily on military difficulties and to some extent on the League and England to prolong the campaign. He now finds that his military experts, with the sole exception of General von Seeckt, reckoned as usual in terms of the last war and failed to take note of

scientific progress such as the use of aviation for provisioning troops and of gas for dealing with guerilla warfare.

As for sanctions, though he never expected much from them, he hoped their delaying action would be greater than it has proved to be. He now expresses astonishment at the behaviour of the League and particularly of its enthusiasts in England. They shout for measures such as the closing of the Suez Canal or an oil embargo, but they ignore the only argument which he says would carry weight with Mussolini: the passage of a conscription measure. Those who are loudest in their clamour for measures which would lead to war are also loudest in advocating pacifism at home. It was this kind of contradictory and chaotic policy which forced him to overthrow the party system in Germany and muzzle the press and the churches.

In the present state of Europe the Chancellor feels that it would be premature and dangerous to attempt the *Anschluss*, and yet the Austrian plum is ripening *a vue d'oeil*.⁶⁸ If he delays he may be forestalled by a monarchist restoration, for which he thinks Sir Austen Chamberlain is now intriguing, or by Mussolini who will return crowned with laurel and more bellicose than ever from his African exploit and more determined to keep Austria under his heel.⁶⁹ He is considerably impressed by the exploits of the Italian Air Force, all the more as the efforts to improvise a really efficient German Air Force are not yet bearing fruit.

Talking yesterday to his cronies, Herr Hitler again professed to be bewildered by British policy. While professing the desire to checkmate Mussolini, England publicly told the *Duce* that she had no army to fight him and could not even find recruits for her tiny peace-time army, chiefly because the press and the Churches, which are equally anxious to foil him, will not allow it. Was not this a "reduction ad absurdum" of the parliamentary system? A small country ready, like Italy, to shed its blood would always, he remarked, be superior to any number of enemies who were prepared to do more than shout insults or shed money.

But urgent messages are reaching him from Austria to the effect that the army, police, Civil Service and Heimwehr⁷⁰ are ready for a change, that anti-Semite feeling is growing, that all classes are deeply impressed by his seizure of the Rhineland, and finally that time, which has hitherto been working for him will henceforth work against him, unless the *Duce* can be thwarted at the eleventh hour and the Italian forces kept in Africa.

Nevertheless, as spring progressed, von Papen introduced fresh impetus to discussion of an *Anschluss*. He endeavoured to persuade Schuschnigg that his personal standing in Austria would be enhanced if he sought a rapprochement with Germany. In return, the German government would guarantee the integrity of Austria. Mussolini urged Schuschnigg to take Hitler at his word, his intervention coinciding with his final victory in Abyssinia. With his African exploits now at an end, Hitler feared that Mussolini would now take a more proactive role in central European diplomacy.

Hitler also continued to broker a deal with the British and French governments on security. On 7 and 31 March, the Führer had dispatched outlines of the minimum terms acceptable to Germany should the pact be concluded.⁷¹ By the end of April, Eden was anxious to secure something more concrete from Berlin.⁷² Thinking that waiting for French co-operation could lead to a reduction in diplomatic momentum, he proposed a unilateral British attempt to obtain a list of Hitler's priorities, through the dispatch of a questionnaire. This was presented to the Cabinet on 29 April, and was subjected to the scrutiny of two subsequent meetings before a final draft was approved.⁷³ Eden's intention was that the arrival of the questionnaire would be followed up by a visit either from himself or a senior member of the Foreign Office to facilitate positive responses from the Führer.

Phipps thought Eden too ambitious. He received his final instructions regarding the questionnaire on 6 May.⁷⁴ He thought that any attempt to commit Hitler to a long-term strategy of co-operation with Britain on issues relating to peace and disarmament was unlikely to work. Hitler's diplomatic strategy worked on the basis of seizing opportunities as they arose. He would allow nothing to inhibit that. Phipps' predictions proved correct. Hitler was reluctant to respond to the questionnaire until the French General Election revealed whether any policy stemming from Eden's document could lead to an Anglo-French attempt to curtail his diplomatic and military ambitions. To emphasise the importance of the initiative, Eden sent Phipps a long dispatch explaining his rationale, making it clear that he would give any objections raised by Phipps the same short shrift as he had to those made by von Ribbentrop.⁷⁵ Instructions received on 7 May, requested that Phipps seek an interview with Hitler as soon as possible to discuss the questionnaire.⁷⁶

12 May

Herr Hitler continued to regard with concern the situation in Austria, and the possibly premature ripening of the Austrian Nazi plum in view of Signor Mussolini's unexpectedly rapid Abyssinian success which will enable Italy to play her part again on the Brenner far sooner than Herr Hitler was led by his military experts to expect.

The paradoxical position has therefore been reached where the victorious aggressor in Africa forms the chief, if not the only, obstacle to an important step on the path of German aggression or at least aggressive expansion in Europe.

When France showed herself to be backward in applying sanctions against Signor Mussolini she was often urged to remember that Abyssinia was a "test-case" for action some day against Germany. This argument strikes me more and more as disingenuous, for it was clear that German expansion would not, anyhow in its first stages, take the form of actual aggression such as would justify the use of sanctions by the League of Nations. Nor was it ever likely that British public opinion would react with sufficient vigour to justify or render possible the imposition of such sanctions in the case of a re-

occupation of the Rhineland or of a German "response" to a pressing demand by a large number of Austrian citizens or of Sudeten Germans for incorporation in the German *Reich*. Would British public opinion indeed approve of any very drastic action to prevent the return to Germany of the [Polish] Corridor, Silesia, Memel or Danzig? Later on, perhaps, public indignation might be aroused by some positive act of German aggression in the Ukraine or elsewhere, but by that time Germany would be so strong that indignation would probably be Platonic and in any case ineffectual.

But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that it were decided to impose sanctions on Germany. Does anybody really believe that so resolute a leader as Herr Hitler would be deflected from his course by any such decision? Herr Hitler is well aware that Germany was exposed to a relentless blockade during the four years of war and is convinced, rightly or wrongly, that it was neither the blockade nor the war on two fronts but internal dissension which was the prime cause of Germany's breakdown. It is more than doubtful whether sanctions in time of peace even if generally enforced for an indefinite period, could bring Germany to her knees. The policy of autarchy, adopted when Herr Hitler took office, has been pursued with redoubled vigour since the imposition of sanctions on Italy, and there is little doubt that Germany's supply of foodstuffs, synthetic oil, synthetic rubber and fibre substitutes would render her immune. In this sense the failure of the League to bring Mussolini to his knees by the policy of sanctions must be regarded as a blessing in disguise. Had Italy succumbed the peoples of Europe, lulled into a false sense of security, would have abstained from further efforts. They would have relied upon sanctions to save themselves in case of need, and would have neglected the only defences likely to impress Herr Hitler or to prove effective against him.

For that matter it is doubtful whether Germany's small neighbours could in the last resort be induced by Geneva to take the risk of refusing to trade with her. In the case of Czechoslovakia such a refusal would be tantamount to imposing sanctions against herself for her trade with and through Germany must be vital to her.⁷⁷ It would be a bold Dutch Government that would risk the consequences of closing their frontier to Germany. Even if the Netherlands could reply upon the ultimate victory of the League could they face the risk of German military occupation within a few hours of the declaration of sanctions? Nor are any of Germany's other neighbours in a much safer position. The predicament of Poland would not be enviable, and the imposition of sanctions would probably lead to the last-minute defection of one or more of the Scandinavian countries.

Recent debates in the House of Commons, as well as correspondence in the British press, have disclosed the existence of what is in my mind a most dangerous fallacy, namely the belief that Germany's policy would have been affected, had the defeat of Mussolini been brought about by the recent action of the League.⁷⁸ Nothing could be further from the truth. It must not

be imagined that Herr Hitler and his friends are building up the most formidable military machine in the world today merely to relegate it to the scarp-heap when threatened with sanctions, even if the hitherto despised Italian Nation had yielded to their pressure. On the contrary this country would rally like one man to the clarion call of the *Führer* and again astonish the world by its fortitude and resolution in resistance.

Since writing the above I notice that certain French quarters wish to restore vitality to the League by propounding some scheme for general disarmament. They apparently even profess to believe that Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini would bow to the inevitable if England, France and Russia were to take up a strong attitude on disarmament with the approbation of practically the entire world. No mention is made of Japan.

If they really think that the heavily armed and successful treaty-breakers – Japan, Italy and Germany – would disarm at the behest of themselves, Monsieur Litvinov and a notoriously disarmed Britain, they make a big mistake. If they were able to put their theory into practice they would cause quite a big war (with most of the trumps, or arms, in the wrong hands).

It is devoutly to be hoped that the new French Government⁷⁹ will, without too much loss of time, look at things as they are and not as they would like them to be or as they would wish their electors to be blind enough to believe them to be.

To return to the Brenner. I think it is important to realise that if Austria is not already nestling in Germania's bosom it is due not to German fear of League resolutions or even sanctions, but to Herr Hitler's newly aroused and healthy awe of Signor Mussolini, who now, according to his own declaration, has joined the ranks of the satisfied Powers. This situation is not likely, however, to last indefinitely. Herr Hitler is nothing if not dynamic and if the satisfied Powers do not soon decide to compose their differences he may take advantage thereof to induce the *Duce*, infuriated but not overcome by sanctions, to reach some unhealthy agreement with himself over the Austrian and other problems.

Eight years passed in Austria⁸⁰ and Nazi Germany have convinced me that the loss of the former's independence and her merging in the ranks of Nazidom would be a far greater blow to civilisation than even the inclusion of Abyssinia in the new Roman Empire.

The next two entries chronicle Phipps' meeting with Hitler on 14 May to discuss the British government's questionnaire. As Phipps had predicted, the Führer swept aside Eden's attempt to establish a British lead in the negotiations, preferring to see the calibre of the new French government before announcing German terms for negotiating with Britain and France together.⁸¹ Opinion in the Foreign Office was similar to that taken initially by Eden – that plans for an agreement should evolve slowly rather than be hurried along. Wigram thought that that offered the best opportunity of mending British relations with Italy, which if successful, could lead to

*Italian inclusion in the pact.*⁸² Sargent feared that Britain's role might become merely incidental. Vansittart agreed, recommending that a memorandum be drafted warning the Cabinet to this possibility.⁸³

14 May⁸⁴

The Chancellor received me this morning in the presence of Baron von Neurath and Herr von Ribbentrop. He asked that our conversation might be treated as confidential and not passed on to others. The atmosphere was very friendly. Herr Hitler remarked that the new French Government would not be in the saddle before nearly the middle of June. If he were now to give me the German reply it would have to be published, and several weeks would be given to the French to pick holes in it before there were any chance of beginning negotiations. He therefore proposed to hold up a reply until the formation of a new French government was in sight.

The Chancellor here made an outburst against Bolshevism and the alarming progress it was making in Spain and France: in the latter country, chiefly owing to the unholy Russian alliance which would drag it down into the Bolshevik pit. He objected to our suggestion that he should extend non-aggression pacts to Russia and others who are not Germany's neighbours, and declared we might as well ask him to conclude such pacts with South American or Asiatic States. He declared that he would not even have received a Soviet Ambassador here if he had not found one upon taking office. He had no intention whatever of attacking Russia but angrily declined to conclude a pact with her. Moreover, she had had the effrontery to make herself into a neighbour of Germany by occupying large numbers of aerodromes on Czechoslovakia, and then suggesting a non-aggression pact. The Chancellor brushed aside my remark regarding Czechoslovak denials,⁸⁵ and described them as lies.

I turned to the air-pact, which the Chancellor said would be most desirable as stabilising peace in that sensitive spot – the West of Europe; but we could not ask Germany to limit her air-force vis-à-vis of Western Powers without taking Russia's huge air force into account. His previous offers regarding limitation had been made "before France had brought back Russia into Europe." If a limitation of arms were general and included, as it must, Russia and Japan he would be ready to join an agreement, but in view of the lamentable failure of the disarmament conference he was highly sceptical of the possibility of success. He again urged general prohibition of bombing altogether as being far more practical.

The Chancellor made his usual outburst about *Gleichberechtigung*. He remarked that the Treaty of Versailles was divided into two parts, one dealing with the limitation of German sovereignty which he had altered, and the other dealing with territorial clauses, which could not be altered except by agreement.

I impressed upon the Chancellor how desirous His Majesty's Government were of reaching a comprehensive settlement and told him they would be only too glad to send a Cabinet Minister to Berlin to discuss matters with him if he wished. He thinks the moment for that has not yet arrived, but would welcome a British Minister later, particularly to explain to him what exactly His Majesty's Government have in mind over League reform. Will reform, for instance, give the League more teeth, or will it extract that body's present teeth? He himself had not yet made up his mind regarding this important question.

I tried my best to reassure the Chancellor regarding the probable desire of the new French Government to conclude a reasonable arrangement with Germany. I also pointed out that nowhere so much as in France did Socialists pour water into their red wine after taking office. He remained unconvinced, however, and fears complete subservience to Moscow and the spread of Communism in France.

I then asked the Chancellor what he thought of Italy's surprising victory in Abyssinia.⁸⁶ He replied that he had always expected it, though not so soon. He then proceeded to expatiate upon the greatness and genius of Mussolini, which we in England had never sufficiently realised. Sanctions, he said, were pure folly. They only served to weld a nation together: in fact they had helped more than anything else to bring about Mussolini's astonishing victory. England was now faced by the Roman Empire. Instead of sanctions she should have sent troops to Lake Tsana, should have staked out her vital sphere of interest there,⁸⁷ and settled matters afterwards in a friendly way with Italy. I replied that England had not considered her own interests, but had joined in collective action against the aggressor. It was a religion in England that there should be no more aggression. The Chancellor smiled pityingly.

With dictators nothing succeeds like success, and Herr Hitler is clearly lost in admiration of Mussolini. Before long he may have visions of the Holy Roman Empire (plus a big colonial empire) of his own.

Before leaving I made the Chancellor promise that he would let me know whenever he felt the time had arrived for a visit to Berlin of a British Minister to produce useful results.

15 May⁸⁸

When on *Gleichberechtigung*, the Chancellor shouted that if anybody dared to suggest that he should not build fortifications on German soil he would tell them to mind their own business. What others did he had the right to do, and if attempts were made again to impose any kind of discrimination upon Germany he would astonish the world by his strength.

The Chancellor's manner between outbursts was perfectly friendly, but my distinct impression continues to be generally as described on December 14th last, and in particular that he has no intention of binding himself in any way

in the present fluid state of Europe. My feeling also is that he will launch his reply when it best suits him, and will publish it almost simultaneously. He indicated that he was not a "bargainer", and thereby implied that his next reply would be final, to be taken *en bloc* or rejected. I do not believe he really desires the visit of a British Cabinet Minister here in the near future, for it might render it more awkward for him to carry out the above programme.

Despite Phipps' pessimism, Eden continued to believe that Hitler would eventually accept his plan for a security pact.⁸⁹ In early June, he sought Cabinet support for a visit of a Minister to Berlin, believing that such a move would also meet with the approval of a British public anxious to see Hitler being handled in a constructive but decisive manner. Nevertheless, the deadlock between London and Berlin remained unbroken.⁹⁰ As June progressed, Eden increasingly came to regret that Britain and France had not taken a more decisive stand over the Rhineland. Hitler would probably have backed down. Although there had been no Cabinet support for a confrontation with Hitler over the Rhineland, this sense of missed opportunity haunted Eden for his remaining time at the Foreign Office.

On 19 May, rumours reached Phipps that Göbbels was deliberately scuppering Eden's plans for a security pact by persuading Hitler that German foreign policy objectives would be more easily achieved if Germany were unshackled by treaty obligations.⁹¹ Phipps was also concerned that unless decisive steps were taken in the near future, the election of a Left wing Blum government in France could make Hitler more disinclined to consider a pact with the French and the British. The Führer would become increasingly convinced of Franco-Soviet connivance against Germany, rendering any agreement on arms limitation unlikely. Phipps' observations led Vansittart to comment: 'Hitler has never meant business in our sense of the word. The sooner the Cabinet realises that the better for this long misguided country'.⁹²

17 June⁹³

I hear from a very good source that the Chancellor is in great form and has no intention of replying seriously to our questions. Indeed, he is rather disposed to answer with his tongue in his cheek to the question about Germany's future respect for Treaties, and to refer to the English and French default over the American debt,⁹⁴ showing that the vital interests of a country always override treaty obligations. He is at times disposed to answer the innocuous questions only.

The Chancellor feels the present situation in Europe is ideal for him. France is very weak internally and is faced with a grave financial crisis. Even when sanctions cease the left parties will hardly resume cordial relations with Italy, or be able to shake off Russian influence, and his reports tells him that French influence with the Little Entente, etc. is rapidly waning. He thinks there is trouble ahead for us in the Far East which will distract our attention from Europe.

... He now regards Dr. Schuschnigg as a more redoubtable adversary than Dr. Dollfuss, particularly in view of his courageous attitude over sanctions.

The Chancellor continues to express feelings of admiration for Great Britain and the British people, but finds what he describes as British interference in Europe embarrassing. What he really hankers after, however, is an Anglo-German understanding to the exclusion of third or fourth parties.

There is little evidence to suggest that Hitler conspired to secure Phipps' removal as ambassador. Nevertheless, Martha Dodd, wife of Phipps' American opposite number, noted in her memoirs that securing Phipps' permanent recall from Berlin had been one of von Ribbentrop's principal objectives as ambassador to London.⁹⁵

24 June

The *Deutsche Nachrichten Büro* issues the following notice which is published in this morning's German press:-

"An English newspaper [*The Times*] announced a few days ago that Herr von Ribbentrop had been intriguing in London against the British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Eric Phipps, and had mentioned the names of certain British public men who would be acceptable as Ambassador in Berlin.

This report of the English newspaper, which has also led to a question in the House of Commons, is of course a pure invention."⁹⁶

The early summer of 1936 was partly taken up with discussion of naval issues. Eden had long been anxious to secure German participation in a wider naval agreement than that concluded in June the previous year.⁹⁷ But persuading others powers to join the negotiations, notably France and Japan, had proved difficult. In the spring of 1936, von Ribbentrop had argued that Germany should be granted special treatment in any negotiations because of the security threat posed by the Soviet Union.⁹⁸ As discussions progressed through the summer and autumn, the instructions given to von Ribbentrop became increasingly uncompromising. Under no circumstances would Germany scale down her programme of naval expansion. Germany needed a strong navy and army to fend off the threat of invasion from France and her allies, while Britain, it was anticipated, would probably remain neutral.

What the German government had not anticipated was that Eden would get on better with the new French Premier, Leon Blum, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Yvon Delbos, than he had with Sarraut and Flandin. A possible military extension of the Franco-Soviet pact, so feared in the Wilhelmstrasse, could therefore be encouraged, even brokered by Britain. Relations with Britain were not improved by Hitler's insistence that he would not sign a security pact with Britain and France. A number of minor agreements relating to Part XII of the Treaty of Versailles, concerning the control of German rivers and canals, were signed, but Hitler shied away from broader

considerations, declaring in October that he reserved the right to denounce or renegotiate sections of the peace settlement when he saw fit. Not for the first time, Phipps suggested that the German government was employing stalling tactics.

It was in this climate of obfuscation, that plans were made for Lloyd George to visit Hitler. As Prime Minister after the First World War, Lloyd George had favoured a policy of accommodation and arbitration towards Germany. In a visit ostensibly to study the impact of the Nazi revolution on German social and economic questions, Lloyd George also discussed the proposed Locarno-style security pact at meetings with Hitler at his retreat at Berchtesgaden on 4–5 September.⁹⁹ The encounter was engineered by von Ribbentrop, who hoped that the former Prime Minister might broker a better relationship between the Führer and the British government. Phipps suggested that it was a ploy to persuade Britain to sanction the return of Germany's colonies.¹⁰⁰ The former premier's visit demonstrated how little he now understood the rationale behind German foreign policy.

Nevertheless the welcome that Lloyd George received in Germany was warm. The summer of 1936 marked a turning point in German attitudes to the international community. The propaganda machine that was becoming so adept at convincing German citizens of the merits of Nazism, was also to be used to convince the rest of the world of the superiority of the Aryan race. The principal showcase was to be the Olympic Games, staged in Berlin in August 1936. The Games conveyed the impression that the Nazis were assured of their position and that the wealth of the nation was increasing. The diplomats resident in Berlin were treated to lavish banquets and invited to the opening ceremony. Phipps attended the latter with his wife under protest, believing the event to be a sham.

The Olympic Games were also overshadowed by the outbreak of civil war in Spain. Hitler showed little interest in the conflict during its early months, but he was mindful of its potential importance in dealing with Britain and, in particular, France, should the war spread beyond the Spanish frontiers. Göring and von Blomberg supported initiatives emanating from German intelligence sources to offer German aid to Franco. Hitler encouraged them in their exploits on the premise that Spanish raw materials might be of use to German industry. However, in the summer of 1936, Hitler's eyes were more firmly fixed on the diplomatic wrangle with Britain and France. Indeed, the war did add an extra dimension to Anglo-French relations, as it became apparent that France might be compelled to provide a base from which international supporters of the republicans in Spain could fight their cause. This could draw France into the war, and by extension, have an impact on British assurances of military assistance. The question in Whitehall was, as it had so often been in the past, should Britain be drawn into French diplomatic problems, and if so, to what extent should any help be given? One answer was the establishment of the Non-Intervention Committee in September 1936.

In early July, Eden had been persuaded by van Zeeland to call a meeting of the Locarno powers to expedite the conclusion of the security pact.¹⁰¹ Eden welcomed this opportunity to apply pressure on Germany as his attempts to secure French and German support for the British questionnaire had left him feeling diplomatically

exposed. But news from Berlin for an expansion of the German army forced the pace of negotiation of the security pact.¹⁰² The Locarno powers, meeting on 23 July, concurred, but several days later, Eden came up against German obstructiveness.¹⁰³ Von Neurath announced that his government would not be prepared to attend a conference until October at the earliest. Rumours from Paris that Schacht had requested French economic assistance and discussed the restoration of German colonies, suggested to Eden and Baldwin that the German government was using delaying tactics. With this news, the feeling in the Foreign Office was that Eden's plans for a security pact were now defunct, pressure was applied on him by Wigram and Vansittart to admit as much.¹⁰⁴ For several months, he resisted their arguments, claiming that he would not be prepared to restore Germany's colonies as a precondition for negotiating a security pact with Hitler. However, by the autumn, he found their arguments increasingly difficult to rebut.

Phipps was more concerned with German domestic politics. The 1936 Nuremberg Rally, which he attended, began on 9 September. It provided the platform for the announcement of a Four-Year Plan to boost rearmament. Before the rally, Hitler had come under criticism from Schacht, Commissioner for the War Economy since May 1935, and other economics experts. Their claim was that the German economy could not withstand a massive expansion in armament production. The reoccupation of the Rhineland had placed a still greater strain on resources. In a memorandum of 12 August, Hitler had vehemently rejected Schacht's contention, and announced that he intended to put forward his own plans for creating a war economy. Phipps regarded the rallies as little more than propaganda exercises and that much of what was said at them was rhetoric.

[undated] September

I again declined the Chancellor's annual invitation to the Party Rally at Nuremberg, and my American and French colleagues, as before, did likewise.

My reason for not going is very simple. A great deal of hot air is emitted at these Party meetings in the course of which rude remarks are made by various speakers about "the so-called democracies", etc. If I were present on such an occasion I should immediately withdraw, quit the special train, in which the Diplomatic Corps are cooped up in a siding for a week, and return to Berlin. Anglo-German relations would then suffer more than they do by my polite refusal to accept the invitation.

Dr. Schacht once at luncheon at the Embassy asked me in a loud voice across the table why the French Ambassador and I never went to the Party Rally. I replied that the Führer always persisted in fixing that meeting for a date when I was accustomed to take my leave.¹⁰⁵

The disagreement between Hitler and Schacht continued through September. But Schacht found himself superseded by Göring for the task of putting the Four-Year Plan into operation. Nevertheless, he continued to voice his objections to Hitler's

plans. At Nuremberg, Hitler had announced that war with the Soviet Union was not only inevitable, but imminent. Schacht saw little reason for these conclusions. Göring, however, was more in agreement with Hitler. In a conference with his air staff in December, he restated the gravity of the Soviet threat, but also pointed to the British programme of rearmament, which could undermine Germany's interests in western Europe.

30 September¹⁰⁶

I hear from an excellent source that although the Chancellor's dislike of a [security] Conference has not been overcome, he regards our memorandum of 17th September¹⁰⁷ as a distinct advance. The other Nazi leaders are in no hurry, as Herr Hess puts it, to send the German fly to confer with the four spiders.

If a new Locarno Agreement can be reached without the inclusion of other Powers on extraneous matters, Herr Hitler is not disposed to make the Franco-Russian treaty or Czech-Russian relations¹⁰⁸ a stumbling block. So far he refuses to fix the date for Herr von Ribbentrop's departure. The latter, for his part, is in no hurry lest on his arrival in London he may be pressed by all and sundry to bring Germany to the Conference table. He fears that his disinclination to press the Chancellor might alienate his British friends.¹⁰⁹

The action of the three Governments in connection with the franc came as a severe blow.¹¹⁰ The highest Nazi circles have always been convinced that no democracy could act with secrecy and that co-operation between the three Powers in question was a thing of the past. The fact that three democratic governments have been able to spring a surprise on the world came as a most unpleasant surprise to them.

The internal situation, notably the food difficulties and the shortage of foreign currency, is preoccupying the Chancellor. His veteran supporters have been very obstreperous of late. They regard the decision to double the military service as a dangerous concession to the army. They have confidence in General von Blomberg, but none of his colleagues.

The resumption in October 1936 of discussions about the restoration of Germany's colonies, when all of the fascist powers were flexing their muscles in foreign affairs, gave the subject a fresh resonance. Phipps now believed that the restoration of the colonies was now essential for Hitler. The Rhineland episode had demonstrated that the British and French were not willing to go to war to defend the Treaty of Versailles. Mussolini's triumph in Abyssinia had been achieved despite the best efforts of the League of Nations and the international community, and now it appeared that Franco was winning a swift victory in Spain.

14 October

I learn from a reliable source that the Colonial Department at the Munich headquarters of the Nazi Party is confident that the return of the Cameroons

is a foregone conclusion, and that the restoration of all the colonies is only a matter of time. So great is this confidence in regard to the Cameroons that a complete scheme for the administration, finance and exploitation of the restored territory is being prepared and jobs are being filled in advance. I am also told that German agents go regularly from Munich to the former colonies and that a certain Herr Dittrich is now in the Cameroons on a political propaganda mission from Dr. Göbbels.

21 October¹¹¹

... We had Ribbentrop to a farewell dinner last night. I hear that it is his intention to come back to Berlin very frequently. He will keep on his office here, a thoroughly unpractical arrangement, but which will give him a good pretext for coming over; this he is anxious to do both for political and personal reasons. The fact is he is a lightweight (I place him near the bottom of the handicap), irritating, ignorant and boundlessly conceited.

Ribbentrop arrived rather late, dazed and deaf at our dinner, having flown to and from the *Führer* at Berchtesgaden since breakfast! He told Frances [Phipps' wife] that on the whole he did not really know whether Mosley sprang from the soul of the English people. Frances replied that he undoubtedly did not. Mosley was here incognito the other day and did not, it seems, make a favourable impression.¹¹² After dinner I had some talk with Ribbentrop, or rather he talked at me. It was mostly on Communism and the terrible danger that not only France but also Great Britain ran of being submerged by it. The Nazi is of course unable to see how Communists can possibly be defeated except by putting them in camps, beating them "up" and making them into slaves.

Hitler has promised Ribbentrop he shall be Minister for Foreign Affairs if his London mission is successful (in other words, I suppose, if he brings back colonies and credits in his suit-case).¹¹³

I hear Hitler much regrets having sent us his reply¹¹⁴ on the Five-Power Conference before King Leopold's bombshell.¹¹⁵ If he had waited till the bursting of the latter his answer would have been wonderfully withering. Ribbentrop, it appears, would in that case have suggested to Hitler to propose to us a joint Anglo-German guarantee of Belgium!

The discussion below is notable for the broader definition Phipps gives to Germany's colonial aspirations. It is not simply linked to the restoration of the pre-war empire, but is also an ideologically driven plan aimed at colonising Eastern Europe. It contains one of a number of references in the diary to Mein Kampf acting as a blueprint for Hitler's foreign policy intentions. These points have an added significance. Phipps almost certainly included them because the time when he was compiling the diary for publication coincided with the first stages of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, begun in June 1941.

22 October¹¹⁶

Germany's colonial appetite is growing as quickly as I had apprehended.

When Dr. Schacht boasted to me in December last¹¹⁷ that he had converted the Führer to the colonial thesis I told him that I did not consider he was to be congratulated upon that conversion, (which means that Germany will not be satisfied even by the fulfilment of the alarmingly ample demands set forth in *Mein Kampf*).

Herr Hitler in that work makes a slashing attack on Germany's pre-war foreign policy and criticised amongst other things the importance attached to colonial expansion. "And so", he concludes (p. 742), "we National Socialists deliberately drew a line under the aims of the foreign policy of our pre-war period. We take up the thread broken six hundred years ago. We stop the never-ending Germanic migration to the South and West and turn our eyes to the land in the East. We at last finish with the colonial and mercantile policy of the pre-war time and go over to the territorial policy of the future."

There is no reason to believe that Herr Hitler is now prepared to revise this dictum, to abandon his aspirations in Europe and to be satisfied, even for a measurable period, with colonies. On the contrary, assuming that the return or acquisition of some colonies will, as Dr. Schacht claims, patch up the sole weak chink in his armour, the effect of our surrender would probably only be to accelerate or at any rate to facilitate, the execution of the programme for Eastern expansion laid down in *Mein Kampf*. But the German colonial programme now advocated, viz., a redistribution of the Belgian, Portuguese, Dutch and possibly Australian possessions would not be mere surrender on our part, it would also be a betrayal by Great Britain and France (not to mention the League) of the small States concerned. The unscrupulous Dr. Schacht doubtless thinks that His Majesty's Government, rather than give up British or Dominion mandated territory, would be ready to connive at the black-mailing by Germany of these small States, whose possessions, moreover, would be more valuable to her than the former German Colonial Empire, the return of which to Germany would, I have always felt, only constitute an appetising *hors d'oeuvre* for a really square Teutonic meal later on.

To attempt to assess the danger to the British Empire by the establishment overseas of German air and submarine bases or by added facilities for long-distance flying would clearly be outside my province. I feel grave doubts, however, despite Herr Hitler's assurances to the contrary, whether Germany would not eventually declare herself to be compelled to violate the Anglo-German Naval Agreement in order efficiently to protect a colonial Empire of which, at the time of its signature, she was not yet possessed.

Further, it might be well to remember Dr. Schacht's admission to me last December that Nazi extremists would be got rid of by being sent to any future German colonies. These gentry would not be very agreeable neighbours,

nor would they be likely to be over squeamish in their treatment of the unfortunate natives.

It is my firm conviction that to encourage even a beginning of German colonial expansion is merely to whet the German appetite, increase German prestige and strength and ultimately to render more probable an Anglo-German conflict.

Should any further colonial overtures be made by Dr. Schacht or others the British or French interlocutors concerned might quote *Mein Kampf*, and might point out politely but firmly that Great Britain and France are not prepared to discuss the already Gargantuan menu set forth for Germany in her bible – plus the substantial repast that contributed to the undoing of the Hohenzollerns.¹¹⁸

On 22 October, Schacht had made further representations to Phipps about the restoration of German colonies, specifically, Cameroon, Togoland and New Guinea, and part of the Belgian Congo and Angola. But by the end of the month, as the next entry suggests, the emphasis of the German government had moved away from the simple acquisition of these territories for their own sake towards the establishment of 'raw material areas' vital for German industry. The intention was to convey the impression that German territorial acquisition was rooted in economic need rather than bellicose statements intended to intimidate the international community. In this way, Hitler sought to distinguish himself morally from Mussolini.

This was a propaganda line that suited Eden's purposes, as he circulated a memorandum about his plans for a Five-Power Conference to the Cabinet on 23 October.¹¹⁹ Hitler could not be trusted, but it would do more harm than good to the chances of peace by treating him as a diplomatic pariah. The Foreign Secretary's spirits were further lifted by a visit by von Ribbentrop four days later, who reiterated the Führer's often-made commitment to the promotion of good relations with Britain.

30 October¹²⁰

After a luncheon party yesterday Dr. Schacht drew me aside and tackled me on the colonial question.

He said that he could not understand Great Britain's attitude in declining even to discuss this matter, which was the only obstacle to a satisfactory arrangement between our two countries.

I repeated to him the arguments which I have already used to him and Dr. Göbbels. I laid stress on the practical unanimity of public opinion in Great Britain against any return of the mandated territories, etc., and I drew Dr. Schacht's attention to the resolution of the Margate Conference.¹²¹ He replied that British public opinion would have to be altered, but that he welcomed one of the Margate resolutions which opposed the return of the colonies chiefly on the ground that they might serve as military, naval or air

bases and as recruiting grounds for black troops for Germany. The Chancellor, he declared, would be quite ready to give the most positive and far-reaching assurances on these points. I replied that this would seem to infringe the meaning of that blessed word *Gleichberechtigung*, but he vowed that that would never be invoked in this respect.

Dr. Schacht, finding no response from me, angrily remarked that during his recent visit to Paris he had found the French more reasonable than us, and he quoted Madame [Genevieve] Tabouis in the *Oeuvre* of the day before yesterday. It was not, he said, a question of prestige but of pure economics and raw material. He even indicated that the question of "sovereignty" might be waived. (This presumably meant a return to the old and impractical idea of chartered companies, but I did not inquire, as my last wish was to give Dr. Schacht an excuse for pretending that we were in any way "negotiating"). In the course of our talk he only specifically referred to the Cameroons and to New Guinea.

Dr. Schacht alternatively wheedled and blustered. When he found both methods left me cold he said that the popular enthusiasm at General Göring's speech¹²² the night before last was boundless, and that if General Göring had asked his audience to applaud a decision to make war they would have done so unanimously. He then brought the conversation to an end by saying that if Germany found it impossible to reach an agreement with us she might still turn to ... Russia.¹²³

Dr. Schacht's position in the National Socialist Government is a peculiar one. He is not, and never was, a National Socialist. He does not believe, and never did believe, in autarchy, anti-Semitism, the racial theory, *Blut und Boden*¹²⁴ or the other fundamentals of the Nazi creed. He is a democrat, but a soured democrat, thanks to his experiences at the hands of the western democracies in connection with the protracted tragedy of German Reparations. He joined the Hitler Government because he had been dismissed by a Weimar Government in much the same frame of mind as Herr von Papen and Herr Hugenberg. He knew very little about the Nazi movement and imagined that the newcomers could be tamed and influenced by wise counsels, and that a semi-autocratic but essentially sensible Government, in which he would be economic and financial dictator, would emerge from the revolutionary movement. He discovered in a very short time that he had made a profound mistake. He found himself dealing with fanatics, gangsters and idealists, as typified by Göbbels, Röhm and Hitler, of a kind that he had never before encountered in Germany. One might compare Dr. Schacht's position to that of a skilled navigator who in a moment of pique joined a pirate vessel, confident that he would reform the pirate captain and his crew. He has found himself compelled to engage in piracy and to steer most dangerous and unorthodox courses, despite his protestations. If the craft is wrecked he knows that he will be the first to drown and he finds that it takes all his skill in navigation to avoid shipwreck. His fate is bound up with that

of the pirates and though he disapproves of their piracy he must abet it in his own interest, though there are moments when his soul revolts.

Luckily for Dr. Schacht Herr Hitler had no knowledge of currency or finance, and he was, and is still, sufficiently intelligent to disregard the advice of his Party friends. He will retain Dr. Schacht so long as the ship of State remains afloat. If it threatens to founder he may have no choice but to pitch him overboard.

Dr. Schacht is therefore faced with a difficult task. He has to find a compromise between political expediency and the dictates of financial common sense. He has succeeded in providing the funds for rearming Germany and the funds for the Nazi unemployment campaign. He has succeeded in warding off the worst attacks of the Nazi extremists. There has been no general confiscation of Jewish or other property and, though dividends are limited to 6 or 8 per cent. and there is considerable interference with private enterprise, the foundations of the capitalist system have not been undermined in Germany. He is, moreover, in the strong position of being able to say: "I told you so!" when the German Government finds itself short of currency, of raw materials, and finally of internal food supplies.

Within the Government he is more or less the leader of the moderate party. He has the support of Baron von Neurath, the German Army and the Civil Service. He finds very helpful points of contact with General Göring, who is an old army officer with few Nazi proclivities in his saner moments.

In demanding the restoration of Germany's colonies Dr. Schacht is actuated by several motives – self-protection, natural inclinations, and patriotism. He is alarmed by the shrinkage of world trade. Even if this is stemmed he realises that Germany's share in it is insufficient as a basis for her economy and her ambition as a Great Power. He foresees a progressive deterioration which will either bring about his downfall or an international explosion. Both consummations would be highly undesirable, for Dr. Schacht, despite his bluster, is not in his heart of hearts a believer in aggression. As a way out he can only think of colonial restoration. He is no believer in the new Four Year Plan, but, to go back to the analogy of the pirate ship, he must help to work the pump which will save the craft from foundering, because he himself is on board.

Perhaps the strongest element in Dr. Schacht's position is the fact that there is no outstanding competitor for the presidency of the *Reichsbank* in the field. Furthermore, Herr Hitler is notoriously conservative in the matter of his lieutenants. He dislikes new faces and on principle he believes that a dictator should not admit that he has made a mistake. To dismiss a Minister is equivalent to admitting that an error of judgement was committed in appointing that Minister.

Several hearts beat in Dr. Schacht's breast, a Liberal Democratic one, a National Socialist one and an international one. At times one beats more strongly than the others. This accounts for his inconsistencies of speech and action. He was in office when Liberal Democratic Germany was denied the

smallest concession. Today he sees autocratic Nazi Germany freed by her own initiative from many of the fetters of Versailles and he reflects bitterly that the world is ruled by unreason, selfishness and force. I can well imagine Dr. Schacht, piqued by our refusal to give Germany colonies, urging General Göring to perfect such an air force as would bring London to reason.

Dr. Schacht is a clever tactician. He has now scored a distinct success in his handling of the questions of the moment, the currency, food, and material shortage in Germany, for which he, in a sense, can be held by the uninformed German public to be responsible. He has induced the Nazis to take up the front line positions in the new campaign for the Four Year Plan. When General Goering addressed the Berlin populace at the Sportpalast on the 28th October, Dr. Schacht was present merely as an expert. His name was mentioned by General Göring in the same breath as that of the unimportant Nazi "expert" Herr Keppler. He was distinctly relieved when the Führer agreed with him that an outstanding personality like General Göring should be entrusted with the noble task of rallying the country for the new campaign. If the campaign fails General Göring and the Nazi Party, and not Dr. Schacht, will be responsible.

Much of Eden's attention was taken up with the preliminary consideration of a Five-Power security pact. A principal concern was that British willingness to negotiate would be seen as a sign of weakness in Berlin and Rome. In mid-November, Eden had been urged by Grandi to give formal diplomatic recognition to the Italian conquest of Abyssinia as a precursor to Italo-British negotiations. This the Foreign Secretary refused to do. Phipps' description of Göring was intended to warn Eden that he should employ the same circumspection when negotiating with the Germans as he did with the Italians. As the above entry illustrates, Phipps was also sending the Foreign Office detailed dispatches about the likely outcome of the Four-Year Plan to German economy and rearmament programmes. Reaction to the success or failure of the Plan was difficult to predict because he believed that the Nazis were not in control of the economic situation, having inherited the main problems relating to currency depreciation from the last Weimar cabinets. The Nazis were therefore likely either to bankrupt Germany or, to avert this, kick start the economy by putting it on a war footing.

10 November¹²⁵

The flow of English visitors to Germany continues.¹²⁶

Göring entertains his English guests in a lavish and generous manner, but so far they have been unable to give him anything in return (not even a colony). I fear the result of all this one-sided hospitality may well be an attempt on Göring's part, which it will be difficult to resist, and perhaps still more difficult to satisfy, to come to England (possibly as Hitler's representative at the Coronation [of Edward VIII]). If we resist we may incur Göring's undying hospitality and if we let him come we run quite a good risk of his

being shot in England. Neither of these alternatives would be likely permanently to improve Anglo-German relations. (Incidentally I hear from a first-class source that Blomberg also is very keen to be the chief German representative at the Coronation. He, of course, would be far more suitable from our point of view, and I only hope he may eventually be chosen.)

I often wonder what is the object of all these visits, apart of course from the very natural wish of the visitors to see so strange a being as Göring at close quarters. I realise that in our free country the Government cannot always prevent Mayfair from rushing Hitlerwards, but if some of the visitors could be choked off I think it would be a good thing. So far as I can see they only raise false hopes here and will eventually arouse more resentment in the German breast than even that curmudgeon – the British Ambassador – who has always obstinately declined to give Göbbels, Schacht and Co. the slightest hope of obtaining the smallest colony. Now it is well-nigh impossible, with the best will in the world, for the gallant General's guests, whilst actually partaking of his Gargantuan repasts, to adopt this attitude of reserve. Yet is not reserve the only prudent attitude unless and until we definitely decide to grant the German demands? Meanwhile, of course, diplomacy stinks in the Nazi nostrils. I believe Göbbels suggested to one English guest recently that "somebody" should come here to discuss matters with the powers that be, but that "somebody" was on no account to be a diplomat.

I earnestly trust that if Schacht goes to London he may be told the same thing by all in authority, viz., that if Germany prefers guns to butter, as she openly boasts, she is quite welcome, but that Great Britain firmly declines to supply the butter so long as German policy continues on its present course. I hope all concerned will be quite frank and firm with Schacht, who mistakes politeness for weakness. It must be remembered that if he does come to London he will certainly make use of his visit and advertise it afterwards in whatever way he thinks best suited to his own interests.

The general public here is in complete ignorance of the fact that I made representations regarding Göring's and Göbbels' speeches.¹²⁷ Only the few who read the foreign press are aware of it. Incidentally, it is only another instance of Göring's old-world tact and courtesy that he should, in the presence of his chief English guest have sneered at the "superior intelligence of the English", thereby making the whole Sportpalast rock with laughter.

I may be thought too pessimistic, but the longer I stay here the less cause I find for rejoicing. I believe the Nazi extremists, who opposed Ribbentrop's appointment to London, are now ready to wait and see what success attends that worthy's attempts to woo Great Britain. If he fails the "Party" will give up playing what the French call *la carte anglaise* and will strain every nerve to isolate us, and then *Gott strafe England* will be their motto. To attain that object they hope (1) that France will go Communist and fall prey to civil war *a l'Espagnol*, or (2) that France will go Fascist and come to a separate arrangement with Germany. Here perhaps the German medicine men of the mind

may make a wrong diagnosis, for it seems by no means certain that a Fascist France need necessarily turn her back on us or throw in her lot with Frau Germania. But in any case it seems absolutely essential for us that (1) a strong Government, capable of restoring and preserving order, should soon emerge in France, and (2) that we should continue to work in as close collaboration with France as possible. I hardly dare to advocate a (3), but I will set it down as an eventuality so blissful for a British dweller in the Wilhelmstrasse to contemplate as to savour of Paradise – a re-establishment of our traditionally friendly and cordial relations with Italy. Then, with an admittedly well-disposed Roosevelt America in the background, we could pursue the even tenor of our rearmament course without worrying too much over the German gangsters' hot air and breath.

In Berlin, the final months of 1936 were concerned with formalising relations with Italy and Japan. A speech by Mussolini on 1 November made some attempt to define the word 'axis' and how it pertained to Italo-German relations. As far as Hitler was concerned, the alliance provided a means of resisting British and French pressure for a Locarno-style security pact and of applying political and diplomatic pressure on Austria. However, Schacht and others charged with the implementation of the Four-Year Plan had other concerns. A close association with a country that was willing to risk war to achieve its objections might drag Germany into a conflict for which the German economy and military could be ill-prepared. But Hitler was not willing to allow his judgement to be affected by such considerations. Having thrown off the shackles of the treaties of Versailles and Locarno, his ambitions for Germany were now on a global scale. On 23 October, the same day as the Rome–Berlin Axis was formally created, von Ribbentrop and the Japanese ambassador to Berlin, Mushakoji Kintomo had initialled the Anti-Comintern Pact, which was officially ratified on 25 November. The agreement with Japan was important not simply because it offered German approval to a right-wing militaristic regime. Its intention was to create an international alliance to combat the spread of communism and in so doing suggest that the democratic powers had not done enough to meet this challenge. In this climate, the voices of more moderate Nazis such as Schacht tended to be drowned out. The number of references to the Minister of Economics' views contained in Phipps' diary for 1936 suggests that he was trying to convince the Foreign Office that not all members of the Nazi ruling elite were as irrational as Hitler. In an era when Phipps and Eden still hoped that agreements with Germany could be reached on rearmament and the Five-Power Pact, one strategy was to hope that eventually the German economic position would become so bad that Hitler would have little choice but to listen to his expert advisors.¹²⁸

Phipps was endeavouring to persuade the German government that a close relationship with Italy, Japan as well as the Western European powers was not mutually exclusive. On 21 November, when he heard that Hitler intended to recognise Franco as Spanish head of state, he made representations to von Neurath, arguing that there was still scope for German participation in the Non-Intervention Committee. Von Neurath

*dismissed Phipps' request as being out of the question. It is tempting to see Phipps as an idealist, but his views were consistent with those held by the War Office, which had been supplying the Foreign Office with data about the scale of German involvement in the Spanish Civil War. The figures suggested that while German assistance was at least comparable with that of Italy, their objectives were different.*¹²⁹

9 December

In the course of a speech at Frankfurt today Dr. Schacht said as follows:-

"We are a country which possesses on too small an area too great a population and this fact presses on us like mountain. When I recently had occasion to discuss this fact in conversation with a foreign diplomatist in Berlin this friend of mankind (*Menschenfreund*) gave me the advice that the German nation should then reduce its births. This outlook, which we meet in Anglo-Saxon circles also in other connections – we need only think of the so-called scientific treatment of this problem by Malthus¹³⁰ – is in my opinion in contradiction with the most primitive principles of the divine order and, if we were not already accustomed to much of this sort of thing, it would surprise us to see such an outlook come precisely from a country, in which in other respects religious conceptions and susceptibilities take a prominent place. It is only the irony of circumstances that this same country should be one of those very countries which possess for their own population perhaps the greatest space and resources for living. I believe the arbitrary limitation of the increase in the population to be a crime against God and nature so long as the whole globe offers possibilities for the nourishment of the people living on it."

The above, if it refers to a friendly and private conversation that I had with Dr. Schacht after luncheon at this Embassy on October 29th is not only impertinent and indiscreet, but contains two gross misstatements:

- (1) I never gave Dr. Schacht any advice on this subject, and
- (2) I never advocated birth control for Germany.

What really passed was as follows:-

Dr. Schacht made the usual remark about Germany being a *Volk ohne Raum*. I thereupon asked him why then the German Government tried artificially to stimulate the birth-rate by offering premiums for babies, and by other means. To this Dr. Schacht replied that it would be a disaster if the German population sank, as it well might do, for forty millions or even less.

I shall certainly give Dr. Schacht a wide berth in future.

Eden believed that the recent German alliances provided proof there was need for a Five-Power Pact. On 4 December Phipps was instructed work with François-Poncet to formulate a communication to be given to Hitler, setting out the British and French case for such an agreement. The rationale was that the Spanish Civil War

had provided a reminder of the folly of going to war.¹³¹ War would be prevented in Europe and the conflict in Spain brought to an end if there was a broad reaffirmation of the Locarno 'spirit' of the 1920s. Furthermore, even countries that had flouted the First World War peace treaties in the past had shown their willingness to adhere to a policy of non-intervention in Spain. However, the German government's response was sceptical both about the security agreement and about the likelihood of the negotiations bringing an end to the conflict in Spain. Phipps' confidence in the practical realities of the plan, rather than its intention, also began to wane.

Hitler preferred to make his views about the Anglo-French proposal known to Eden through von Ribbentrop rather than through Phipps. The comparison between the proposed treaty and that of the Treaty of Locarno was undesirable because the 1925 agreement had been contrary to German interests, especially in Eastern Europe. There was no guarantee that the new security pact would address German vulnerability to attack from the Soviet Union or facilitate the return of the Polish Corridor. By mid-December, it was becoming clear that the German government wanted an improvement in British relations with Italy before committing further to participation in security negotiations. Concerns centred on the nature of any British diplomatic presence in Abyssinia and on efforts to persuade the Italians to limit assistance to Franco. Further objections were also raised to a Locarno-style security pact, especially to British assumptions that any infringement of the treaty would be policed by the League of Nations – a body of which Germany was no longer a member. To pacify Hitler, Eden asked Phipps what other form of arbitration would be acceptable to Germany. By 23 December, Phipps was still considering his response. He thought that von Ribbentrop was placing unnecessary obstacles in the way of negotiations, but it was unclear how Hitler would pursue a successful policy as he appeared to have exhausted all of the diplomatic options.

23 December¹³²

The wise words of warning that Mr. Eden recently uttered in public speeches and in the House of Commons have fallen unpleasantly on Nazi ears. It is unlikely therefore, nor do I wish it otherwise, that Herr von Ribbentrop is spending a very pleasant Yuletide with his master.

The German Ambassador's carefully laid English plans and opportunities for intrigue have, in certain important details miscarried, and a review of his first official weeks in London can hardly have afforded either himself or Herr Hitler much cause for rejoicing.

Nazi Germany is beginning to realise that the brilliant period of bloodless victories by means of Treaty violations is over. I only trust that we shall continue to refrain from allowing ourselves to be bullied or coaxed into increasing its prestige and strength by weakening on the colonial question. Nazi Germany will not, I feel sure, venture to attack a rearmed Britain, merely because the latter declines to succumb to bluff.

Remaining concerns relating to the fascist dictators, the Soviet Union and the civil war in Spain were viewed by Foreign Office officials as one large, extended problem. The central question, as ever, was whether a general rapprochement could be reached that would prevent the outbreak of a European war, or, at least, limit British involvement in such a conflict. The policy of appeasement remained associated more with peace and reconciliation rather than with territorial concession. Within Whitehall, not only was this strategy viewed as morally correct, it offered a means to buy time so that the British armament industry could be modernised and expanded should war break out. Vansittart was in the forefront of the campaign to prepare Britain for a war that he was certain would occur within five years. Britain had a long history of facing down foes and preparing for war. He saw no conflict between upholding that tradition while maintaining the spirit as well as the substance of the treaties of Versailles and Locarno, and the work of the League of Nations. Phipps' opinions were broadly consistent with these views. His dispatches from the first week of January indicated that while Germany still maintained an active involvement in the Spanish Civil War, resources were fully stretched, especially manpower.¹ Phipps' observations led to Foreign Office speculation about whether Hitler could be forced to withdraw from the Rhineland, and lose face, or whether he would broker a deal with Britain and France offering a 25-year non-aggression pact in return for the return of Germany's colonies.² Phipps warned that if Hitler proposed the latter option, it should be rejected, as he believed that the Führer and von Ribbentrop wished to drive a diplomatic wedge between Britain and France.³

Phipps has been instructed to attend Hitler's annual New Year banquet for foreign diplomats to persuade François-Poncet that the French government ought to issue a declaration making it illegal for French volunteers to fight in Spain.⁴

11 January

The French Ambassador, whose French is always beautifully turned, did not much relish having to read out the French speech prepared by the Nuncio at

the Chancellor's New Year reception today. On the other hand he did not have time to prepare a speech of his own, for he only heard a few hours before the Reception that Monseigneur Orsenigo would be prevented by illness from being present.

It appeared to me that Herr Hitler glared balefully at Monsieur François-Poncet whilst the latter was speaking. The tiger that forms part of Herr Hitler's make-up, occasionally reveals itself. Most of his foreign interlocutors, however, have never caught sight of the animal.

Further tension between France and Germany was caused by press reports in Berlin that the French were contemplating an invasion of Spanish Morocco. Phipps' dispatches in the second week of January attempted to convince Eden that there was no truth to the rumour.⁵ He sent Eden reports by the Military Attaché, Elliott Hotblack, suggesting that the threat came not from France, but from Germany. Hitler was anxious for greater involvement in the Spanish Civil War and needed to acquire bases closer to Spain.⁶ This would not only allow greater deployment of troops, but give scope for the German navy to engage Republican supply convoys. Furthermore, it was likely that Hitler wished to try out new weapons in Spain, which could ultimately be unleashed on the whole of Europe if their trials proved successful.⁷ The history of the Spanish Civil War has revealed that some of these reports were simply scare mongering. However, Phipps knew that his days in Berlin were numbered. He could afford to throw caution to the wind. As soon as he was aware of his appointment to the Paris embassy, he lost interest in Berlin life. His dispatches returned to comparing the cultured milieu of Paris – the willingness of the French government to establish an ethical policy against allowing foreign nationals to participate in the Spanish war – and the ill-concealed barbarity of the Germans.⁸

18 January

I received a letter today from the Secretary of State offering me the Paris Embassy on George Clark's [sic] retirement towards the end of April. I have already served four times in Paris, or five times including my term on our Secretariat at the Peace Conference (nearly 17 years altogether), besides the years I spent there when my father was Minister there and afterwards. I have always felt that if I could be of any use anywhere it would be at Paris, which I know so well, and among the French whom I love so dearly. But I never really believed that I should get the Blue Riband of our Service. My great-uncle (Lord Normanby) occupied the *nid de Pauline* in the Faubourg St. Honoré⁹ from 1846 to 1852.

Correspondence between Phipps and Eden during the final two weeks of January was dominated by German reactions to a bill proposed by Blum and Delbos prohibiting French volunteers from fighting in the Spanish Civil War.¹⁰ German criticisms

centred on the lateness of the French proposal. Action had only been taken after the British government had done so. The tardiness of the French also suggested their affinity with Soviet involvement in the war, as the Russians had spearheaded international support for the Republican cause. Eden was anxious to avoid being drawn into a squabble over the appropriateness of French policy regarding the civil war in Spain. He wished to send a different message to the international community. The present climate of ideological confrontation between fascist, communist and democratic states was likely to enhance the probability of a European war, not reduce it. Britain should be prepared for war, but not assume that it would occur in the immediate future.¹¹ In late January, Phipps had a number of meetings with von Neurath to discuss German policy towards the war. Their substance suggests that the Minister for Foreign Affairs had been disconcerted by Eden's statements, and wished to indicate that the German government had no intentions of spreading the war in Spain to the rest of Europe. The culmination of British psychological pressure was the agreement handed to Phipps on 25 January that the German government recognised the need to limit the flow of volunteers to Spain.¹²

Parallel to this, discussions that had been on-going for several months between the Foreign Office and the Treasury to secure financial assistance to Germany based on the return of German colonies.¹³ A requirement for a deal, which also included the French, was that the German government should offer a commitment to European peace. By early 1937, a breakthrough seemed imminent when the President of the Reichsbank, Hjalmar Schacht, had sent proposals to Blum. Eden agreed to meet Schacht on condition that no indication was given as to whether the British government found the Germans' plans acceptable. But Schacht argued that only when the question of the colonies had been settled could consideration be given to a wider agreement between Germany, Britain and France. Phipps became locked into diplomatic exchanges between the Treasury, the Foreign Office and Schacht that continued for the remainder of his embassy. But Eden was anxious not to place too much reliance on Schacht. Phipps was asked to make sure that Hitler realised that any discussions between the British government and Schacht were informal and simply exploratory. On 19 January, Sargent underlined the point by sending Phipps a private letter emphasising that Britain and France intended to proceed in tandem when considering the return of the German colonies.¹⁴ But Phipps believed that the negotiations stood greater chance of success if Britain took the lead. The French view was too cynical to be constructive. He also thought the British better equipped to deal with any German and Italian attempts to use the diplomatic tactic learnt during the Abyssinian crisis of 'democratic bluff'.¹⁵

3 February

Now that my appointment to Paris and that of Neville Henderson¹⁶ as my successor here have been announced our German friends have been so good as to express regret at our approaching departure. They evidently think, however, that we are to be pitied on going to Paris from Berlin. We

do not share that opinion, for we regard the *Ville Lumière* as the hub of civilisation.

Hitler agreed to prohibit the flow of German volunteers to fight for the cause because he was confident that Franco would soon prevail. But Hitler's faith was motivated more by a need to see the defeat of socialism rather than by the belief that the Nationalists possessed superior forces or strategies. On issues relating to a new security pact and to disarmament, Hitler's views remain unchanged.

4 February¹⁷

After his big dinner last night to the foreign heads of Missions and to members of the German Government, the Chancellor sent for me and took me into a room where we talked for about twenty minutes. Nothing very new emerged.

Spain

When I asked Herr Hitler whether he was optimistic, he replied that he was because he felt sure that General Franco would ultimately win; the reason being that the Reds would end by murdering the entire "intelligentsia" in their part of the country. His information was that they had already murdered nearly 180,000. I suggested that the Spanish Left, once the present conflict was over, would probably show itself quite Nationalist and xenophobe, and would therefore give Moscow disagreeable surprises. Herr Hitler, however, would have none of this, but went off on his usual anti-Communist tack, where there is no stopping him, and where he must burn himself out. Finally he did not dissent when I remarked that things looked better on the whole from the purely non-Intervention point of view.

West Pact

Here the Chancellor thought we had reached an *impasse*. He inveighed against the famous "exceptions" and maintained there should be none. War should be renounced by all the parties concerned and that was enough. He asserted that, according to Herr von Ribbentrop, Mr. Eden had said that France herself must be the sole judge as to when a *casus foederis* arose between her and Russia.¹⁸ I interjected that this was not so, but that the "competent body", to be nominated for that purpose, would decide, but the Chancellor brushed aside this rectification and declared that it would be impossible to agree upon the "body". In fact he asserted that the Pact negotiations had been wrecked by the insistence of France upon bringing Russia "into Europe", instead of leaving her in Asia, where she properly belonged. If she had remained there Europe would have been able easily to compose its differences and reach a perfectly reasonable agreement.

Limitation of Armaments

The Chancellor did not believe this now to be possible, owing to Russia's swollen military, naval and air forces, which she had no intention of reducing.

He declared that she wished for 300 submarines and for 150,000 aeroplanes. Even if she had 50,000 this would be too terrible to contemplate. Here also the whole atmosphere had been poisoned by "the criminal murder gang" of Moscow. He would not admit that Russia herself might, for financial reasons, welcome some reasonable *plafond* for armaments; nor did he believe in the likelihood of any evolution in Russia.

Colonies

The Chancellor spontaneously ejaculated that no real settlement was possible until Germany had Colonies. It was inadmissible that France, Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Holland, Portugal and Belgium should have colonies and Germany none. I did not pursue this delicate subject.

France and Germany

The Chancellor did not dispute my contention that M. Blum was a highly reasonable man and that he was desirous of coming to terms with Germany. He objected, however, as he invariably does, when M. Blum's strength in the country was unfortunately not equal to his good-will.

The Chancellor looked well and cheerful throughout the evening, though I believe there is nothing that he dreads more than these diplomatic banquets. He was particularly friendly and amiable to us both.

Foreign Office reaction to this dispatch was that Hitler was 'not really prepared to negotiate over anything that matters at all'.¹⁹ The Führer was deliberately undermining Schacht's efforts to negotiate with the British and French governments. This was of particular concern because Phipps had convinced Eden that political power in Berlin was delicately poised between moderate Nazis such as Schacht, and those who advocated a more confrontational foreign policy. With this knowledge, Eden had made a plea for co-operation with Germany in mid-January. But this had been swept aside by Hitler in a speech in the Reichstag on 30 January, denouncing the Treaty of Versailles and announcing that he would stop at nothing to regain Germany's pre-war colonies. Relations between Britain and Germany were now at their lowest ebb since Phipps' arrival in Berlin. He was pessimistic about an improvement. Göbbels, he reported, had compared Eden's olive branch to 'a small child asking Father Christmas for gifts impossible of realisation'.²⁰

Phipps remained convinced that only a united Anglo-French policy towards the restoration of the German colonies would provide a satisfactory outcome.²¹ Hitler's blatant unwillingness to negotiate with Britain about wider issues of foreign affairs meant that close diplomatic co-operation with France had never been more important. Phipps envisaged playing a key role in that process as he prepared to take up his new post in Paris. He was dismissive of efforts by some of his opposite numbers in Berlin to resurrect a pact based on the Treaty of Locarno. The time for a multi-lateral security pact had passed. Mussolini and Hitler had demonstrated their lack of commitment to the 1925 agreement. There was ample evidence to suggest that a new treaty would not be worth the paper on which it was written.

Phipps liaised closely with François-Poncet in promoting a joint Anglo-French approach to negotiations with Schacht. But Vansittart urged caution. He was concerned that the discussions could expand to include political issues too rapidly for the Foreign Office to assess their implications. Vansittart's concerns stemmed from the rumour that Hitler intended to conclude an agreement with the Czech government that would 'detach Czechoslovakia from France' as part of a strategy to undermine the Franco-Soviet Pact.²² However, Phipps thought any German negotiations with the Czechs inconsequential. Hitler did not have a clear agenda regarding the Sudetenland. More emphasis was placed on Anschluss with Austria. The events of the following year were to prove him right about the latter but wrong about the former.

It was in this climate of Anglo-German tension that Phipps received the official German response to British proposals for a five-power security pact that had been dispatched to Berlin in November 1936. The German government agreed in principle to a pact, but once again maintained that the timing was not yet right. It was unclear whether recent British and Belgian suggestions for the terms of the agreement paid sufficient attention to German security requirements, especially as the threat posed by the Soviet Union was increasing. Recent reports of the expansion of the British army and the Royal Navy confirmed that history was likely to repeat itself. Furthermore, it was not Hitler's intention to conclude a security agreement with the western European powers in order to free himself to invade the Soviet Union.

Eden voiced his objections to these reports to von Ribbentrop on 13 March.²³ Comparisons between the present diplomatic situation and that which existed in 1914 were not helpful. There was also the danger that once locked into the mindset of a repetition of a cycle of events, it might be difficult to break free of it. Britain did not seek a military confrontation with Germany. While a programme of rearmament was under way, that policy was not directed against any particular country.

9 April²⁴

Today we paid a farewell visit to General and Frau Göring, who were most amiable and friendly.

General Göring opened by referring to some of the great building schemes that are now in progress in various parts of the country. In Berlin the plan, which will demand twenty years, is to construct amongst other things a magnificent avenue from the Spree²⁵ to a greatly enlarged Tempelhofer aerodrome, along which a number of Ministries (including the Ministry for Foreign Affairs) theatres, etc. will be erected. A "colossal" luxury hotel will be placed there, with another one less luxurious though equal in size for the "Strength through Joy" organisation, so as to show the German workman that he also counts in the new *Reich*. The course of the Spree is to be deflected, and a huge embankment built so that the Spree will be "wider than the Seine". A triumphal arch will span the new avenue (the largest arch in the world). "That street in Paris", said General Göring, (presumably referring to the Champs Elysées), "is only 78 metres wide, this avenue will be

148 metres wide." He then told me of the improvements at Hamburg, where an enormous bridge will be erected and vast alterations carried out in the docks, and at Nuremberg, where St. Peter's²⁶ could easily be contained in the new Hall for the annual party meetings. These two schemes will only take seven years to complete.

General Göring then passed to the Four Year Plan, over which he presides with a number of experts under him. He remarked however, that too much importance must not be attached to what the experts said; their rôle was to put into execution whatever his mastermind decided to be desirable.

The Four Year Plan is proceeding beautifully, better, in fact, than could have been hoped. To take "buna"²⁷ for instance. At the end of the four years not only would Germany be entirely independent of natural rubber supplies, but she would produce double the amount of buna that she required, and would export the surplus to foreign countries, even to those which were rubber-producing. Already Germany was only 10% short of her total rubber requirements, and buna only costs 17% more than rubber. Soon it would cost much less, and last very much longer.

Substitute oils of very sort would also be turned out in ample quantities; meanwhile the whaling fleet had been trebled.

Facts, the Prussian Prime Minister modestly admitted, were at present the Achilles heel of the Plan, but here too doubtless a solution would soon be found.

Having duly impressed me with German might and wealth, General Göring compared the situation in Germany, where, under beneficent Nazi rule, there was an actual shortage of labour, with that in France and England, where unemployment was rife. He then remarked that, going from Berlin to Paris, I should have the opportunity of comparing the order existing in the former capital with the disorders and civil strife rampant in the latter. France was clearly falling into decomposition; all his information led him to believe that. In fact he knew things that he was unable to repeat in this connection. (If this means anything it may mean that the Nazis subvention the forces of revolution in France.) A forty-hour week was an economic impossibility: a vicious circle would set in, prices would rise and then wages, and then prices again.²⁸ When the worst happened perhaps Great Britain would at last realise that she had "backed the wrong horse". If she had only accepted the Chancellor's offer to work together with Germany she would have been far better advised. After all there were only two Powers in Europe that really counted – Germany and Great Britain – and, united, nobody could prevent them from doing what they wished. It will be observed that no mention was made of the Russian bogey, so constantly used to justify German rearmament. As it was, however, Great Britain had ignored Herr Hitler's offer and now the situation in England was very bad; serious strikes kept breaking out all over the country, and it was impossible to foresee where all this would end. Moreover Germany was beginning to believe that Great Britain must be numbered amongst her enemies.

Whenever Germany tried to “pick a flower” the English boot came down upon her, even in regions where Great Britain had no interests at stake. (No indication was given as to the garden where the “picking” was desired.) That Power might soon come to be regarded as the enemy *par excellence*.

I replied that France was a strange country and one very difficult for foreigners to understand. When a complete muddle appeared to exist things had a way of straightening themselves out. Too much importance must not be attached to a certain amount of street disturbances. The political temperature of Paris was generally much higher than that of other European capitals. As for the situation in England, it was only in totalitarian States that strikes could be entirely eliminated. Our system implied liberties of speech and action that might appear excessive and even dangerous to a National Socialist, but after all that system had worked fairly well on the whole for some hundreds of years. In my turn I took a shot amongst General Göring’s ducks and asked what he thought of Communism in Germany, where it had been driven underground, but presumably not been stamped out. He did not seem to relish the question, but replied that he did not believe there to be more than 500,000 Communists in Germany. As for the enemies of the present régime, he assessed them at about one million all told.

Regarding the Chancellor’s offer to Great Britain,²⁹ I said that our great wish was to work with Germany, as indeed with every other country, for the maintenance of peace all over the world. The last war had shown that even the victors and neutrals lost; the next would presumably mean the end of civilisation as we knew it.

Later on in the day we had tea with Dr. and Frau Göbbels, who were likewise most friendly.

Dr. Göbbels also spoke about the vast building schemes now in progress or about to begin. For the twenty-year plan for Berlin sixty millions of marks will be the annual contribution of the *Reich* Government alone, without counting further annual contributions from Prussia and the City of Berlin.

Politics were not mentioned upon this occasion, and tea was served in idyllic conditions, with the little children of our amiable host and hostess executing dances to the strains of an old-world musical box.

The dispatch on which the next entry is based took two weeks to compile and was intended to act as an introduction to the German situation for Phipps’ successor, Sir Nevile Henderson. Phipps believed that Hitler’s desire to seek a rapprochement with Britain had been genuine until 1936. The tame Anglo-French response to the reoccupation of the Rhineland, and to Mussolini’s victory in Abyssinia, demonstrated that all the discussion about compliance with the treaties of Versailles and Locarno was mere rhetoric. Phipps’ own ideas about Hitler’s approach to international affairs and to the Nazi revolution in Germany, were, however, fixed at a much earlier date, at the time of the Röhm purge in June 1934. He had held similarly clear views about Hitler’s long-term policy towards Austria from a similar date.

13 April³⁰

Before leaving Berlin I must bring my latest review of the foreign policy of this country up to date, and add a personal appreciation of the German problem based on nearly four years' experience here.

If any one event may be said to have influenced the course of German policy decisively during recent years it was the imposition and subsequent failure of the League sanctions against Italy. It was the cause, direct or indirect, of the reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936, of the gradual deterioration of Anglo-German relations, and of the Italo-German *rapprochement*. Moreover, it led the German Government to pursue more boldly than ever the policy of economic self-sufficiency and to commit the country to the Four Year Plan of General Göring and to claiming the return of the German Colonies. These developments were all closely connected and affected in their turn [by] Germany's situation in Europe and in particular her relations with Austria. In addition the failure of sanctions finally destroyed in Germany whatever slight influence those moderate elements may have enjoyed who deprecated economic autarchy, advocated a return to the League, and opposed a policy of naked force.

Anglo-German relations

Three years ago an understanding with England was the avowed aim not only of Herr Hitler and the Nazi Party, but of almost all German in every walk of life. The policy expounded in *Mein Kampf* won universal approval. "To conciliate the favours of England no sacrifice would have been too great", writes the Führer of pre-war Anglo-German relations. Similar sentiments were expressed in every conversation at which an Englishman was present. Although it was not always apparent to us, the privileged position of Englishmen earned the envy of other foreigners. It was in deference to English public opinion, for example, that Dimitroff was released,³¹ that the colonial question was kept in cold storage, and that the persecution of Jews and political prisoners was mitigated. Such concessions, it may be argued, do not amount to very much, but they were regarded here as very important and they were made to no other nation. British influence and prestige reached its height towards the end of 1935 when, for a brief space, it was thought that England at the head of the League, might succeed in stopping Signor Mussolini's Abyssinian adventure.³²

The victory of Italy opened up a new chapter. It was inevitable that in a country where Might is worshipped English prestige should then fall. The German began to ask himself whether it was necessary to conciliate a Power, without whose favours Italy seemed to be doing very well. Moreover the collapse of the Stresa front impelled Germany to indulge in acts, which were bound to result in friction with England. In March last year the Rhineland was occupied. The Germans characteristically could not see that their action placed Great Britain in an embarrassing position towards France, and they

resented the inevitable consultation and collaboration between the British and French Governments. Not long afterwards came the "questionnaire", which further exacerbated German opinion. The Press, reflecting the prevailing mood, began a hostile campaign on a small scale; events in England and the Empire were represented in as unfavourable a light as possible. In particular great play was made of the difficulty of keeping our army up to strength; prominence was also given to cases of sabotage on the navy, the strikes and to the anti-Fascist riots in the East End. The impression of military weakness thus created caused the man in the street to view an Anglo-German understanding in a different light.

At the same time, conscious of her growing strength in relation to that of her neighbours, Germany judged that the moment had come to unmask the battery of her colonial aspirations. In an interview in the *Daily Mail* on 6th August 1934, Herr Hitler had declared: "We want nothing from England. ... I would not sacrifice the life of a single German to get any colony in the world." In his *Reichstag* speech of 7th March 1935, the Chancellor, whilst declaring that he could "regard the struggle for German quality as concluded today", indicated that in payment for Germany's return to the League he expected that: "within a reasonable time and by means of friendly negotiations the question of colonial equality of rights ... will be cleared up." Before the end of the year the German colonial campaign was in full swing. England was pilloried as the robber State and the cause of Germany's economic ills, and was invited in more or less summary terms to disgorge her loot.

For once the trumpets blew and the walls did not fall. The refusal of His Majesty's Government to discuss the colonial question disappointed German opinion, misled by the German Press, which had hitherto only published the letters and statements of Englishmen who favoured Germany's claims. Consequently the impression was created that, whilst the English nation acknowledged the justice of the German demands and was anxious for a generous settlement, the Government had hardened its heart. There are few Germans who do not now feel a sense of grievance when the colonial question is discussed.

Meanwhile a further cause of friction was at work. In August 1936 German military service was extended to two years. During the succeeding months the British rearmament plans were made public. The Press declared that such expenditure in time of peace was unparalleled in history. The suggestion that Germany was responsible for this development was indignantly scouted, and direct criticism of the action of the British Government was carefully avoided. But in his heart every German knows that British rearmament is aimed primarily against Germany. The Press which of course is silent on German armament expenditure, emphasises the magnitude of the British financial effort and implies that in view of Herr Hitler's peace policy there is no justification for rearmament on such a scale.

There is now a general feeling that Great Britain is deliberately rejecting the proffered hand of German friendship and that the policy of Anglo-German understanding is breaking down. There is, it is said, no German aspiration, however legitimate, which Great Britain does not resist. Jealous of Germany's qualities, she is determined to oppose the recovery of the colonies, the acquisition of new markets, the *Anschluss* with Austria, and a settlement of the Danzig and Memel problems, not to mention expansion "to the East", where no British interest is concerned. When General Göring, in his speech at the Sportpalast on 28th October 1936,³³ spoke of the foreign hand on Germany's throat, it was the British hand which he really had in mind. Three years ago it was a commonplace that war with us was unthinkable; today the Nazi German is beginning to wonder whether it will not have to be faced, if Germany is to realise her destiny. General Göring implied as much at our farewell interview.³⁴

Relations with Italy

Whilst relations with England have deteriorated, Italo-German relations have undergone a corresponding revolution, which it would have been difficult to forecast in July 1934 or still less at Stresa some months later. The ice was broken by the application of sanctions and Germany's so-called neutrality, which was fully exploited in both countries. Italy's subsequent military and political success surprised and impressed the Germans, who began to think of the Italians as *Bündnisfähig* (fit for alliance). The delay in lifting sanctions brought the two countries closer together, and they entered the phase of so-called parallelism. Still Italy did not leave the League and the Austrian question remained unsettled; the Germans felt no assurance that the parallel lines would not once more sharply converge. Their fears were, however, set at rest by the refusal of the League Powers to recognise the conquest of Abyssinia and by the events in Spain. The result was the Italo-German entente which is at times uncomfortable for both parties, particularly Italy, but has been imposed on them by outside forces. The insistence with which the collaboration between the two countries as advertised at every turn is in itself revealing.

Relations with other countries

Herr Hitler's régime has never been popular abroad, but with increasing strength German arrogance has grown whilst foreign countries have become more and more suspicious of Germany's intentions. These two tendencies lead Germany to be more sensitive to criticism and foreign countries to be more critical. The result is a series of incidents in which the German Press angrily complains of the deliberate provocation of this peace-loving nation. During the past year there have been attacks on the United States, Great Britain, France, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Lithuania, Latvia, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Switzerland, the Holy See and even Poland. These continual Press campaigns, together with speeches (such as General Göring's in the *Sportpalast*) which describe Germany as a beleaguered fortress, do not, however, induce

the average German to enquire how it comes to pass that Germany is hated abroad. Misinformed by his Press, he is prone to imagine that he is the victim of an international conspiracy. Before the war this conspiracy was called "encirclement", and it will be surprising if this word does not become current again.

There are unfortunately other signs of a reversion to the pre-war type. The arguments and verbiage used by modern German Speakers painfully recall those of the Emperor William II. For example in 1907, speaking to Sir Charles Hardinge³⁵ and the British Ambassador,³⁶ the Kaiser said that "if the question of disarmament were to be brought before the Hague Conference³⁷ he should decline to be represented at it. Each State must decide for itself the amount of military force it considers necessary for the protection of its interests and the maintenance of its position, and no State could brook the interference of another in this respect." In the autumn of 1907 the Kaiser wrote to Lord Tweedmouth³⁸ to explain that the German Fleet was not being built as a challenge to British naval supremacy. "If England built 60, 90 or 100 battleships, there would be no change in the German plans. It was unpleasant to Germans to notice that in discussions about the British programme of construction there was always some reference to the German Navy. People would be very thankful over here if Germany were left out of the discussion." How often has Herr Hitler not used almost those very words? Expressions which have been notoriously in England are cropping up again: *Der Tag* (see General von Fritsch's speech of 8th December 1936); "Our Almighty God" (Herr Hitler's speech of 30th January 1937);³⁹ "Place in the sun" (Duke of Coburg, speech of 18th February 1937).⁴⁰ Finally the idea that the best way of dealing with England is to tread on her toes is unpleasantly reminiscent of the methods of pre-war German diplomacy.

German aims

I see no reason to modify the opinion which I have already expressed that the aims of German foreign policy may briefly be described as:

- (1) Absorption of Austria and other Germanic peoples (e.g., the German "fringe" of Czechoslovakia).
- (2) Expansion in the East.
- (3) Recovery of colonies.

If these are the aims of present-day German policy, it must not be supposed that their realisation will necessarily make Germany a contented country. So long as Germany was weak and the goal seemed distant, there was no need for her to look beyond it; the immediate task seemed difficult enough. Today Germany is strong, the achievements of the last four years are stupendous and there seems no reason to set a limit to German ambitions. In the course of a private conversation with the Military Attaché⁴¹ an officer of the General Staff recently said that in his opinion Germany could only

begin to form a real colonial empire after she had consolidated her position in Europe; this meant possession of the Netherlands and access to the Adriatic at Trieste, both of which, he declared, were formerly Germanic. Similarly, a well-known German admiral, who is now lecturer at the War Academy, remarked to another member of my staff that the last war was due to the fact that German territory was so restricted that she did not possess the means of existence (*Lebensmöglichkeit*). This argument invited the obvious retort that it followed that if Germany now received back not only all her former colonies, but all her old territory in Europe she would still have no means of existence. The admiral concurred unreservedly. Asked what solution he proposed, he shrugged his shoulders and replied that this was precisely the kernel of the so-called German problem.

The absorption of Austria

The understanding with Italy has, to outward appearances, removed the principal obstacle in the way of German aspirations. Although Italy is not unreservedly trusted, it is hoped that the state of her relations with England and France will prevent her in future from interfering with German plans in Austria. The German Government are quietly confident that time is on their side and that the growing power of Germany will have the effect of drawing an increasing number of Austrians into the Nazi camp. On his return from Vienna Baron von Neurath told me that if a free vote were taken seventy per cent. of the electorate would vote Nazi. Austria, he continued, must eventually decide for herself, and without outside interference, what her destiny should be. He conveyed the impression that, in his opinion, this decision would be taken in favour of Germany at no very distant date.

Germany's other aims and the attitude of Great Britain

Hitherto the relative weakness of Germany and her isolated position situation in Europe have counselled prudence. The colonial demands have only recently emerged, whilst the question of Eastern expansion has never been publicly ventilated. In these circumstances there has been no need to elaborate a policy and Germany could well afford to wait on events, whilst she was concentrating all her efforts on bringing the armed forces, industry and the civilian population to the highest pitch of military efficiency.

Germany's rearmament is now nearing completion and her entente with Italy has strengthened her position. The time may be approaching when these hitherto distant aims appear to the younger generation capable of realisation. Before a definite policy can be formulated on the German side a decision will have to be taken as to the future course of Anglo-German relations, for in German eyes the key to the situation lies in London.

It is again dawning on the German consciousness that of all European countries perhaps the most inconvenient is Great Britain. The tradition of the balance of power, combined with the ruthless egotism of the English character and jealousy of German qualities, make it likely that Great Britain will not readily allow national Socialist Germany to take the predominant place in

Europe which is her due. It is noted that Herr Hitler's repeatedly expressed desire for an understanding with it has been ignored; his voluntary limitation of the strength of the German Navy has not produced the anticipated results. On the contrary, British policy bars the way to Germany in every direction. Germany's colonial demands are passed over; in the West the British Prime Minister declares the British frontier to be on the Rhine in the South-East the *Anschluss* with Austria has been consistently opposed, whilst in the East, where no British interest is involved, Great Britain declines to give Germany a free hand or even join the anti-communist crusade. The same dog-in-the-manger policy is adopted in the case of Memel and Danzig. Wherever Germany attempts to recover what is hers or to extend her influence she is met with suspicion and covert or open opposition from Great Britain.

Some Nazi Party extremists have already come to the conclusion that the effort to conciliate England has failed and that the threat of force must be used to coerce her. An official at the Ministry of Propaganda recently told Reuter's correspondent that our internal weakness was known here and that it would only be necessary to drop a couple of bombs on London to bring His Majesty's Government to reason in regard to the colonial question. This attitude is reflected in the more extreme section of the Nazi Press which is adopting an increasingly hostile tone. Thus the *Schwarze Korps*, the official organ of the S.S., has recently published a series of derisive cartoons on British fidelity to the League, on the refusal to recognise the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, on the policy of His Majesty's Government in Spain and on the shortage of recruits, etc.

In responsible circles in Berlin so extreme a view is not yet taken. General Göring, Dr. Schacht and Baron von Neurath have, it is true, at times given vent in private to their exasperation with England and the first two have done so, in relatively moderate terms, on the public platform. Yet finally to abandon the principles laid down in *Mein Kampf* is a decision which will not be lightly taken and for which, incidentally, the time is not yet ripe.

In his criticism of German pre-war policy in *Mein Kampf* Herr Hitler states that Germany should have elected either to pursue a colonial policy, in which case she should have contracted an alliance with Russia against England; or, and this was the correct policy, she should have allied herself with England against Russia in order to secure territory in the East. The Great War, in Herr Hitler's opinion, altered the situation. The accession to power of the Bolsheviks put Russia beyond the pale. "The present day rulers of Russia do not dream of contracting an alliance honourably or indeed of keeping to one ... One does not conclude an alliance with a partner whose only interest is the destruction of the other party." (*Mein Kampf*, p. 750). And again, referring to the arguments of those who invoke Bismarck's policy: "The question should not be, what did Bismarck do, but rather, what would he do today? And this question is easy to answer. With his political skill he would never ally himself to a State which is doomed to destruction."

If the situation in Russia were to change and the policy of international revolution were to be abandoned, the fundamental obstacle of a "rap-prochement" with Russia would disappear. Not only the German General Staff, but those who regard the Western Powers as Germany's chief enemies would welcome such a development and would seek to exploit it. But for the moment Russia is still Public Enemy Number One, though, owing to the exigencies of the Four Year Plan and German dependence upon that Power for certain material necessary for rearmament, the anti-Soviet Press campaign has for the time been damped down. Meanwhile it would be against Herr Hitler's principles to make a declared enemy of England. "If the German nation wishes to put an end to a situation in which it is threatened with extinction in Europe, then it must not fall into the mistake of the pre-war period and make enemies of God and the world; rather it must recognise its most dangerous enemy in order to attack him with the whole of its concentrated force." (*Mein Kampf*, page 711.)

The conclusion reached by Herr Hitler in his survey of post-war Europe is that there are only two possible allies for Germany: England and Italy. Incidentally it may be remarked that one of the reasons for which little success has attended Herr Hitler's advances to England may be found in his explanation of his motives for desiring Anglo-Italian support. "The capital fact", he says, "is that co-operation with England and Italy would not necessarily entail danger of war. The only Power which might be expected to oppose that would be France, and she would not in that eventuality be in a position to do so. This alliance would, on the other hand, give Germany the possibility of working in all tranquillity for the preparatory measures required, within the framework of such a coalition, for a final settlement with France. ... Thus the mortal enemy of our country, France, will be isolated" (*Mein Kampf*, page 155).⁴² Herr Hitler recognises in *Mein Kampf* (pages 720 and 721) how difficult it will be to conciliate England, and the events of recent years have probably confirmed him in this view, but so long as Russia is the enemy, and it is impossible to say how long that will be, he will hesitate to abandon hope of an understanding with England. The next phase will probably see the usual German admixture of cajolery and threats applied to make England toe the line, but however great the present exasperation with British policy, there is as yet no sign that anyone in Germany is anxious to embark on another trial of strength with the British Empire, nor is there any sign that the economic situation of Germany will so improve as to enable her safely to embark on warlike adventures in the near future.

The Italo-German Entente

If the policy outlined in *Mein Kampf* has failed in so far as we are concerned, events outside Herr Hitler's control have unexpectedly enabled him to carry out the Italian part of his programme. The strength of the so-called "Berlin-Rome axis" is advertised on every possible occasion. Baron von Neurath

actually informed me, for example, that Herr Hitler would not appoint a German representative at the Coronation [of King George VI] until the Italian Government had made known their decision. Yet neither party is entirely happy in the new friendship. Signor Mussolini appears to realise that it is dangerous to go for a ride on a tiger, whilst Germany only trusts Italy so far as she can see her. The entry of Italy into the last war and more recently the Italian intervention to save Austria will not easily be forgotten, and today Signor Mussolini is suspected of being ready to run out, if the Western Powers give him a favourable opportunity. Fortunately for Germany the conclusion of the Anglo-Italian Mediterranean agreement appears, for various reasons, to have caused no real *détente*. The Germans for their part have done their best to bind Italy to them by assuring her that it is against her that British rearmament is principally directed, and that she is certain to be attacked in Britain's good time.

From the blatant manner in which the Italo-German entente is advertised to the world, it may fairly be deduced that Signor Mussolini has not irrevocably committed himself to the German embrace. But he cannot afford to be isolated and if no effort were made soon to detach him, the formation of a Fascist bloc in Europe would seem probable. The longer the present situation lasts the more difficult it will be to alter it. Hence the satisfaction with which German official circles view the series of Anglo-Italian incidents, although the Press is warned occasionally not to spoil things by over tactless demonstrations of glee. To keep Italy deeply committed in Africa and the Mediterranean, so that she cannot interfere in Central Europe, and to exploit Anglo-Italian differences, so that she remains tied to Germany, is the present strategy of the Wilhelmstrasse.

A free hand in the East

British rearmament, doubt regarding the attitude of Great Britain towards an act of aggression in the East, uncertainty regarding the future course of Italo-German relations and the catastrophic state of German foreign trade are all factors which counsel prudence. In consequence, the problem of Eastern expansion has not been brought into the open. In fact the semi-official *Deutsche diplomatische-politische Korrespondenz* of March 17th⁴³ complained of the malicious premise abroad that Germany wanted peace in the West in order to have a free hand in the East. As regards Czechoslovakia, which is at present the most sensitive point, the two German grievances, treatment of the German minority and the provision of aerodromes for Soviet aircraft, have been kept well in the public eye. The threats to which these complaints have given rise have been accompanied by characteristic German tactics and attempts to detach Czechoslovakia from the League and from her allies.

For the moment the colonial question is being pushed, not only for its own sake, but with a view to rendering us more compliant with German designs in the East. In a recent conversation at the Ministry for War a highly

placed staff officer made no bones about the German desire to do a deal. Any nation, he declared, which desired to improve its position in the world must realise that it would come sooner or later into conflict with the British Empire. He suggested that the only way for Great Britain to avoid a conflict would be to agree not to interfere with any action the German Government might take on the Eastern frontier and in that even she could expect to hear nothing more of Germany's claim to colonies for quite a long time. The idealistic objections to such a deal are simply not understood in this country where everyone now thinks unashamedly in terms of power politics.

Conclusion

The conclusion to be reached from a survey of the situation is far from encouraging. In fact, the German problem as it existed before the war is substantially with us again. How is Europe to deal with this vigorous, homogenous and disgruntled block of sixty-five millions? Partly by their own actions, and partly by the fact that they appeared too late on the scene, they have not got their fair share of the good things of this world. To make matters worse, they have embarked on an experiment in autarchy and in new-fangled political ideas which subordinate business to Party considerations, with the result that their economic situation is at least 50% worse than it should normally be. They are a primitive, credulous and docile people, with almost implicit faith in their present leaders. President Wilson placed his finger on the vital spot, when he insisted during the Armistice negotiations that Germany should not in future be governed by an arbitrary authority. As a result, the monarchy had to disappear, and Germany reverted for a time to democratic government, becoming thereby an innocuous member of the European family. Unfortunately for humanity this country is again in the hands of an arbitrary authority. Indeed, the Imperial régime was liberal and democratic compared to the régime of today. Is there any remedy for the present state of affairs? Is there anything that any outside agency can do to improve the situation, or to ward off the risk of an ultimate explosion?

A section of opinion in Great Britain and elsewhere urges the restoration of the German colonies. This would be a cheap price to pay for the permanent pacification of Europe. But is there any reason to assume that the restoration of the colonies would permanently satisfy Germany of even assuage German ambition for a decade? Germany possessed her colonies and her Colonial Empire was prosperous before the war, but this fact did not prevent the outbreak of war. Nor were the German people by any means satisfied with their place in the sun when their colonies were flourishing. Indeed, when one recalls the prosperity and abundance of good things in the Germany of those days, where every beer-hall was filled to overflowing, and where the standard of housing and general comfort for the working class was higher than anywhere else on the continent, one can only feel sceptical concerning the

remedy of restoring German prosperity whether by the cession of colonies, financial help, or any of the other remedies put forward.

Now that it is established statistically that the return of the colonies would not seriously increase Germany's prosperity, it is certain that whatever feelings of gratitude which their return might arouse, would soon evaporate, and that German eyes would be turned longingly on to the colonies of others or on to the fertile areas awaiting development in Russia and elsewhere. The only definite result of the return of the colonies would be to force this country to realise that the Promised Land was, as Herr Hitler already divined, much nearer home, and that colonies alone without financial resources or command of the seas were not enough.

History has a way of repeating itself. There was a great deal of talk before the war of the *Einkreisung* [encirclement] of Germany. But a study of the documents only confirms what one already knew, namely that there was no systematic attempt by statesmen anywhere in Europe to create an anti-German bloc, or to isolate Germany. There was merely a community of interest between certain Powers, who felt themselves threatened by this restless country. Much the same state of affairs exists today. Europe, with the exception, largely involuntarily, of Italy, is hostile to Germany because each country in turn has felt its interests threatened at some point by German ambition. For whose interests are not threatened when the most highly organised and militarist of European nations publicly announces its intention of becoming, in the jargon of the day, a "totalitarian" military State, in which everything and everybody is to be subordinated to the supreme object of becoming invincible in war?

My experience here makes me think that the German people are least dangerous and least troublesome when they feel the chill air of isolation blowing about their ears, and when that wind blows not merely from European countries, but from the United States as well, the effect is invariably salutary. Readers of Herr Hitler's speech of January 30th will recall the naïve enumeration of Germany's friends and well-wishers.⁴⁴ Herr Hitler knows his own country, and he knows the demoralising effect on the German populace of a hostile outer world. The emphasis laid on the "Rome-Berlin axis" springs partly from this fear of isolation, and those who realise the contempt felt and expressed by Germans for the Italian army which ran from a few German visions at Caporetto,⁴⁵ and quite recently, as they maintain, from some German Communists backed by Soviet aviators on the Madrid front, and the treacherous ally who betrayed them in 1914, understand how sorely Germany is now in need of friends. So long as Europe is knit together by this community of interest, the present rulers of Germany may think twice before disturbing the peace. They will from time to time have recourse to bluff, and intimidation, to noisy newspaper campaigns and vulgar demonstrations of hostility, but without friends and

encourage them, as Austria did in 1914, they may, I do not say they will, refrain from the final gamble of war.

To induce Germany, however, to follow the narrow path of even relative virtue the following factors are essential:-

(1) The might of Britain

Any pandering to German threats or any slackening of our rearmament, would, in my considered opinion, be to court disaster.

(2) The might of France

If civil strife, so serious as to impair the efficiency of the French Army, were to break out, the temptation to Germany would be irresistible,

(3) The maintenance of the closest Anglo-French friendship, amounting in all but name to an alliance.

We must always be prepared for recurrent German efforts to drive a wedge between us (even the agitation for colonies, for instance, may be partly inspired by the hope that the French will show weakness on this point, where a firm joint front is, as elsewhere, necessary). Efforts will also doubtless continue to be made by Germany to frighten us by various bogeys such as the Berlin-Rome axis or a Russo-German *rapprochement*, from which incidentally Germany would seem to have far more to gain than Russia.

Finally, it is, I am convinced, important that Germany should continue, as now, to see the United States a potential enemy, or at least a disquieting question mark. To this desirable end we can of course reply only partially upon German blundering and seeming inability to grasp the rudiments of any other nation's psychology. The appointment of Herr Dieckhoff to Washington is in this connection unfortunate for he is a sound and sensible man, who knows the United States well. He will therefore be able to throw more dust into American than Herr von Ribbentrop has hitherto succeeded in throwing into English eyes. But even in the Third *Reich* Ribbentrops are rare.

15 April⁴⁶

The Chancellor was so kind as to invite Lady Phipps and me to a farewell tea yesterday afternoon. We were quite alone with him for about forty minutes. He talked on a variety of subjects, touching upon politics only towards the end.

A recent tour in the Ruhr had impressed Herr Hitler with the contented state of the people and the good and comparatively smart clothes worn by the working men and women. Every German now realised that any individual who opposed the régime, whether he were Bolshevik, Catholic or Protestant, was the enemy of all. Referring to the endless strikes in France he said the German Pavilion at the Paris Exhibition was practically finished: the German workmen had returned to their country completely and healthily disgusted with conditions in France; but they had continued working all the

time and had even succeeded in persuading the French workers in the Pavilion to join them.

About Spain the *Führer* spoke in a minor key. Franco would probably win in the end, but it might last a long time. There were very few Germans there now. He did not wish a Communist Government to be set up in Spain, for it would involve Communism spreading to France, Belgium and Holland, etc., which would be intolerable; but he declared that Mussolini felt even more strongly on this point than himself. In reply to a question, he said that he did not for a moment believe the Duce wished to establish himself permanently in Spain, he was far too clever. In this connection, Herr Hitler quoted with approval what Mr. Eden had said about the intense Nationalism of both sides in Spain and their probable disinclination, once the conflict was over, to let themselves be run by foreigners.⁴⁷ Finally, he declared emphatically that he would not risk the lives of any of his beloved S.S. men in Spain. If Germany were ever attacked, he exclaimed, that would be a different matter; that was what they were there for. However, so far as he knew nobody was likely now to attack Germany. Certain small countries had been impudent and troublesome, like Lithuania, for instance, but she was showing herself more reasonable. Czechoslovakia's attitude, however, was still unsatisfactory.

Passing to Austria, the Chancellor spoke with bitterness and almost fanatical violence about the absurd and dangerous schemes of the foolish Legitimists there, who, although only some 20% of the total population, wished to set up a Southern German Monarchy formed of Austrian, Bavaria, etc. There were some things that could on no account be tolerated and a Restoration in Austria was decidedly one of them.

To further the cause of peace it would be necessary for all Powers to make certain sacrifices. Divining inquiry in my attitude, Herr Hitler remarked that Germany's sacrifice had been to give up Alsace-Lorraine. A successful war might bring her about a million more citizens from those provinces but at a loss of perhaps two million in dead; whereas the Nazi campaign for an increased birth-rate had already given large numbers of future citizens without a corresponding loss. Moreover, Germany was set on her vast building and improvement schemes, and needed peace for completing them. The French, however, as represented by a number of lawyers and *journaille*, carried on a poisonous Press campaign against Germany, and seemed to wish for war. The Bolsheviks also always sought to make trouble everywhere. Herr Hitler seemed less fanatical than usual on this subject. The era of surprises, he again said, was over. Any further steps would only be taken after most mature reflection and consideration. He would have preferred to have attained his various objects in the past by negotiation, had it been possible.

The Chancellor only referred indirectly to Great Britain by paying a warm tribute to the courage and efficiency of the British troops in the trenches facing him during the war. He remarked that it had been a great help to him in the Party and outside it to have been an ex-service man. The men who had been

at the front in the war were always the most peace-loving, whereas those, like the French lawyers and journalists referred to above, who had never fought, liked to distribute poison in the Press and elsewhere.

Herr Hitler was most friendly throughout our visit, and was good enough to express regret at our approaching departure, a feeling we assured him that we warmly reciprocated. He conveyed to me, directly he left commonplaces, the same automaton-like impression that I felt at our first meeting in October, 1933.

The Foreign Office was not convinced by Hitler's observation that the 'era of surprises' in European diplomacy was now over. Strang thought it might 're-open' at any time. Vansittart agreed. On 18 April, he added: 'Most of the really unpleasant [surprises] ... are still in posse'. But Eden, remained optimistic about the prospects of, if not a rapprochement with Germany, then the ability of the British government to meet the challenge posed by a military threat. 'Meanwhile', he noted 'we become daily a little stronger; in this sense time is on our side, for the French become stronger too ...'.⁴⁸

Notes

Introduction

1. C. Gladwyn, *The Paris Embassy* (London: Constable, 1976), p. 219.
2. Typical comments include 'I value not only your subject matter but the style which you always manage to impress upon it'. Vansittart to Phipps, 9 Nov. 1935, PHPP I 2/17, Phipps papers, Churchill College Archive Centre; 'the amount of work that you accomplish is truly a matter for admiration. ...' Sargent to Phipps, 11 Nov. 1933, PHPP I 2/10.
3. R. Vansittart, *The Mist Procession* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), p. 445.
4. N. Rostow, *Anglo-French Relations 1934–36* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 34.
5. M. Jaroch, 'Too much wit and not enough warning?' *Sir Eric Phipps als britischer Botschafter in Berlin von 1933 bis 1937* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999).
6. This is the central thesis of M. Macmillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (London: John Murray, 2001).
7. Phipps to Simon, 19 Sept. 1934, [Documents on British Foreign Policy](DBFP), Second Series, Vol. XII, No. 99.
8. W. E. Dodd, M. Dodd (eds), *Ambassador Dodd's Diary, 1933–1938* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1941), p. 140.
9. Dodd, *Diary*, pp. 75–76.
10. The substance of this conversation was reported in Phipps to Simon, 10 Dec. 1933, DBFP, Second Series, Vol. VI, No. 127, pp. 187–188.
11. Dodd, *Diary*, pp. 76–77.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 176–177. Phipps sent an account of this interview to Simon, 19 Sept. 1934, DBFP, Second Series, Vol. XII, No. 99.
13. G. Jebb, *Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 17.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
15. There are a large number of references to this in the works of his contemporaries. See, for example, Lord Birkenhead, *Life of Lord Halifax* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965), p. 358.
16. J. Herman, *The Paris Embassy of Sir Eric Phipps. Anglo-French Relations and the Foreign Office, 1937–1939* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), p. 3.
17. Jaroch, 'Too much wit. ...'
18. Vansittart to Phipps, 20 Dec. 1935, PHPP I 2/18.
19. Jaroch, 'Too much wit ...', pp. 229–235.
20. W. Shirer, *The Collapse of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p. 397.
21. I. Colvin, *Vansittart in Office* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965), p. 31.
22. H. Dalton, *The Fateful Years, Memoirs 1931–1945* (London: Muller, 1957), p. 191.
23. Sargent to Phipps, 24 Dec. 1941, PHPP I 10/1.
24. PHPP I 9/1. Written in 1928, it covers Phipps' career to 1914.
25. Lindsay left no memoirs. For the general context of his Berlin embassy, see J. Jacobson, *Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925–29* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).
26. Rumbold also left no memoirs. But see M. Gilbert, *Sir Horace Rumbold: Portrait of a Diplomat 1869–1941* (London: Heinemann, 1973).

27. Rumbold to Nicolson, 30 Nov. 1930, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Rumbold Mss, 38.
28. P. Neville, *Appeasing Hitler. The Diplomacy of Sir Neville Henderson 1937–9* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000). See also 'Neville Henderson in Berlin: A Re-evaluation', *Red River Valley Historical Journal*, 4 (2) 1977, p. 341.
29. Herman, *The Paris Embassy*, p. 16.
30. Henderson to Halifax, 6 Oct. 1938, TNA/FO800/314.
31. *Daily Express*, 16 May 1933, p. 5.
32. Rostow, *Anglo-French Relations 1934–36*, p. 27.
33. Cited in Hermann, *The Paris Embassy*, p. 4.
34. Diary, 8 Jan. 1935.
35. See, for example, G. Johnson, *The Berlin Embassy of Lord D'Abernon, 1920–1926* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
36. Diary 12 Jun. 1935.
37. Vansittart, *The Mist Procession*, p. 483.

1933

1. The German withdrawal from the Geneva Disarmament Conference and from the League of Nations.
2. Made in a wireless broadcast, 14 Oct. 1933, N. H. Baynes (ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922– August 1939*, Vol. II (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 1097–1102.
3. In Oct. 1932, Mussolini had suggested a security agreement intending to preserve the security of Italy's northern borders by diverting Hitler's enthusiasm for an *Anschluss*. In March 1933, he suggested an agreement between Italy, Britain, France and Germany that would consider revisions of the Treaty of Versailles in accordance with Article 19 of the League Covenant.
4. It had been rumoured that Daladier might be prepared to modify the French disarmament proposals in the light of British pressure to make them more consistent with the MacDonald Plan. At this time, it was unclear what form these modifications would take.
5. Phipps to Simon, 19 Oct. 1933, *DBFP*, Vol. V, No. 471.
6. Under the Treaty of Versailles, this coal-rich region of Germany was administered by France as compensation for the damage done to French coal mines by the Germans during the First World War. The outcome of the plebiscite to determine future jurisdiction of the region is discussed later in the diary.
7. Established by the Treaty of Versailles to give Poland access to the sea. It separated eastern Prussia from the rest of Germany.
8. Earl of Avon, *Facing the Dictators* (London: Cassell, 1962), pp. 48–49.
9. Based on Phipps to Simon, 24 Oct. 1933, *DBFP*, Vol. V, No. 489.
10. These provinces had been under German jurisdiction following the Franco-Prussian War, 1870–1871.
11. Literally 'equal rights'.
12. That is, since the departure of Germany from the disarmament conference and from the League.
13. In this speech MacDonald had called for a spirit of neighbourliness in Europe and appealed to Germany to show herself willing to resume co-operation with other nations after her withdrawal from the League of Nations.
14. Marinus van der Lubbe and Georgi Dimitroff, who had been charged with setting fire to the *Reichstag*, on 27 Feb. 1933.

15. Hitler did not assume this title officially until 2 Aug. 1934.
16. Mohammed Ahmed, (1843–1885), Sudanese military leader. Led a revolt against Egypt in 1881 and captured Khartoum in 1885.
17. Memorandum by von Neurath, 24 Oct. 1933, [*Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series C*]/[*DGFP*], Vol. I, No. 23.
18. Memorandum by von Neurath, 10 Nov. 1933, No. 54.
19. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 49.
20. Based on Phipps to Simon, 22 Nov. 1933, *DBFP*, Vol. VI, No. 67 and Phipps to Simon, 21 Nov. 1933, TNA/FO371/16729/ C10268/319/18.
21. Göring had visited Rome 7–9 Nov.
22. The Daladier government held office from 31 Jan. to 26 Oct. 1933.
23. It held office from 26 Oct. 1933 to 23 Nov. 1933.
24. Under Articles 42–44 of the Treaty of Versailles, the Rhineland was to be a demilitarised zone for 15 years in an area, 30 miles wide along the right bank of the river.
25. One of the conditions of German signature of the Treaty of Locarno had been that Germany should join the League.
26. The figure set by the Treaty of Versailles.
27. On 12 Nov., Hitler had held a plebiscite on his decision to withdraw Germany from the Geneva disarmament conference and from the League of Nations. About 95.1 per cent of the German electorate voiced their agreement after a campaign that was characterised by SA intimidation and anti-British and German propaganda.
28. The first part was dictated by Hitler between 1923 and 1924 while in Landsberg prison. The second part was written from 1925–1927.
29. Hitler's desire for a German *Anschluss* with Austria.
30. The Polish government had asked for an assurance that Germany would not determine the future of the Polish Corridor through the use of force. On 24 Nov. 1933 an agreement to this affect was sent to Pilsudski; the treaty being ratified on 26 Jan. 1934.
31. Based on Phipps to Simon, 5 Dec. 1933, TNA/FO371/16711/ C10651/245/18 and Phipps to Simon, 5 Dec. 1933, TNA/FO371/16711/ C10739/245/18.
32. Memorandum by the Foreign Minister, 5 Dec. 1933, *DGFP*, Vol. I, No. 99.
33. *Proceedings of the House of Commons*, 5th Series, Vol. 283, cols 427–436.
34. In Oct. 1933, Hitler had expressed a desire to conclude a non-aggression pact with Czechoslovakia of a similar nature to that concluded with Poland in Nov.
35. *Proceedings of the House of Commons*, 5th Series, Vol. 283, cols 645–652.
36. At a by-election in Fulham East in Oct. 1933, the incumbent Conservative MP, who favoured British rearmament, was defeated by a Labour candidate who had accused his opponent of being a war mongerer. The Conservative majority of 14,521 was replaced by a Labour majority of 4,840. The result was seen as evidence of the strength of pacifism in Britain.

1934

1. Based on Phipps to Simon, 22 Jan. 1934, *DBFP*, Vol. VI, No. 195.
2. Hitler had seen Cerruti and Dodd immediately after his conversation with Phipps on 5 Dec. 1933.
3. Memorandum by von Neurath, 30 Jan. 1934, *DGFP*, Vol. II, No. 228.
4. On 30 Jan. 1934, Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Vol. II, pp. 1151–1171.
5. Earl of Avon, *Facing the Dictators* (London: Cassell, 1962), pp. 57–67.
6. Phipps to Simon, 7 Feb. 1934, TNA/FO371/17705/C982/29/18.

7. For Eden's account of the meeting see Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 60–71.
8. Record of conversation between Eden, Blomberg and von Neurath, 20 Feb. 1934, *DGFP*, Vol. II, No. 270.
9. Memorandum by an Official in the *Reichschancellery*, 20 Feb. 1934, *DGFP*, Vol. II, No. 271.
10. Eden's visit to Italy lasted until 27 Feb.
11. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 66–67.
12. Göring had been a pilot for the Swedish civilian airline *Svensk-Lufttrafik* 1920–21. He had lived in Rome 1924–5 during a period of convalescence for his wife and had visited London in 1932 to research *Germany Reborn* (1933).
13. In which Göring denounced the perpetrators of the Reichstag fire as enemies of the state, 21 Feb. 1934, p. 14.
14. That is when Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor.
15. Richard Wagner, (1813–1883). He was Hitler's favourite composer.
16. The English Channel.
17. Bülow to von Hoesch, 3 Mar. 1934, *DGFP*, Vol. II, No. 296.
18. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 76–79.
19. Based on Phipps to Simon, 21 Mar. 1934, *DBFP*, Vol. VI, No. 360.
20. Made on 9 Mar. Göring said that Germany could now defy the world and would once again be a great power that honoured its proud militarist traditions.
21. Eden referred to Göring's speech in a debate on foreign affairs in the House of Commons on 14 Mar. See *House of Commons Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 287, col. 389.
22. This sentence was struck out of the original diary manuscript.
23. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 87–88.
24. Tardieu had been a member of the French delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, and had been one of those who had signed the treaty on behalf of France.
25. Gaston Doumergue, President of the Council of Ministers, Feb. 1934–Nov. 1934.
26. Based on Phipps to Simon, 18 Apr. 1934, TNA/FO371/17706/C2464/29/18.
27. The *Erbhofgesetz* programme stated that the peasantry should occupy a privileged position in German society as they provided a bulwark against the rapid expansion of capitalism.
28. This was not surprising. Darré had been educated in Britain.
29. Hitler was concerned that repressive measures in Germany might persuade Saarlanders to vote in favour of remaining under French jurisdiction in the plebiscite that was due to take place in 1935.
30. President Hindenburg's country estate, outside Berlin.
31. Colonel Oskar von Hindenburg had been one of those who had persuaded his father to appoint Hitler Chancellor in Jan. 1933.
32. Based on Phipps to Simon, 25 Apr. 1934, TNA/FO371/17706/C2726/29/18.
33. To resist Hitler's desire for an *Anschluss*, the Austrian Chancellor, Englebert Dollfuss set up a nationalist, repressive, anti-socialist dictatorial regime in Vienna. In Feb. 1934, a workers' demonstration led to a confrontation with the government that resulted in civil war in the Austrian capital for several days. Dollfuss was murdered in Jul. 1934 by Austrian Nazis backed by their German counterparts.
34. One of the last Chancellors of the Weimar Republic, Brüning's power had largely been usurped by President Hindenburg and by the military.
35. The 'Leadership Principle' formulated by Hitler that Germany should be an authoritarian state with power emanating from the leader. It had formed the basis on which the National Socialist Party had operated since Jul. 1921.
36. Based on Phipps to Simon, 29 Apr. 1934, *DBFP*, Vol. VI, No. 412.

37. Actually published on 28 Apr., p. 13.
38. Von Neurath addressed the foreign press in Berlin on 27 Apr., claiming that in their latest Note, the French government had broken off negotiations begun over six months before on grounds involving serious accusations against Germany.
39. Suvich was visiting London in Mussolini's stead following the official visit to Rome of MacDonald and Simon.
40. Von Neurath had met Henderson in Geneva at the meeting of the League Assembly on 20 Sept. 1933.
41. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 89–90.
42. Based on Phipps to Vansittart, 30 May 1934, TNA/FO371/17706/C3398/29/18.
43. An account can also be found in *Ministerialdirektor* Köpke to Adelman, 12 Jun. 1934, *DGFP*, Vol. II, No. 497.
44. Based on Phipps to Simon, 13 Jun. 1934, TNA/FO371/17763/C3911/3911/18.
45. At Karinhall, north of Berlin, named after Göring's first wife.
46. The Teutonic god of war, learning and poetry.
47. In German folklore, Siegmund was the son of Wotan, he represented a symbolic link between the Gods and mortal man.
48. Memorandum by von Neurath, 15 Jun. 1934, *DGFP*, Vol. III, No. 6.
49. Göbbels had been to Essen to attend a wedding. In a speech that day, he claimed that he had been excluded from Hitler's secret discussions about how to deal with Röhm.
50. On 17 Jun. 1934, at the University of Marburg, von Papen had warned against the consequences to Germany of an SA-dominated revolution, which, he argued, would be perpetuated by power-obsessed men who cared little for the fortunes of the country.
51. This observation suggests that Phipps had adjusted the text of this entry after the Röhm Purge on 30 Jun. 1934, discussed below.
52. This entry is an extract from Phipps to Simon, 2 Jul. 1934, TNA/FO371/17707/C4244/29/18.
53. Based on Phipps to Simon, 4 Jul. 1934, TNA/FO371/17707/C4281/29/18.
54. When Minister for Foreign Affairs, Rathenau, had been assassinated in Jun. 1922 by anti-semitic nationalists.
55. The term 'Night of the Long Knives' had also been used to describe an encounter between Nazis and Communists in Königsberg on 31 Jul. 1932, during the general election campaign, following a month of street battles between their respective supporters.
56. The Siamese royal family was on a state visit to Berlin.
57. Hitler met Mussolini in Venice on 14 Jun. 1934, when the Duce warned him of the consequences of annexing Austria.
58. Colonel Bronislaw Pieracki, who was assassinated in Warsaw on 17 May 1934 by members of an Ukranian anti-semitic group.
59. Based on Phipps to Simon, 5 Jul. 1934, TNA/FO371/17707/C4395/29/18.
60. *The Times*, 2 Jul. 1934, pp. 15–17, 20.
61. *Ibid.*, 5 Jul. 1934, p. 14.
62. On 1 Jul. Phipps was instructed to take a suitable opportunity to impress upon von Neurath the spontaneous and independent nature of the feelings of the British press.
63. Made on 10 Jul., and reported in *The Times*, 11 Jul. 1934, p. 13. Göbbels claimed that only the German press understood the true message of National Socialism.
64. Memorandum by von Neurath, 12 Jul. 1934, *DGFP*, Vol. III, No. 85.

65. The family name of the Dukes of Romagna that after the fifteenth century became synonymous with political intrigue and murderous excess.
66. See Baynes (ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Vol. I, pp. 290–328. Its theme was the success of the Nazi revolution and the need to act against enemies of the state.
67. *The Times*, pp. 12, 14, also 16 Jul., p. 13.
68. D. Dutton, *Simon* (London: Aurum, 1992), p. 185.
69. Named after the Battle of Tannenberg, 26–30 Aug. 1914, during the First World War, in which Germany defeated Russia, thus preventing the invasion of Prussia.
70. Based on Phipps to Simon, 8 Aug. 1934, TNA/FO371/17675/C5448/29/18.
71. The 1934 Nuremberg rally was held between 3 and 10 Sept. twice as long as on previous years, and contained displays of loyalty from over a quarter of a million participants and spectators. The event was recorded by Leni Riefenstahl's film, *Triumph des Willens*.
72. Phipps to Simon, 26 Sept. 1934, TNA/FO371/17707/C6489/29/18.
73. Sargent to Phipps, 11 Oct. 1934, TNA/FO371/17695/C5747/20/18.
74. Simon to Phipps, 18 Oct. 1934, TNA/FO371/17723/C6923/74/18.
75. Memorandum on German Debt Negotiations, 30 Oct. 1934, TNA/FO371/17736/C7281/90/18.
76. In the original manuscript, Phipps inserted 'not feverishly, but very steadily and gradually' but later struck out the phrase.
77. For example, Phipps to Simon, 2 Nov. 1934, TNA/FO371/17724/C7323/74/18.
78. Phipps to Simon, 31 Oct. 1934, TNA/FO371/17724/C7261/74/18.
79. Phipps to Simon, 7 Nov. 1934, TNA/FO371/17725/C7502/74/18.
80. *House of Commons Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 293, cols 617–618.
81. Phipps to Simon, 16 Nov. 1934, TNA/FO371/17696/C7769/20/18.
82. Memorandum on German Rearmament by H. M. Military and Air Attachés at Berlin, 21 Nov. 1934, TNA/FO371/17697/C8126/20/18.
83. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 102–103.
84. For example, Phipps to Simon, 22 Nov. 1934, TNA/FO371/17751/C7868/247/18.
85. Memoranda by Sir E. Phipps on German Rearmament, 23 Nov. 1934, TNA/FO371/17696/C8014/20/18.
86. Phipps to Simon, 27 Nov. 1934, TNA/FO371/17751/C8036/247/18.
87. 'Message given to Sir E. Phipps by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs prior to Sir E. Phipps's departure for Berlin on November 26 1934', TNA/FO371/17696/C7975/20/18.
88. Phipps had visited London 24–26 Nov. to advise the Cabinet Committee on German Rearmament.
89. On 28 Nov. 1934. See *House of Commons Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 295, cols 857–982.
90. A statement of Czech nationalism as it was known that Hitler had aspirations towards the Sudetenland.
91. Lithuanian repression of the German minority in Memel. Formerly an area of East Prussia ceded from Germany and administered by France 1920–1923, it was part of territory claimed by Lithuanian guerrillas. The region was 87 per cent German speaking.
92. Phipps placed a question mark against this phrase, which is underlined in the original.
93. Memorandum by *Direktor* of Dept. IV, 27 Nov. 1934, *DGFP*, Vol. III, No. 359.
94. Memorandum by von Neurath, 27 Nov. 1934, *DGFP*, Vol. III, No. 356.
95. Phipps to Simon, 27 Nov. 1934, TNA/FO371/17696/C7979/20/18.

96. Phipps to Simon, 27 Nov. 1934, TNA/FO371/17697/C8010/20/18.
97. Note by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 29 Nov. 1934, TNA/FO371/17697/C8211/20/18.
98. Phipps to Simon, 2 Dec. 1934, TNA/FO371/17675/C8150/20/18.
99. Simon to Phipps, 5 Dec. 1934, TNA/FO371/17727/C8214/74/18.
100. *House of Commons Debates*, 5th Series, 28 Nov 1934, Vol. 295, cols 874–875.
101. Phipps to Simon, 3 Dec. 1934, TNA/FO371/17697/C8183/20/18.
102. Simon to Clerk, 4 Dec. 1934, TNA/FO371/17727/C8210/74/18.

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1. Simon to Clerk, 28 Dec. 1934, TNA/FO371/17697/C8796/20/18.
2. Phipps to Simon, 4 Jan. 1935, TNA/FO371/18812/C133/1/18.
3. Simon to Phipps, 9 Jan. 1935, TNA/FO371/18813/C181/1/18.
4. Phipps to Simon, 15 Jan. 1935, TNA/FO371/C18823/C366/55/18.
5. The Foreign Office's response was detailed in Memorandum by Sargent, 17 Jan. 1935, TNA/FO371/18825/1009/55/18.
6. Phipps to Simon, 21 Jan. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XII, No. 358.
7. Earl of Avon, *Facing the Dictators* (London: Cassell, 1962), pp. 123–124.
8. Notes of Anglo-French Conversations, held at No. 10 Downing Street, S.W.1, on 1–3 Feb., 1935, TNA/FO371/FO18824/C893/55/18.
9. Phipps sent a less candid version to Simon, 23 Jan. 1935, TNA/FO371/17675/C600/55/18.
10. See J. Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933–1939* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 50.
11. See G. von Rauch, *The Baltic States: The Years of Independence. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, 1917–1940* (London: Hurst, 1974), pp. 99–106.
12. The British Cabinet's opposition to Simon's foreign policy strategies. Hitler had Baldwin in particular in mind.
13. Lord Allen of Hurtwood, Member of the Executive Committee of the League of Nations Union, when visiting Berlin on a goodwill mission, conveyed a message of greeting from Ramsay MacDonald on 25 Jan. It stated that it was in the interests of Britain and Germany to agree on a formula for the limitation of weapons.
14. The Berlin street containing many government departments and foreign embassies. Often used as shorthand to refer to the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
15. Phipps to Simon, 23 Jan. 1935, TNA/FO371/18824/C637/55/18.
16. Cf. Memorandum by Mr Sargent on the proposed Eastern Pact, 28 Jan. 1935, TNA/FO371/18825/C962/55/18.
17. Lothian had arrived in Berlin on 26 Jan. for a dinner of the Association of German Rhodes Scholars.
18. See Phipps to Simon, 30 Jan. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XII, No. 391, note 5.
19. Based on Phipps to Simon, 30 Jan. 1935, TNA/FO371/17675/C785/55/18.
20. See Phipps to Simon, 30 Jan. 1935, TNA/FO371/18824/C841/55/18.
21. Note by Sir J. Simon on a possible mutual guarantee treaty against air attack, 1 Feb. 1935, TNA/FO371/18824/C892/55/18.
22. See Notes of Anglo-French Conversations, held at No. 10 Downing Street, S.W.1, on 1–3 Feb., 1935, TNA/FO371/18824/C893/55/18.
23. Circular to the Foreign Ministry, 11 Feb. 1935, *DGFP*, Vol. III, No. 487.
24. See note 1 on Phipps to Simon, 8 Feb. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XII, No. 433.

25. Phipps to Simon, 14 Feb. 1935, TNA/FO371/18826/C1216/55/18.
26. Memorandum by Mr Sargent on the Occasion for Conclusion of Proposed Air Agreement, 14 Feb. 1935, TNA/FO371/18826/C1341/55/18.
27. Simon to Phipps, 11 Feb. 1935, TNA/FO371/18827/C1159/55/18.
28. Phipps to Simon, 13 Feb. 1935, TNA/FO371/18828/C1179/55/18.
29. Phipps to Simon, 14 Feb. 1935, TNA/FO371/18826/C1216/55/18.
30. Phipps to Simon, 15 Feb. 1935, TNA/FO371/18826/C1285/55/18.
31. Note by Mr Ramsay MacDonald, undated, Feb. 1935, TNA/FO371/18828/C1720/55/18.
32. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 125.
33. On 4 Mar. detailing the scale of German rearmament and warned that if left unchecked, it would lead to war.
34. This is a reference to Baldwin's speech in the Commons noted earlier. He did not become Prime Minister until Jun. 1935.
35. Von Neurath to von Hoesch, 6 Mar. 1935, *DGFP*, Vol. III, No. 517.
36. Phipps to Simon, 5 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/18828/C1774/55/18.
37. Phipps was commended for his 'admirable picture' of the situation. Sargent to Phipps, 7 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO800/275.
38. Phipps to Simon, 9 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/18829/C1924/55/18.
39. That is, old news.
40. For example, Phipps to Simon, 16 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/18830/C2122/55/18.
41. Phipps to Simon, 17 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/18830/C2128/55/18.
42. Based on Phipps to Simon, 22 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/17679/C2626/2626/18.
43. Phipps struck out this sentence in the original manuscript.
44. Now the Bode Museum, in Berlin.
45. Torgler, a Communist, had been acquitted of a charge of involvement in the Reichstag fire in Feb. 1933, because he was too frail to stand trial and because of international condemnation of his arrest. In 1935 he was expelled from the Communist Party and joined the Social Democratic Party.
46. Neubauer was also a Communist Deputy implicated in the *Reichstag* fire.
47. Based on Phipps to Simon, 16 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/17675/C2121/55/18.
48. The actual figure was 36. Hitler had rushed the measure through a Cabinet meeting on 15 Mar.
49. Phipps to Simon, 16 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/18830/C2124/55/18.
50. Phipps to Simon, 17 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/18830/C2129/55/18.
51. Simon to Phipps, 18 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/18830/C2180/55/18.
52. Based on Phipps to Simon, 21 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/17675/C2328/55/18.
53. Laval had visited Moscow on 30 Mar. to discuss a draft mutual assistance pact between France and the Soviet Union. However, he came under British pressure to give greater priority to the forthcoming Stresa conference. Laval was thus compelled to convince the Russians of French commitment to their agreement.
54. The French government's note of 17 Apr. 1934.
55. William Strang, who had accompanied Eden on his visit to Berlin in Feb. 1934, and Ralph Wigram.
56. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 132–142.
57. Record of the Substance of the Conversation between the Führer and Chancellor and the British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, during the morning of 25 Mar. 1935, *DGFP*, Vol. III, No. 555.
58. Simon to Phipps, 23 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/18832/2469/55/18.
59. That took place on 26 Mar.

60. A heavy military barrage.
61. 'God punishes England', a slogan of the German army during the First World War.
62. Phipps to Simon, 28 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/18832/C2639/55/18.
63. In the original diary manuscript, this entry was positioned after that for 6 Apr.
64. *Victory of the Faith*, made by Leni Riefenstahl in 1933, was a film of the party rally at Nuremberg 31 Aug.–3 Sept.
65. King of Prussia 1740–1786, whose passionate nationalism made him a hero of Hitler.
66. One of the proposals for an Anglo-German naval agreement had been that the German navy be expanded to match that raised by British colonies collectively.
67. Phipps to Simon, 4 Apr. 1935, TNA/FO371/17675/C2891/55/18.
68. See Record of an Anglo-Soviet Conversation held at the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, Moscow, on 28 Mar., 1935, at 3 pm enclosed with Chilston to Simon, 30 Mar. 1935, TNA/FO371/18832/C2726/55/18.
69. Phipps to Sargent, 4 Apr. 1935, TNA/FO371/18834/C2922/55/18.
70. British objectives concerning the conference were set out in Memorandum on Questions for discussion at the Stresa Conference, 5 Apr. 1935, TNA/FO371/18835/C3049/55/18.
71. Phipps to Simon, 9 Apr. 1935, TNA/FO371/18834/C2986/55/18.
72. Based on Phipps to Simon, 6 Apr. 1935, TNA/FO371/17675/C2949/55/18.
73. Article VII of the Treaty of London of 1839 declared that Belgium was an 'independent and perpetually neutral state'. It was the German breach of this treaty that led Britain to declare war in Aug. 1914.
74. Based on Phipps to Simon, 4 Apr. 1935, TNA/FO371/17675/C2891/55/18.
75. For example, Phipps to Simon, 9 Apr. 1935, TNA/FO371/18834/C2988/55/18.
76. Phipps to Simon, 12 Apr. 1935, TNA/FO371/18835/C3116/55/18.
77. Phipps to Simon, 17 Apr. 1935, TNA/FO371/18835/C3267/55/18.
78. Based on Phipps to Simon, 17 Apr. 1935, TNA/FO371/17679/C3298/2626/18.
79. The official marching song of the Nazi Party, named after the Storm Trooper who wrote the lyrics and who was murdered by Communist in 1930 and later declared a martyr by Göbbels.
80. 1 Corinthians, 13, verse 13.
81. Based on Phipps to Simon, 2 May 1935, TNA/FO371/18838/C3621/55/18.
82. The German Admiralty.
83. See Phipps to Simon, 25 Apr. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XIII, No. 138.
84. In particular Piètri, the Minister of Marine, and Léger. They believed that a revived *Entente Cordiale* provided the best security against German military aggression.
85. The reference to the Rome conference is an addition to the original dispatch, as it was Simon's successor, Sir Samuel Hoare, who sent Eden, now Lord Privy Seal, to visit Mussolini to set out proposals for a European air and naval agreement. Eden arrived in Rome on 23 Jun.
86. Put forward by Eden and Laval to the League of Nations on 22 May 1935. It stated that the process of arbitration should refer to all incidents since the publication of the British Defence White Paper in Nov. 1934. It also reaffirmed the Kellogg–Briand Pact of 1928 under which signatory powers undertook not to make recourse to war.
87. The date of the reintroduction of German conscription.
88. Made on 21 May, Hitler reiterated his desire for peace and expressed regret at the deterioration of relations with Italy over Austria.
89. Based on Phipps to Simon, 15 May 1935, TNA/FO371/18843/C3946/55/18.

90. Von Ribbentrop had recently been appointed head of the German delegation charged with negotiating the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. Phipps was asked to ascertain how much influence von Ribbentrop would have on the course of events. Simon was reassured to discover that most of the negotiations would be conducted by the *Marineleitung*.
91. Hitler's speech on German foreign policy made instead on 21 May.
92. The location in Paris of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
93. Laval had visited Stalin in early May.
94. A reference to speeches in the Commons on 2 May and in the Lords on 7 May; *House of Commons Debates*, Vol. 301, cols 571 and 688 and *House of Lords Debates*, Vol. 96, col. 818.
95. Phipps to Simon, 23 May 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XIII, No. 230.
96. *The Times*, 28 May 1935, p. 16.
97. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 217–218.
98. Phipps to Hoare, 12 Jun. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XIII, No. 327.
99. The League Council Resolution of 17 Apr. 1935.
100. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 230–234.
101. Based on Phipps to Hoare, 24 Jun. 1935, TNA/FO371/18850/C4955/55/18.
102. Memorandum by von Neurath, 24 Jun. 1935, *DGFP*, Series C, Vol. IV, No. 167.
103. Based on Phipps to Hoare, 24 Jun. 1935, TNA/FO371/18851/C4956/55/18.
104. Contained in Köster to von Neurath, 3 Jun. 1935, *DGFP*, Series C, Vol. IV, No. 127.
105. A non-aggression treaty was signed between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia on 16 May 1935, as a supplementary agreement to the Franco-Russian pact concluded a fortnight earlier.
106. Julius Seljamaa, held office 1933–1936.
107. 'World view', used to define the National Socialist concept of the world and their philosophy of life.
108. Mussolini had asked that Abyssinia become an Italian protectorate in the same way as Morocco was to France and Egypt was to Britain. Abyssinia would thus retain the status of an independent state, therefore allowing a growing Italian presence in the country to take place without being in breach of the Covenant of the League of Nations.
109. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 237.
110. *Ibid.*, pp. 245–247.
111. Memorandum by Hoare on the Air Pact and Air Limitation Agreement, 2 Jul. 1935, TNA/FO371/18852/C5301/55/18.
112. 11 Jul. 1935, *House of Commons Debates*, 5th series, Vol. 304, cols 515–516.
113. Hoare to Newton, 23 Jul. 1935, TNA/FO371/18859/C5592/55/18.
114. Secondary sources references to the history of the Abyssinian crisis.
115. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 220–221.
116. Based on Phipps to Hoare, 18 Sept. 1935, TNA/FO371/18851/6556/55/18.
117. The Brenner Pass, the lowest pass over the Alps. The area south was assigned to Italy under the Treaty of St Germain of 1919, although the territory contained a German–Austrian minority. After the murder of Dollfuss in Jul. 1934, Mussolini had sent troops to the pass and had flown to Austria to show his solidarity with the Austrians. This provided the impetus for the Stresa conference.
118. The 1935 Nuremberg rally, 10–15 Sept.
119. League sanctions against Italy in the event of an invasion of Abyssinia.
120. After Hoare's speech on 12 Sept. Laval had been anxious to demonstrate the French commitment to supporting a League-sponsored solution to the Abyssinian crisis.

121. Prince von Bismarck to the German Foreign Ministry, 16 Sept. 1935, *DGFP*, Series C, Vol. IV, No. 298.
122. Brought about through the passage by the United States' Congress of the Immigration Act in 1921.
123. At the Nuremberg rally, they had made a speech condemning the Jewish influences that had been at work during the Comintern Convention in Moscow, which had met between 25 Jul. and 21 Aug. 1935.
124. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 278–280.
125. Sir William Fisher had been Chief of Staff of the Mediterranean Fleet, 1919–1922.
126. Based on Phipps to Hoare, 10 Oct. 1935, TNA/FO371/18850/C6983/55/18.
127. The vociferous French anti-Fascist campaigners, such as André Malraux, who advocated collective action against Italy under the auspices of the League of Nations.
128. Hoare had said that the British government would be 'prepared to take its share in any collective attempt to deal, in a fair and effective way, with a problem that is certainly troubling many people at present and may trouble them even more in future'.
129. Entitled *Manifesto for Respect of International Law*, published on 5 Oct. 1935, it condemned Mussolini's actions in Abyssinia and pledged French support for the maintenance of international peace.
130. Peter the Great, (1672–1725). Established Russia as a European power.
131. For example, Phipps to Hoare, 11 Oct. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XV, No. 67.
132. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 284–286.
133. Hoare to Phipps, 17 Oct. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XV, No. 104.
134. The first four paragraphs are Phipps to Hoare, 7 Nov. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XV, No. 194.
135. The point being that it would take many more Italian troops than this because of the superiority of the German army over its Italian counterpart.
136. Phipps expanded the information given in the following entry in Phipps to Hoare, 13 Nov. 1935, TNA/FO371/18854/C7648/55/18.
137. See note 2 on Sargent to Phipps, 14 Nov. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XV, No. 218.
138. Based on Phipps to Hoare, 13 Nov. 1935, TNA/FO371/18841/C7647/55/18.
139. Churchill had predicted that Germany would be as strong as Britain in the air by the end of 1935 and twice as strong by 1937. See Phipps to Hoare, 25 Oct. 1935, M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, V, 1929–1935, Companion* (London: Heinemann, 1981), pp. 1299–1300.
140. The Strength through Joy recreational organisation was intended to improve the morale of the German people, and so increase economic productivity. It received over 17 million marks in government subsidies in 1935.
141. Both made on 3 Nov. 1935. They discussed German rearmament and Franco-German relations.
142. Of 8 Nov. to commemorate the twelfth anniversary of the Munich Putsch, see also *The Times*, 9 Nov. 1935, p. 11.
143. Two former German colonies that came under joint British and French rule under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
144. The status of these former German colonies was different from Togoland and Cameroons. South West Africa had surrendered to the Allies in 1915 and was administered by South Africa as a League of Nations Mandate after the war. Tanganyika had also become a League mandate, administered by Britain.
145. Phipps to Hoare, 19 Nov. 1935, TNA/FO371/18854/C7732/55/18.
146. Phipps to Hoare, 20 Nov. 1935, TNA/FO371/18854/C7789/55/18.

147. Based on Phipps to Hoare, 21 Nov. 1935, TNA/FO371/18841/C7762/55/18.
148. Laval had concluded an entente with Mussolini in Rome on 7 Jan. 1935, which affirmed their commitment to peace and to resolving disputes through the League of Nations.
149. In this article, Béraud had asked 'L'Angleterre doit-elle être réduite à l'esclavage?'
150. A reference to the riot on 16 Nov., following a meeting of the *Croix de Feu*, reported in *The Times*, 18 Nov. p. 14. The incident led Socialist leaders to demand the dissolution of this fascist organisation.
151. The members of the League of Nations.
152. A General Election had been held on 14 Nov. 1935. The National Government won 53.7 per cent of the vote. The General Elections of 1931 and 1935 are the only occasions on which a government has been elected with more than 50 per cent of the vote.
153. Phipps to Hoare, 22 Nov. 1935, TNA/FO371/18855/C7818/55/18.
154. Note for the Cabinet by Sir S. Hoare on German Rearmament, 25 Nov. 1935, TNA/FO371/18855/C8002/55/18.
155. Phipps to Wigram, 27 Nov. 1935, TNA/FO371/18841/C7931/55/18.
156. Hoare's speech to the League of Nations Assembly on 11 Sept. 1935 in which he said that 'elasticity' was an important part of League security policy.
157. The treaty of mutual assistance signed in Apr. 1922 between Germany and the Soviet Union.
158. Three days later, Sargent minuted that Phipps' account of the steps Britain needed to take to secure British interests in Europe in the event of a proposed alliance between Germany and the Soviet Union merited further consideration.
159. Phipps to Hoare, 30 Nov. 1935, TNA/FO371/18855/C7984/55/18.
160. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 295.
161. Based on Phipps to Hoare, 30 Nov. 1935, TNA/FO371/18841/C7984/55/18.
162. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the original name of British Petroleum, had been formed in 1909, when the British government had secured an oil concession from the Shah of Persia. The strategic importance of Persia to Britain's imperial interests, gave the activities of the company considerable political importance to the British government.
163. See Hoare to Clerk, 3 Dec. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XV, No. 297.
164. Now the state of Tanzania.
165. Schacht had been a staunch supporter of Hitler until the Night of the Long Knives in June 1934. But while committed to making the economy of Nazi Germany operate as efficiently, he resigned in protest against the growing persecution of the Jews in Nov. 1937.
166. Phipps to Hoare, 4 Dec. 1935, TNA/FO371/18856/C8029/55/18.
167. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 310.
168. As a result of the occupation of the Ruhr region of Germany by French and Belgian troops in response to German non-payment of reparation payments stipulated by the Schedule of Payments of May 1921.
169. The Soviet Union was a member of the League of Nations 1934–1939.
170. See J. Barnes, K. Middlemass, *Baldwin: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), pp. 867–868.
171. Phipps placed a question mark against this phrase in the original manuscript.
172. *Victoriously we want to Strike France*, a song associated with the German army during the First World War.
173. That is, for the return of Alsace and Lorraine.

174. Ras Gugsä Araya Salassie (1888–1932), known as the Great Ali.
175. 5 Dec. 1935, *House of Commons Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 307, cols 333–344.
176. Possibly a reference to Hitler's speech at Nuremberg on 13 Sept. 1935, Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, pp. 1252–1255.
177. That is Hitler, Hess and Göring.
178. 'A people without space', a concept used as a justification by Hitler to seek German expansion into Eastern Europe. The phrase was borrowed from the title of a book by Hans Grimm in the 1920s.
179. Based on Phipps to Hoare, 16 Dec. 1935, TNA/FO371/18841/C8364/55/18.
180. Concerning the Anglo-French air pact, discussed earlier.
181. The other area of concern to the British government was the Far East, where Japanese attempts to establish a 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' had resulted in incursions into China and the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo in Manchuria in 1932.
182. Made on 26 Nov. 1934 and discussed earlier, *House of Commons Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 295, cols 876–883.
183. Minute by Mr Sargent on Sir E. Phipps' interview with Herr Hitler on 13 Dec., 18 Dec. 1935, TNA/FO371/18852/C8329/55/18.
184. Based on Phipps to Hoare, 19 Dec. 1935, TNA/FO371/18841/C8373/55/18.
185. *The Road to Endor*, by Esther Barstow Hammond, published in 1940.

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1. Phipps to Eden, 30 Dec. 1935, *DBFP*, Vol. XV, No. 418.
2. Earl of Avon, *Facing the Dictators* (London: Cassell, 1962), p. 318.
3. Eden to Phipps, 8 Jan. 1936, TNA/FO371/19922/C8329/55/18.
4. Phipps to Eden, 8 Jan. 1936, TNA/FO371/19883/C186/4/18.
5. Johann Strauss II (1825–1899). A composer of dance, music and popular operettas.
6. Phipps to Eden, 14 Jan. 1936, TNA/FO371/19883/C248/4/18.
7. Eden to Phipps, 16 Jan. 1936, *ibid.*
8. Phipps to Eden, 16 Jan. 1936, TNA/FO371/19923/C299/86/18.
9. In particular Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (1754–1838). French foreign minister 1797–1807, represented France at the Congress of Vienna 1815 and was ambassador to Britain 1830–1834.
10. Memorandum by Mr Eden, 17 Jan. 1936, TNA/FO371/19883/C454/4/18.
11. Based on Phipps to Vansittart, 22 Jan. 1936, TNA/FO371/19884/C585/4/18.
12. The elections of 19 May 1935. The Sudeten German Party, led by Konrad Henlein, won more than 60 per cent of the German vote in Czechoslovakia.
13. In an undated note in the margin Vansittart wrote 'but all that hinges on it is'.
14. Made on 10 Jan. by Molotov, President of the Soviet of People's Commissars, to the Central Executive at Moscow. Summarised in *The Times*, 13 Jan. 1936, p. 11.
15. Phipps to Vansittart, 23 Jan. 1936, TNA/FO371/19883/C502/4/18.
16. Upon the death of King George V.
17. *War is war*, a reference to the pamphlet by Antonio Gramsci, published 31 Jan. 1921.
18. See Note of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on 3 Feb. 1936, to discuss Sir R. Vansittart's memorandum on Britain, France and Germany, TNA/FO371/19885/C979/4/18.
19. Phipps to Eden, 5 Feb. 1936, TNA/FO371/19884/C750/4/18.

20. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 334.
21. See Memorandum by Mr Eden on Policy towards Germany, 11 Feb. 1936, TNA/FO371/19885/C997/4/18.
22. Eden to Phipps, 11 Feb. 1936, TNA/FO371/19884/C835/4/18.
23. Drummond to Eden, 14 Feb. 1936, *DBFP*, Vol. XV, No. 518.
24. Providing the rationale for Memorandum by Mr Eden on the Rhineland Demilitarised Zone, 14 Feb. 1936, TNA/FO371/19885/C1027/4/18.
25. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 334.
26. Foreign Office Memorandum on Terms of a Working Arrangement with Germany, 15 Feb. 1936, TNA/FO371/19885/C998/4/18. The draft document for presentation to the Cabinet is included in this file.
27. Eden to Phipps, 19 Feb. 1936, TNA/FO371/19885/C1014/4/18.
28. See Draft Minutes of the first meeting of the Committee on Germany, held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, on 17 Feb. 1936, at 4pm, TNA/FO371/19885/C1028/4/18.
29. See Note 3 on Eden to Phipps, 22 Feb. 1936, *DBFP*, Vol. XV, No. 538.
30. Eden to Phipps, 24 Feb. 1936, TNA/FO371/19884/C750/4/18.
31. Memorandum by Mr Eden, 27 Feb. 1936, TNA/FO371/19886/C1302/4/18.
32. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 328.
33. See 'Note by Mr Eden on the Air Pact for the Cabinet Committee on Germany', 2 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19888/C1352/4/18.
34. Based on Phipps to Eden, 29 Feb. 1936, TNA/FO371/19886/C1287/4/18.
35. Minute, 13 Mar. 1936, on Phipps to Eden, 11 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19891/C1710/4/18.
36. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 338.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 340–341.
38. Eden to Phipps, 6 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19889/C1450/4/18.
39. Discussed in Eden to Clerk, 7 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19886/C1486/4/18.
40. Eden to Phipps, 12 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19890/C1671/4/18.
41. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 346–347.
42. Based on Phipps to Vansittart, 12 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19894/C1995/4/18.
43. Sigmund Gustloff, leader of the National Socialists in Switzerland, was murdered by a Jewish student in Davos on 4 Feb. 1936. As a result, the Swiss parliament banned all Nazi party activity at local level.
44. Of 2 May 1935.
45. On 22 Feb. 1936, Mussolini had told von Hassell that if oil sanctions were imposed, Italy would leave the League and no longer be bound by the Treaty of Locarno. Hitler was hoping that if Mussolini carried out his threat, it would pave the way for a similar German declaration linked to the signature of the Franco-Russian pact. However, as indicated above, on 2 Mar. Flandin persuaded Eden that the imposition of sanctions would be counterproductive.
46. Phipps was correct. Von Hoesch to von Neurath, 11 Mar. 1936, *DGFP*, Series C, Vol. V, No. 74.
47. Phipps to Eden, 13 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19892/C1817/4/18.
48. Von Hassell to von Neurath, 11 Mar. 1936, *DGFP*, Series C, Vol. V, No. 75.
49. Memorandum by Mr Wigram on a conversation with M. Flandin, 12 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19894/C1940/4/18.
50. Eden to Clerk, 13 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19893/C1806/4/18.
51. Eden to Clerk, 14 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19893/C1876/4/18.
52. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 357.

53. Minute by Sir R. Vansittart, 17 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19904/C2802/4/18.
54. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 366–367.
55. Phipps to Eden, 28 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19927/C2497/97/18.
56. See Memorandum by the German Government, 7 Mar. 1936, in S. Heald (ed.), *Documents on International Affairs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 218.
57. Reported in *The Times*, 10 Mar. 1936, p. 10.
58. Eden to Phipps, 2 Apr. 1936, TNA/FO371/19901/C2615/4/18.
59. Phipps to Eden, 7 Apr. 1936, TNA/FO371/19901/C2788/4/18.
60. Ribbentrop was then Ambassador-at-Large in London. He did not take on the full role of a plenipotentiary until 11 Aug. 1936.
61. Peace Plan of the German Government of 31 Mar. 1936, handed to the British Government by Ambassador von Ribbentrop, 1 Apr. 1936, *DGFP*, Series C, Vol. V, No. 242.
62. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 370–371.
63. See Memorandum by Mr Eden regarding Part III of the Proposals of the 19th March, TNA/FO371/19900/C2528/4/18.
64. Von Hoesch to the German Foreign Ministry, 27 Mar. 1936, *DGFP*, Series C, Vol. V, No. 223.
65. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 379–380.
66. Phipps to Sargent, 23 Apr. 1936, TNA/FO371/19903/C3209/4/18.
67. He visited Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary during Easter 1936.
68. 'Before the eyes'.
69. Memorandum, 7 Mar. 1936, Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Vol. II, pp. 1293–1302.
70. The Austrian right-wing home-guard movement. While its leader, Prince Ernst Starhemberg (1899–1956), had supported Hitler's *Beer Hall Putsch* in 1923, he was hostile to an *Anschluss* with Germany.
71. Phipps to Eden, 31 Mar. 1936, TNA/FO371/19900/C2521/4/18.
72. Memorandum by Mr Eden on questions to be addressed to the German Government, 28 Apr. 1936, TNA/FO371/19906/C3297/4/18.
73. Cabinet Minutes, 29 Apr. 1936, TNA/CAB31/36.
74. Eden to Phipps, 6 May 1936, TNA/FO371/19906/C3421/4/18.
75. *Ibid.*, TNA/FO371/19904/C3421/4/18.
76. Discussed in Phipps to Sargent, 7 May 1936, TNA/FO371/19942/C3458/4/18.
77. The strategy suggested to the Czech President by Mussolini in Rome in Mar. 1936 as part of his strategy to use the Little Entente as a bulwark against German ambitions in central Europe.
78. 21 Apr. 1936, *House of Commons Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 81, col. 127; 22 Apr. Vol. 81 cols 130–131; 11 May 1936, Vol. 82, cols 6–7.
79. The Sarraut government remained in office until 5 Jun. 1936.
80. Phipps had been Minister in Vienna, 1928–1933.
81. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 382–383.
82. Minute 18 May 1936 on Phipps to Sargent, 13 May 1936, TNA/FO371/19906/C3676/4/18.
83. Minute 15 May 1936 on Selby to the Foreign Office, 14 May 1936, TNA/FO371/19906/C3647/4/18.
84. Phipps to Eden, 14 May 1936, TNA/FO371/19906/C3662/4/18.
85. In Apr. 1936, Beneš tried to scotch rumours of a Czech-Russian rapprochement by convincing Hitler of his willingness to sign a non-aggression pact. This would

- ensure peace between Germany and Czechoslovakia while offering Czech assistance should Germany be invaded by the Soviet Union.
86. Expressed thus, it is odd that Phipps was surprised at an Italian victory in Abyssinia, given the relative firepower of the countries. He was not sufficient of an idealist to believe that the moral objections of the British and French governments and that League action would be so decisive that Mussolini would have retired from the conflict. Furthermore, neither had proved the case.
 87. Lake Tsana in Abyssinia formed one of the headwaters of the Nile, which flowed through British territory in Egypt. In 1930, the Abyssinians had granted the American government permission to build a dam on the lake.
 88. Phipps to Eden, 15 May 1936, TNA/FO371/19906/C3677/4/18.
 89. Eden to Baldwin, 6 Jun. 1936, TNA/FO371/19907/C3689/4/18.
 90. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 384.
 91. Phipps to Eden, 19 May 1936, TNA/FO371/19907/C3746/4/18.
 92. Minute by Vansittart, 1 Jun. 1936, on Phipps to Eden, 26 May 1936, TNA/FO371/19909/C5167/4/18.
 93. Phipps to Eden, 16 Jun. 1936, TNA/FO371/19907/C4342/4/18.
 94. Debts incurred by Britain and France during the First World War. The economic collapse caused by the Wall Street Crash prevented full repayment. Hitler is wrong. The United States did not sign the Treaty of Versailles.
 95. M. Dodd, *My Years in Germany* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939), p. 91.
 96. 22 Jun. 1936, *House of Commons Debates* 5th Series, Vol. 313, col. 1404.
 97. Cabinet Minutes, 6 Jul. 1936, TNA/CAB50/36. See also Conclusions of the second meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, on 15 Jul. 1936, at 5 pm, TNA/FO371/19912/C5417/4/18.
 98. M. Bloch, *Ribbentrop* (London: Abacus, 1992), p. 239.
 99. A. Lentin, *Lloyd George and the Lost Peace. From Versailles to Hitler 1919–1940* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2001), pp. 89–105.
 100. Phipps to Eden, 27 Jun. 1936, TNA/FO371/19908/C4687/4/18.
 101. Discussed in Vansittart to Edmond, 3 Jul. 1936, TNA/FO371/19907/C4804/4/18.
 102. Newton to Eden, 4 Jul. 1936, TNA/FO371/19909/C4864/4/18.
 103. Eden to Newton, 21 Jul. 1936, TNA/FO371/19910/C5350/4/18.
 104. See Record of Conversation between British, French and Belgian Ministers at No. 10 Downing Street, on Thursday, 23 Jul. 1936, at 10.30 am, TNA/FO371/19911/C5449/4/18.
 105. Phipps was on leave in mid-August for four weeks. In his absence, Basil Newton had been *Chargé d'Affaires*.
 106. Phipps to Eden, 30 Sept. 1936, TNA/FO371/19913/C6815/4/18.
 107. Memorandum by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on the Agenda of the Five-Power Conference, 17 Sept. 1936, TNA/FO371/19912/C6259/4/18.
 108. See notes to entry for 14 May 1936.
 109. This observation provoked a scornful response in the Foreign Office. The consensus was that the British government should take a firm line with Hitler rather than regard his regime as the objective of friendship.
 110. When the French franc was devalued on 26 Sept. the British, French and American governments undertook to prevent any crises of confidence that might result.
 111. Based on Phipps to Vansittart, 21 Oct. 1936, TNA/FO371/19932/C7853/576/18.

112. Mosley was in Berlin for interviews with Hitler and Göring. See *The Times*, 17 Oct. 1936, p. 12.
113. Hitler fulfilled his side of the bargain by appointing him Minister for Foreign Affairs on 4 Feb. 1938. Von Ribbentrop did not.
114. See von Neurath to von Ribbentrop, 13 Oct. 1936, *DGFP*, Series C, Vol. V, No. 596.
115. King Leopold's announcement in mid-Oct. 1936 that the Belgian government wanted no part in the proposed Locarno-style pact, intending instead to take unilateral steps to preserve Belgian security.
116. Phipps to Eden, 22 Oct. 1936, TNA/FO371/19930/C7500/97/18.
117. See the entry for 3 Dec. 1935.
118. The defeat of Germany in 1918 and the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II.
119. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 424.
120. This entry is an amalgamation of Phipps to Eden, 30 Oct. 1936, TNA/FO371/19930/C7742/97/18 and Phipps to Eden, 4 Nov. 1936, TNA/FO371/19937/C7901/99/18.
121. The annual conference of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, 1–2 Oct. 1936. The resolution stated: 'His Majesty's Government, in order to dispel the grave anxieties within the Empire and dangerous hopes abroad, to give an assurance that the declaration made by the then Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, to the German Chancellor in Berlin in Mar. 1935, to the effect that the cessation of any British Mandated Territory was not a discussable question, still represents the unaltered attitude of His Majesty's Government.' Some delegates disagreed and thought that the British government's position should reflect the more conciliatory position expressed in a speech by Eden on 27 Jul. 1936. However, the conference voted in favour of Simon position.
122. At the Berlin *Sportpalast* on 28 Oct. 1936, he linked shortages of raw materials for German industry to the absence of colonies.
123. On 31 Oct. Vansittart minuted, 'this is an ominous interview. The admission, or rather the aspiration, at the end is another justification of the Franco-Soviet Pact'.
124. 'Blood and Soil' – the rejection of urban values and a return to nature to rediscover the pure roots of the German people.
125. Based on Phipps to Eden, 10 Nov. 1936, TNA/FO371/19943/C8168/576/18.
126. Berlin had recently been visited by Lord and Lady Londonderry, their son Viscount Castlereagh, and the Earl of Derby, a former ambassador to Paris. The Londonderrys met Hitler on 30 Oct.
127. Reported in Phipps to Eden, 4 Nov. 1936, Vol. XVII, No. 350 not included in the diary. See pp. 506–510.
128. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 428–429.
129. War Office to the Foreign Office, 23 Nov. 1936, *DBFP*, Vol. XVII, No. 406.
130. Thomas Malthus (1766–1834). His *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) argued that food production, which increases on an arithmetic basis, is negated by the geometrical increase in population size.
131. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 430.
132. Phipps to Eden, 23 Dec. 1936, TNA/FO371/19894/C9152/4/18.

1937

1. For example, Phipps to Eden, 4 Jan. 1937, TNA/FO371/20709/C109/3/18.
2. Eden to von Ribbentrop, 5 Jan. 1937, TNA/FO371/20705/C147/1/18.
3. Phipps to Eden, 11 Jan. 1937, *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, No. 48.

4. Eden to Phipps, 5 Jan. 1937, *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, No. 11.
5. See contents of Phipps to Sargent, 11 Jan. 1937, TNA/FO371/20719/C369/ 37/18.
6. Earl of Avon, *Facing the Dictators* (London: Cassell, 1962), pp. 433–434.
7. Phipps to Eden, 14 Jan. 1937, *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, No. 72.
8. Phipps to Eden, 18 Jan. 1937, TNA/FO371/20705/C424/1/18.
9. The location of the British embassy in Paris.
10. For example, Phipps to Eden, 18 Jan. 1937, TNA/FO371/20705/C424/1/18.
11. Minute by Mr Eden, 18 Jan. 1937, TNA/FO371/20705/C447/1/18.
12. Phipps to the Foreign Office, 25 Jan. 1937, *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, No. 112.
13. For example, Leith-Ross to Jebb, 12 Jan. 1937, TNA/FO371/20725/C292/78/18.
14. Sargent to Eden, 19 Jan. 1937, TNA/FO371/20718/C369/37/18.
15. Phipps to Eden, 22 Jan. 1937, *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, No. 102.
16. Henderson's views about Hitler were different from those of Phipps. Cf. P. Neville, *Appeasing Hitler: The Diplomacy of Sir Neville Henderson, 1937–1939* (London: Macmillan, 2000).
17. Phipps to Eden, 4 Feb. 1937, TNA/FO371/20706/C989/1/18.
18. Cf. Orme Sargent to Phipps, 23 Feb. 1937, TNA/FO371/20706/C989/1/18.
19. Minute by Sir O. Sargent, 10 Feb. 1937, TNA/FO371/20726/C958/78/18.
20. Phipps to Eden, 13 Feb. 1937, TNA/FO371/20709/C1277/3/18.
21. Phipps to the Foreign Office, 13 Feb. 1937, TNA/FO371/20709/C1276/3/18.
22. Phipps to Sargent, 24 Feb. 1937, *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, No. 212.
23. Eden to Phipps, 13 Mar. 1937, TNA/FO371/20706/C2061/1/18.
24. Based on Phipps to Eden, 13 Apr. 1937, TNA/FO371/20716/C2840/78/18.
25. The river that flows through the centre of Berlin.
26. St Peter's in Rome.
27. The trademark of a synthetic form of rubber formed from polymerised butadiene.
28. As part of a plan to stabilise the franc, a programme of public works was introduced in France in the spring of 1937.
29. Hitler's reply to the British government's note about a Five Power Conference, made a month earlier.
30. Phipps to Eden, 13 Apr. 1937, TNA/FO371/20710/C2857/3/18.
31. *The Times*, 28 Feb. 1934, p. 14.
32. In the original dispatch, Phipps added the following sentence: 'I reported at the time that in existing circumstances the policy of Anglo-German understanding would be abandoned only with the greatest reluctance.'
33. See the entry for 30 Oct. 1936.
34. See the previous entry.
35. Sir Charles Hardinge, Baron Hardinge of Penshurst (1858–1944). He was Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office 1906–1910.
36. Sir Edward Goschen (1847–1924).
37. The first Hague conference, held in 1899, had codified the rules of war and established the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. The second conference made additions to the code of war, but failed to reach agreement over disarmament.
38. Edward Majoribanks, Second Baron Tweedmouth (1849–1909). He served as a Minister in the Admiralty from 1907 until his death.
39. See Sargent to Leith-Ross, 30 Jan. 1937, TNA/FO371/20716/C945/78/18.
40. Describing the first meeting of a Congress of International Commission of Frontline Fighters in Berlin, 15–18 Feb. 1937, at which Hitler, Göring and von Blomberg had given speeches.
41. There is no record in Foreign Office archives of this conversation.

42. This is an error. The page number is 755.
43. See Phipps to Eden, 18 Mar. 1937, TNA/FO371/20706/C2196/1/18.
44. Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Vol. II, pp. 1334–1347.
45. The battle of Caporetto, which began on 24 Oct. 1917.
46. Phipps to Eden, 15 Apr. 1937, TNA/FO371/20710/C2880/3/18.
47. Eden had made a speech in Liverpool on this subject on 12 Apr. 1937. See *The Times*, 13 Apr. 1937, p. 18.
48. Minute on Phipps to Eden, 15 Apr. 1937, TNA/FO371/20710/C2880/3/18.

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