

The Political Career of Sir Samuel Hoare during the National Government 1931-40

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Sir Samuel Hoare was one of the most significant politicians in 1930s Britain, heading several major departments during the National Government. Appointed India Secretary in August 1931, he steered the hugely complex Government of India Bill through parliament in the face of virulent opposition from Churchill. Rewarded for his fortitude, Hoare became Foreign Secretary in June 1935, only to see his reputation suffer enormous damage due to his enforced resignation six months later, over his attempt to resolve the Abyssinian Crisis. Brought back into government as First lord of the Admiralty in June 1936, he earned the admiration of his officials for his enthusiasm for the senior service and success in securing additional funds for the Navy's modernisation programme. The accession of Neville Chamberlain to the Premiership saw Hoare move to the Home Office, where he achieved considerable praise for his reformist approach to a variety of issues, from regulation of the workplace to penal reform. Nonetheless, controversy remained ever present due to his role in determining Britain's response to the increasing numbers of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, and as one of the key Ministers during the Munich Crisis. At the outbreak of war in September 1939 Hoare retained his salience in government as Lord Privy Seal in a small nine-man cabinet, before being transferred to the Air Ministry as the Norwegian campaign began in April 1940. However, his tenure lasted but a few weeks as he became a scapegoat for Allied reverses in the battle for Norway, being relieved of his duties when Churchill became Prime Minister on 10 May 1940. He was never to regain ministerial office.

For my grandma, Doreen Dixon
20 August 1914 – 26 February 2010

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Abbreviations

ACDL	Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters
NCDL	Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters
BL	British Library
DBFP	Documents on British Foreign Policy

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INTRODUCTION

The assumption of the Premiership by Winston Churchill on 10 May 1940 has traditionally been regarded as the moment when the country dispensed with the discredited politicians who had advocated the policy of appeasement. However, the popular image of Churchill brandishing a broom and affecting a clear-out of the men of Munich is a fallacy. As the new government began to take shape, it became clear to most contemporaries that it was not to be the 'clean sweep' demanded by critics of the previous administration. Whilst places were made for the leading figures of the Labour and Liberal parties, twenty out of the remaining thirty positions were filled by members of the former government, including those most identified with Britain's pre-war foreign policy. Of the 'Big Four' figures in the National Government, Neville Chamberlain became the second most powerful man in the new ministry, having a seat in the war cabinet and chairing the Lord President's Committee. Lord Halifax remained Foreign Secretary, again with a seat in the inner sanctum, and the perennially unpopular Sir John Simon moved to the not unwelcome position of Lord Chancellor. However, the fourth leading figure became the one major casualty in this Winstonian pretence of changing the 'old guard': Sir Samuel Hoare.

Hoare's omission from Churchill's war-time government marked the end of a long ministerial career during which he had become one of the most significant politicians of the inter-war years. As a backbench MP, he played a significant part in the fall of the Lloyd George Coalition in October 1922, and was given office as Air Minister at the beginning of Bonar Law's short-lived administration (Oct. 1922-May 1923). Here he demonstrated considerable administrative ability and was subsequently retained in the same role, with a seat in the cabinet, throughout the two Baldwin ministries of 1923-24 and 1924-29. During MacDonald's second Labour government Hoare continued to enhance his political reputation within his own party by becoming its Treasurer, and nationally through his role as one of the Conservative delegation at the Round Table Conference on Indian constitutional reform. However, it was the formation of the National Government in the summer of 1931 which truly established Hoare's credentials as a politician of the first rank. Appointed India Secretary on 26 August, he successfully steered the vastly complicated Government of India Bill through parliament over a period of almost four years against the wishes of many in his own party.

Feted for his efforts over the India legislation, Hoare was promoted to the Foreign Office when Baldwin became Prime Minister for a third time in June 1935, amidst much uncertainty in Britain's relationship with both Germany and Italy over their respective territorial ambitions. Inadvertently, his attempt to thwart a seemingly inevitable rift with Mussolini over Abyssinia, by committing Britain to a French plan sanctioning the cessation of vast tracts of the East African country to Italy, culminated in catastrophe for Hoare when the government disowned both him and the plan that bore his name. Despite the ignominy of his resignation, he returned to

government after a short hiatus, first as First Lord of the Admiralty, and then subsequently as Home Secretary when Neville Chamberlain succeeded Baldwin in May 1937. Heading the Home Office until the outbreak of war, Hoare became responsible for a myriad of different policy areas from penal reform to Jewish refugees; as one of Chamberlain's main confidantes he was also increasingly involved in the area of foreign policy. At the outbreak of war Hoare joined the small war cabinet, taking on the non-specific role of Lord Privy Seal until April 1940, when he returned to his original department as Air Minister just as the Norway campaign was getting under way, and only a few weeks before Churchill replaced Chamberlain as Prime Minister.

Though Hoare's breadth of departmental responsibility was unrivalled during this period (1931-40), his ministerial record has, with the exception of his resignation and support of appeasement, generally been overlooked due to the preponderance of foreign and defence policy in the historiography of the National Government. The die was cast no sooner had Hoare left office, when three Beaverbrook journalists (writing under the pseudonym 'Cato') released a hastily written book which condemned the pre-war Ministers for inadequately preparing the country for a conflict with Germany.¹ Hoare was identified as one of the worst culprits due to his prominence in government throughout the period of reluctant rearmament; the charge that he had personally approved the rebuilding of the German Navy was a particularly damaging accusation at a time of impending invasion. Moreover, Cato sarcastically complimented Hoare over his longevity in office despite numerous gaffes; he was portrayed as a 'clever fumbler' whilst Foreign Secretary for his ability to both

¹ Cato [M. Foot, P. Howard & F. Owen], *Guilty Men* (1940).

estrangle Britain's principal ally (France) and secure an 'understanding' with Baldwin for his reinstatement prior to his resignation. Although more polemic than historical work, Cato's central message of ministerial ineptitude resonated with a British public eager to understand their predicament in the summer of 1940, and was certainly expedient for the new Churchill government in the wake of Dunkirk and the fall of France. Accordingly, the 'Guilty Men' indictment went unchallenged throughout the war years, and its credibility was further strengthened by the selective release of official documents after the Allied victory in 1945. Contrastingly, Keith Feiling's bid to regain a historical perspective of the 1930s through his study of Neville Chamberlain (which included a more sympathetic portrayal of Hoare), failed to make much impression outside academic circles.²

Cato's interpretation of history was further cemented into the nation's consciousness by the release of the initial volume in Churchill's epic history of the Second World War.³ His premise that Ministers had consistently failed to appreciate Hitler's predetermined programme of aggression (which had been corroborated at the Nuremberg Trials), and that this dilatoriness had in fact encouraged the Nazi leader, further substantiated the 'guilty men' thesis. Although Churchill reserved much of his criticism for Baldwin and Chamberlain, his assertion that the Abyssinian Crisis was one of the 'steps' that led directly to Munich was doubtlessly calculated to besmirch Hoare, as was the insinuation, made throughout his introductory volume, that certain Ministers had persistently sought to exclude him from office. Although *The Gathering Storm* was written to depict its author in the best possible light, Churchill's status as

² K. Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (1946).

³ W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War Volume One: The Gathering Storm* (1948).

the nation's saviour ensured that it became universally accepted as an accurate representation of events by the post-war generation. His narrative of government failure during the 1930s was moreover endorsed by two of Britain's pre-eminent historians, Lewis Namier and John Wheeler-Bennett, in their corresponding studies of the same year.⁴

Confronted by such universal condemnation, those former Ministers denounced as 'guilty men' were understandably apprehensive of defending the policies they had advocated while in office. Significantly, all three men who had been Prime Minister during the 1930s had already passed away prior to their post-war vilification.

MacDonald went in 1937, while Chamberlain was already mortally ill when Cato released their initial diatribe in July 1940. Baldwin declined to enter the fray and died two years after the war had ended; his younger son subsequently wrote a defence of his father's record, in which he asserted that Hoare had acted without cabinet authority in accepting Laval's plan to resolve the dispute with Italy.⁵ However, during the 1950s several former Ministers decided to publish accounts of their political careers, although they characteristically tended to sidestep the more controversial episodes; both Halifax and Simon were notably anodyne regarding their involvement in the discredited appeasement policy.⁶ However, this reluctance to discuss foreign policy did not prevent Simon from accusing Hoare of exceeding his mandate during the talks with Laval, claiming that the cabinet did not anticipate the Paris talks taking the course they did. In his own reminiscences of the National Government, Hoare was

⁴ L. B. Namier, *Diplomatic Prelude, 1938-1939* (1948); J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy* (1948).

⁵ A.W. Baldwin, *My Father: The True Story* (1955).

⁶ Viscount Simon, *Retrospect* (1952); Earl of Halifax, *Fulness of Days* (1957).

notably less reticent in discussing foreign affairs than his erstwhile colleagues.⁷ Although he dealt with his various departmental roles during the 1930s (somewhat superficially), over two-thirds of his memoir was dedicated to explaining the complex and largely unpalatable choices that faced both him and his colleagues in the formulation of policy during the 1930s, with particular reference to Abyssinia and Czechoslovakia. Nonetheless, despite being praised for its candour,⁸ *Nine Troubled Years* was primarily regarded as a defence of the author's conduct rather than a dispassionate account – a not uncommon judgement on political memoirs, although the fact that Hoare was still arguably *persona non grata* doubtlessly reinforced this prejudice.

In the early 1960s, the 'Guilty Men' interpretation was challenged by A.J.P. Taylor's assertion that the Second World War had predominately been caused by the opportunism of unscrupulous dictators facilitated by the 'Gordian knot' of disarmament and deterrence which had so bedevilled the democracies during the interwar years.⁹ Hamstrung by these unique circumstances, the National Government's decision to adopt appeasement was, in Taylor's view, clearly a rational choice. In addition to his critique of the orthodox consensus on appeasement, he was also more ambivalent than his predecessors on the subject of Abyssinia; whilst continuing to believe that British policy during the crisis had delivered a 'deathblow' to the League of Nations, Taylor asserted that the Hoare-Laval plan was a 'perfectly sensible' solution to the dilemma of maintaining allied

⁷ Viscount Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years* (1954).

⁸ A.F. Whyte, *International Affairs*, Vol.31, No2 (Apr. 1955), p.211; C.L. Mowat, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.28, No.1 (Mar. 1956), pp.76-8.

⁹ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (1961).

solidarity. Furthermore, in a rebuke to conventional wisdom, he defended Hoare's conduct during the Crisis, believing him to have been brave, if somewhat impetuous, in his efforts to resolve the dispute; Taylor primarily blamed the government as a whole for the debacle in Paris rather than the Foreign Secretary, who he suggested, was merely doing its bidding.

Although Taylor's challenge to the traditional view of the 1930s caused not a little consternation amongst historians, his reputation as a maverick undercut the veracity of his claims. Nonetheless, there were unmistakable signs of disquiet amongst traditionalists over this new extenuating rendering of appeasement, and Martin Gilbert swiftly sought to augment the official view with a re-affirmation of the 'guilty men' verdict.¹⁰ This foreboding was promptly realised, as Churchill's death in January 1965 prompted an increasing number of scholars, including the highly respected Donald Cameron Watt, to re-evaluate British foreign policy during the 1930s; Watt concluded that appeasement was mainly a reaction to Britain's unpreparedness for war.¹¹ This move away from post-war orthodoxy received further impetus after the second Wilson government decided to downgrade the time-limit on the release of official documents in 1967 from fifty to thirty years; this change in the law gave historians access to thousands of unseen documents from the inter-war years, and provided the opportunity for a new generation of British historians to

¹⁰ M. Gilbert & R. Gott, *The Appeasers* (1963). From 1962, Martin Gilbert worked as a researcher for Randolph Churchill on the official biography of Britain's war-time leader. After Randolph's death in 1968, Gilbert went on to complete the eight volume series, finishing the project in 1988.

¹¹ D.C. Watt, *Personalities and Policies: Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (1965).

challenge the prevailing view of British policy during the Munich Crisis.¹² As a result, the 'guilty men' interpretation of history became increasingly discredited, and as academics continued to scour the mass of newly available documentation they duly discovered numerous rationales, from economics to the assessments of intelligence agencies, which arguably influenced the government to adopt appeasement.¹³

This demise of the 'guilty men' model (at least in academia) saw renewed interest in other contentious issues – none more so than the Abyssinian Crisis. Since his resignation in December 1935, Hoare had generally been accused of imprudence in accepting Laval's plan without cabinet approval. However, the 1960s saw a number of historians increasingly acknowledge Taylor's analysis of the Paris talks. In his 1962 article on the subject, the American academic Henderson Braddick proclaimed his scepticism of the conventional view by stating that 'one is struck by the totality of Hoare's capitulation in the Paris negotiations'; consequently, Braddick placed much of the onus on Baldwin for instructing his Foreign Secretary to avoid war at any costs prior to him leaving for his meeting with Laval.¹⁴ This interpretation was further supported by Frank Hardie who concluded that it was too simplistic to blame one man, and that the road to the Hoare-Laval plan had been largely dictated by previous

¹² K. Robbins, *Munich 1938* (1968); W.N. Medlicott, *Britain and Germany: The Search for Agreement, 1933-1937* (1969); K. Middlemas, *Diplomacy of Illusion: The British Government and Germany, 1937-1939* (1972).

¹³ A vast array of revisionist literature on appeasement appeared in the 1970s and 80s. For the economic aspects, see: F. Coglan, 'Armaments, Economic Policy and Appeasement: Background to British Foreign Policy, 1931-7', *History*, Vol.24, No.4 (1972), pp.205-16; J.P.D. Dunbabin, 'British Rearmament in the 1930s: A Chronology and Review', *Historical Journal*, Vol.18 (1975), pp.587-609; R.P. Shay, *British Rearmament in the Thirties: Politics and Profits* (Guilford, 1977); G.C. Peden, *British Rearmament and the Treasury, 1932-39* (Edinburgh, 1984). In terms of the intelligence debate, see: C. Andrew & D. Dilks (eds.), *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century* (1984); W. Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933-39* (Oxford, 1986).

¹⁴ Henderson. B. Braddick, 'The Hoare-Laval Plan: A Study in International Politics', *Review of Politics*, Vol.24, No.3 (1962), pp.342-64.

British policy.¹⁵ R.A.C. Parker also refuted the claims of former Ministers by asserting that the cabinet had given the Foreign Secretary a 'free hand' both before and after the agreement in Paris, and only an adverse reaction from Conservative MPs had caused the cabinet to turn against Hoare.¹⁶ This accusation of Ministerial complicity was further upheld by Robertson, who considered that whilst Hoare could hardly be considered blameless in the affair, he was less culpable than the Prime Minister and his cabinet colleagues, who had been kept informed throughout the talks by the Permanent Secretary to the Foreign Office (Vansittart).¹⁷ Nonetheless, despite this consensus, Maurice Cowling made the point that Ministers would not have expected to read about the terms in *The Times* and learnt in that same newspaper that the Foreign Secretary had declared himself satisfied with the agreement.¹⁸ Thereby, he reasonably deduced that Ministers may well have been aggrieved at the nature of this *fait accompli*. Cowling and Robertson are also notably at odds regarding the consequences of Hoare's resignation, with the latter attesting that it proved no hindrance to his Ministerial advancement, citing the Home Office; Cowling disputes this assertion, suggesting that any chance Hoare had of the Premiership was lost following his resignation. However, as with the case of Munich, new research had increasingly demonstrated that government decision-making during the Abyssinian dispute was far more multifarious than previously supposed.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, Hoare's other controversial moment as Foreign Secretary was also subjected to

¹⁵ F. Hardie, *The Abyssinian Crisis* (1974).

¹⁶ R.A.C. Parker, 'Great Britain, France and the Ethiopian Crisis 1935-1936', *English Historical Review*, Vol.89, No.351, (1974), pp.293-332.

¹⁷ J.C. Robertson, 'The Hoare-Laval Plan', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.10, No.3 (1975), pp.433-64.

¹⁸ M. Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler: British Politics and British Policy 1933-1940* (1975).

¹⁹ A. Marder, 'The Royal Navy and the Ethiopian Crisis of 1935-36', *American Historical Review*, Vol.75, No.5 (1970), pp.1327-56; D. Carlton, 'The Dominions and British Foreign Policy in the Abyssinian Crisis', *Journal of Imperial and Contemporary History*, Vol.1, No.1 (1972), pp.59-77; G.W. Baer, 'Sanctions and Security: The League of Nations and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1936', *International Organisation*, Vol.27, No.2 (1973), pp.165-79; R. Quartararo, 'Imperial Defence in the Mediterranean on the Eve of the Ethiopian Crisis (July-October 1935)', *Historical Journal*, Vol.20, No.1 (1977), pp.185-220.

renewed scrutiny, with several historians undertaking research into the motivations behind the 1935 Anglo-German Naval Agreement; significantly not one of them held Hoare directly responsible for the treaty.²⁰

At the same time as this re-evaluation of pre-war foreign policy there was growing interest in another policy area connected with Hoare. Britain's decision to cease being a colonial power in the wake of Macmillan's 1960 'Winds of Change' speech elicited considerable academic soul-searching over the inherent causes of this imperial decline. Naturally, India's independence, with its previous status as the 'jewel in the crown', was acknowledged as a key event in the demise of Britain's empire; consequently, historians increasingly turned their attention to the precursor of this event - the 1935 Government of India Act.²¹ In his seminal treatise on British decline, Correlli Barnett asserted that although the devolvement of power to Indian politicians was accepted as inevitable by most progressive politicians during the 1930s (particularly Hoare and Baldwin), their viewpoint was unduly compromised by Westminster's overriding desire to retain India within the Empire; accordingly the author labelled the India Bill a constitutional half-way house which satisfied no-one.²² However, many academics deemed that Barnett's analysis was too deferential to the

²⁰ The overriding conclusion of the following articles was that Simon had gained cabinet approval for the Anglo-German Naval Treaty two days before Hoare replaced him as Foreign Secretary: H.H. Hall, 'The Foreign Policy-Making Process in Britain 1934-1935, and the Origins of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement', *Historical Journal*, Vol.19, No.2 (1976), pp.477-99; R. Salerno, 'Multilateral Strategy and Diplomacy: The Anglo-German Naval Agreement and the Mediterranean Crisis, 1935-1936', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.17, No.2 (1994), pp.39-78; C.M. Scammell, 'The Royal Navy and the Strategic Origins of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.20, No.2 (1997), pp.92-118; J.A. Maiolo, 'The Admiralty and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 18 June 1935', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol.10, No.1 (1999), pp.87-126.

²¹ Indian reform has been recognised as one of the major fault-lines in British politics during the interwar years, with historians increasingly acknowledging its importance to an any understanding of the period, in particular regarding the attitudes of the Conservative Party: K. Middlemas & J. Barnes, *Baldwin* (1969); S. Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929-1931* (1988); G. Stewart, *Burying Caesar: Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party* (1999).

²² C. Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (1972).

government of the day; R. J. Moore concluded that Ministers were predominantly exercised by British interests rather than any notion of Indian freedom when drawing up a new constitution for India.²³ His fellow Australian, Carl Bridge, was even more forthright claiming that the 1935 India Bill was largely a sham, with the Conservative hierarchy acting out a deception to placate Indian nationalism and the sensibilities of the then Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald.²⁴

Arguably emboldened by the more benign atmosphere of the 1970s, the Paget side of Hoare's family commissioned the first (and only) account of his career.²⁵ This study refreshingly outlined his entire career, though naturally much of its content was devoted to his role in the National Government; Hoare's role in advancing Indian constitutional reform receives significant attention from the author. However, despite providing a more rounded survey of Hoare's career, Cross undermines his objectivity to a certain extent through the avoidance of any significant comment on the more controversial episodes, such as the Privilege Case or Munich (surprisingly, Beaverbrook's secret cash payments to Hoare in late 1938 is mentioned). Any judgement of his role in the Abyssinian Crisis is also largely avoided in favour of highlighting the fact that the Foreign Secretary was primarily constrained by the policy he had inherited from the previous incumbent. That said, despite the fact that Cross concentrates on India and foreign affairs, his biography does provide a

²³ R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity 1917-1940* (Oxford, 1974).

²⁴ Carl Bridge has published a number of articles on the attitude of the Conservative leadership to Indian reform in general, and Hoare's in particular: 'Churchill, Hoare, Derby, and the Committee of Privileges, April to June 1934', *Historical Journal*, Vol.22, No.1 (1979), pp.215-27; 'Old Men Forget: Some Objections to the Templewood-Halifax Explanation of the Failure of All-India Federation 1930-9', *Flinders Journal of History and Politics*, Vol.6 (1980), pp.32-9; 'The Impact of India on British High Politics in the 1930s: The Limits of Cowlingism', *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol.5, No.2 (1982), pp.13-23. In the mid-1980s, Bridge combined the conclusions of the aforementioned studies into one volume: *Holding India to the Empire: The Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (1986).

²⁵ J.A. Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare: A Political Biography* (1977).

succinct account of Hoare's other departmental responsibilities after he returned to office in 1936.

Although the revisionists dominated the appeasement debate throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a number of historians, such as William Rock, were concerned that the principal actors had become devoid of all responsibility while the arguments over policy had merely spiralled into a philosophical discussion.²⁶ Indeed, when John Charmley claimed that Chamberlain had simply adopted appeasement due his fear that another war would lead to Britain's eclipse by the United States and the Soviet Union, a backlash began.²⁷ This counter-revisionist approach to the 1930s was predominately linked to R.A.C. Parker, who asserted that while Chamberlain undoubtedly had numerous dilemmas in formulating a coherent foreign policy, he could have adopted alternatives to appeasement – primarily an alliance with France.²⁸ However, despite this renewed focus on personality, the mass of available documentary evidence precluded a simple reversion to the 'guilty men' argument and Parker insisted that cabinet support for appeasement was not as unshakable as previously supposed. Indeed, Hoare was to be acclaimed by Parker for being one of only two Ministers (the other being Oliver Stanley) who advocated an agreement with the French in the early stages of the Czech Crisis; Hoare's demand for increased rearmament following the Anschluss was another occasion where his actions have suggested less than complete support for Chamberlain's appeasement policy.²⁹ Nonetheless, the counter-revisionist interpretation was not to go unchallenged, and

²⁶ W.R. Rock, *British Appeasement in the 1930s* (1977).

²⁷ J. Charmley, *Chamberlain and the Lost Peace* (1989).

²⁸ R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War* (Basingstoke, 1993).

²⁹ N. Crowson, *Facing Fascism: The Conservative Party and the European Dictators 1935-1940* (1997).

fresh insights into Anglo-French relations during the late 1990s tended to undermine elements of Parker's alternative policy thesis.³⁰

Notwithstanding the fact that Hoare has been subject to the aforementioned scholarly attention, it remains true that even if his period at the India and Foreign Office was combined it would amount to little over half of his ministerial career during the 1930s. Accordingly, little is generally known about the rest of his career. His year at the Admiralty has received scant attention despite the Navy being at the centre of Britain's rearmament plans, with the 'trivial' matters of the Abdication and Spanish Civil War also prominent during this period. Additionally, Hoare was Home Secretary during the last years of peace, during which time he implemented Britain's first factory reforms since the nineteenth century, championed the most comprehensive penal reform Bill in a hundred years and oversaw the establishment of ARP and a whole raft of other measures to protect Britain's civilian population from the bombing campaign which was widely anticipated if war broke out with Germany. While his role in Britain's policy towards Jewish refugees has admittedly been the subjected to investigation,³¹ there is little recourse to Hoare's domestic record in the general literature on the 1930s; Nick Smart tends to focus primarily on India and foreign policy, while Stevenson and Cook concentrate on economic policy and its affect on unemployment prior to 1935.³² Consequently, there are only two sources which cover Hoare's entire career in the National Government, his own memoirs and the

³⁰ M. Dockrill, *British Establishment Perspectives on France 1936-40* (Basingstoke, 1999); R. Davis, *Anglo-French Relations before World War Two: Appeasement and Crisis* (2001).

³¹ A. J. Sherman, *Whitehall and the Jews: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939* (1973); L. London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948* (Cambridge, 2000).

³² N. Smart, *The National Government* (Basingstoke, 1999); J. Stevenson & C. Cook, *Britain in the Depression: Politics and Society 1929-39* (1977).

official biography – both of which have been demonstrably shown to have inherent weaknesses.

Given Hoare's importance in the National Government and the fragmentary nature of the literature, there is a need for a more comprehensive appraisal of this significant politician. This study aims to take a fresh look at his career during the 1930s by focusing attention not only on his record in office, but also on the many different political factors which dictated either the success or failure of his legislative programme; Hoare's involvement with some of the most divisive policies of the period (from India to penal reform) made him arguably more susceptible to these than most of his contemporaries. Analysing his affinity with other politicians and important figures (such as the Viceroy) will shine light on how Hoare was able to sustain his place at the centre of power under three Prime Ministers, despite a series of controversial incidents. Moreover, a re-examination of his well-publicised misdemeanours, such as the Privilege Case, will use recently available material in an attempt to determine his political judgement in such matters. Additionally, in order to achieve a more balanced account of Hoare's role in the National Government, the thesis will place particular emphasis on the part of his career that has traditionally been ignored in the literature of the period, namely the period between December 1935 and May 1940. Consequently, this will enable an accurate assessment of his impact on domestic policy in the last years of peace and record in the war cabinet thereafter. Only then can a judgement on Hoare's ministerial career be satisfactorily ascertained.

CHAPTER ONE – AT THE INDIA OFFICE: A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

Sir Samuel Hoare became the twenty-ninth Secretary of State for India with the formation of the ten man all-party emergency administration on 25 August 1931, at the height of Britain's worsening financial crisis. Alongside Stanley Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain and Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, he made up the quartet of Conservatives who joined with Labour and Liberal leaders with a mandate to pass a balanced budget through Parliament. Notwithstanding this fundamental objective, Hoare's new role as custodian of the British Empire's 'jewel in the crown' also came at a vital juncture in Britain's relationship with the sub-continent, in the face of rising Indian nationalism. His inclusion in the coterie of Conservatives who joined this 'National Government' (over the heads of more illustrious colleagues) and his appointment to such a prestigious and challenging brief, was a testament to Hoare's rising status, both in his party and the country as a whole.

A relatively successful backbencher since his arrival in Parliament as the member for Chelsea in 1910, Hoare first came to national prominence following the implosion of

the Lloyd George Coalition in October 1922.³³ In the wake of the Conservative split, he benefitted from the dearth of talent available to Bonar Law's new administration and was appointed the Minister for Air (although not in the cabinet); subsequently Hoare was elevated to become a full member of the cabinet in the same office during the Baldwin ministries of 1923-24 and 1924-29. During this period, Hoare established his credentials amongst his fellow Conservatives as both an effective minister in Parliament and a competent administrator. At first, his new post appeared quite precarious, as the very existence of an autonomous Air Ministry was challenged by the Army and Navy. Nevertheless, Hoare was unperturbed and, despite not being a particularly charismatic speaker, successfully defended the fledgling Royal Air Force against the claims of both senior services, gaining acceptance that the new service should not only retain its independence but even be expanded – a highly emotive issue for the post-Great War era. Accordingly, the new Air Minister won many admirers for his stout defence of the RAF's independence, with even the former Conservative leader, Sir Austen Chamberlain, praising Hoare's performance.³⁴ With the adroit assistance of the Chief of the Air Staff, Hugh Trenchard, Hoare continued to strengthen the service during Baldwin's second government, while successfully ensuring its integrity by thwarting the Navy's claims for control of its own air units. Alongside this achievement he also championed civil aviation during the 1920s, culminating in his historic flight to India, together with Lady Hoare, to herald the opening of a new Imperial air-route to the sub-continent.³⁵ By

³³ Hoare had a significant role in persuading Bonar Law to attend the Carlton Club meeting on 19 Oct. 1922: Viscount Templewood, *Empire of the Air* (1957), pp.22-32.

³⁴ Austen Chamberlain's impressions of the ministers in Baldwin's second government, in C. Petrie, *The Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain, Vol.2* (1940), p.243; Hoare's role in championing the RAF is often overlooked (there was no mention of him in the RFC/RAF centenary celebrations) although the force's most famous commanding officer appreciated his Minister's efforts: Trenchard to Hoare, 30 Dec. 1929, Templewood MSS, VI/1.

³⁵ See Hoare's book on his trip, *India by Air* (1927), & *Empire of the Air*, passim.

the time Hoare vacated his role following the Conservative defeat in the 1929 general election, the Air Ministry's future, and that of the RAF, had been secured; in recognition of his achievement he was offered the accolade of Honorary Air Commodore of No 601 City of London Squadron by his grateful Labour successor: 'I can appreciate better than anyone the value of the work you did for the Air Force while you were in office, and I am sure that the service as a whole would feel honoured if you joined it in this way'.³⁶

Whilst these significant achievements at the Air Ministry were lauded by his contemporaries, on a personal level Hoare was subject to more mixed reactions. Small in stature and possessing sharp facial features, his character was austere and straitlaced, with none of the foibles which might have endeared him to the House of Commons. Both in Parliament and cabinet discussion, Hoare rigidly kept to his prepared scripts, refusing to either deviate or consider any counter-argument whilst defending his department, thereby prompting his opposite number at the Admiralty to describe him as 'very stiff and cold' and having the irksome trait of 'refusing to budge' despite the paucity of his case.³⁷ The fact that Hoare appeared unashamedly ambitious also grated upon his fellow MPs, who regarded such pretensions as unattractive in their profession. Consequently, Hoare's mannerisms and conduct elicited much comment, with Cuthbert Headlam (never one to mince words) describing him as a 'pompous, dull little fellow' who took himself far too seriously.³⁸ Not surprisingly, Hoare's comportment often raised much hilarity in the House of

³⁶ Thompson to Hoare, 24 Sep. 1930, Templewood MSS, VI/1.

³⁷ Bridgeman's impressions of cabinet colleagues- Nov. 1929, in P. Williamson (ed.), *The Modernisation of Conservative Politics: The Diaries and Letters of William Bridgeman 1904-1935* (1988), pp.229-30.

³⁸ Headlam diary, 26 Feb. 1925, in S. Ball (ed.), *Parliament and Politics in the Age of Baldwin and MacDonald: The Headlam Diaries 1923-1935* (1992), p.54.

Commons, with Tom Jones noting how some MPs kept a record of the number of times that he said 'quite' and 'really'.³⁹ Even his supposed friend, J.C.C. Davidson, saw the Air Minister as 'small-minded' and definitely 'not of the same calibre' as the First Lord of the Admiralty, Walter Bridgeman, after witnessing their altercations over naval air units.⁴⁰ Notwithstanding these comments, both Bridgeman and Davidson recognised Hoare as a hard-working colleague, with the First Lord suggesting that the Air Minister could undertake most cabinet posts with a very good chance of success.⁴¹ Significantly, even Headlam acknowledged Hoare's proficiency, judging his unattractive demeanour to be no more than the result of his idiosyncrasy,⁴² though predicting it would likely debar him from widespread popularity in parliament nonetheless.⁴³

Despite the indifferent attitude of a number of his Conservative contemporaries, Hoare did gain the respect of some significant colleagues. Lord Beaverbrook, who he initially met when they were both newcomers to Parliament in 1910, remained a close confidante throughout the following decades. Theirs was a strange friendship, with the brash multi-millionaire press baron being an unlikely friend for the priggish Hoare,⁴⁴ yet the relationship prospered with both parties deriving advantage: Beaverbrook's closeness to Bonar Law was certainly a boon to Hoare, and vice versa when Baldwin's scorn for the Press Lord kept him out of government circles. The Colonial Secretary, Leo Amery, was another who remained close to Hoare

³⁹ Diary, 6 Sep. 1932, T. Jones, *A Diary with Letters, 1931-1950* (1954), p.52.

⁴⁰ Davidson's draft memoir, in R.R. James (ed.), *Memoirs of a Conservative: J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Letters 1910-37* (1969), p.213.

⁴¹ Bridgeman's impression of cabinet colleagues, Nov 1929, *Modernisation of Conservative Politics*, pp.229-30.

⁴² Headlam diary, 21 Jun. 1927, p.123.

⁴³ Headlam diary, 21 Mar. 1928, p.144.

⁴⁴ Headlam diary, 21 Jun. 1923, p.123.

during much of the 1920s and 30s, although there was noticeably some chagrin when the former Air Secretary was offered a place in the Conservative delegation which joined the National Government in August 1931.⁴⁵ Though not personally close, Baldwin was appreciative of Hoare's abilities during Bonar Law's short-lived premiership and consequently retained him as Air Minister when he became Prime Minister. Baldwin's foresight was justly rewarded as Hoare's moderation and willingness to adhere to the Prime Minister's standpoint was a principal feature of subsequent cabinet discussion. However, these influential allies notwithstanding, it was the rising star of Neville Chamberlain who was most associated with Hoare during the 1920s.

Politically close and possessing mutual respect for each others' abilities, Chamberlain and Hoare formed a bond after the fall of the Lloyd George Coalition which survived until the former's death in 1940. 'The only two Socialists in the late government', was Chamberlain's description of their relationship, after he asked Hoare to oversee a committee examining municipal reform while in opposition.⁴⁶ During Baldwin's second government, the two men continued to work closely together in Cabinet, allowing Chamberlain to gain continued insights into his friend's character. Writing in early 1927, and possibly aware of some of his colleagues carping about Hoare, Chamberlain remarked: 'There is a lot more in Sam Hoare than people realise. Under his dry manner he has a lot of imagination and great shrewdness'.⁴⁷ Further evidence of this burgeoning relationship came in the weeks and months preceding the 1929 election, when Chamberlain, in the knowledge that

⁴⁵ L.S. Amery, *My Political Life*, vol. 3 (1955), p.62.

⁴⁶ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 12 Jul. 1924, NCDL, 2, P.237.

⁴⁷ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 19 Feb. 1927, NCDL, 2, p.395.

he was earmarked for promotion, urged Baldwin to make Hoare his successor at Health. 'I picked him out as the best', Chamberlain joyfully wrote to his sister on learning Baldwin had accepted his suggestion.⁴⁸

Hoare's move to the Ministry of Health went unrealised due to the Conservative defeat in the general election of May 1929. The resultant minority Labour Government came as a shock to most Conservatives, who had envisaged their continuance in power as a foregone conclusion. Recriminations began almost immediately, with Baldwin becoming the primary scapegoat amongst Conservatives who viewed his refusal to introduce protectionist policies as a decisive factor in Labour's victory. Baldwin's apparent ineffectiveness while in opposition also prompted many Conservatives to favour his replacement by Neville Chamberlain, who they judged better able to 'rally the troops'.⁴⁹ Aware of this Conservative anxiety, Hoare apprised Chamberlain of his concerns should the situation be allowed to continue: 'My fear is that things are moving so fast that unless something happens quickly, everything will collapse like a pack of cards'.⁵⁰ The trepidation that the Conservative Party could move to the right if Baldwin was forced to stand down was a constant fear for those of a moderate disposition like Hoare. Although not so blunt as to suggest that his friend step up to the leadership, Hoare was acutely aware that this dilemma would concentrate Chamberlain's mind. Arguably, the expectation that he would be among the chief beneficiaries of any Chamberlain succession may also have influenced Hoare's leanings in this matter. However, Chamberlain was not persuaded by these exhortations and, as international events began to expose

⁴⁸ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 11 May 1929, NCDL, 3, p.138.

⁴⁹ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 26 Oct. 1930, NCDL, 3, p.160.

⁵⁰ Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 8 Oct. 1930 [misdated as 1929], Templewood MSS, VI/1.

Labour's inheritance as decidedly unpropitious, Conservative criticism of Baldwin eased to some extent (although the press remained less than effusive about his leadership). Moreover, due to the worsening economic news in the first months of 1931 Conservative MPs rallied behind their leader, and sensing an imminent return to office began to concentrate their efforts on attacking the Labour government.⁵¹

The period of opposition during 1929-31 was to prove especially fruitful for Hoare's political progress. With Neville Chamberlain increasingly being recognised as the 'driving force' in the party (with Baldwin's acquiescence), the former was in a unique position by dint of association. That said, the position of Party Treasurer was not initially to Hoare's pleasing, when it was offered to him at the end of 1929 following the retirement of Lord Younger. As was the time-honoured tradition for Tory ex-ministers during periods of opposition, he had successfully secured himself a number of lucrative positions in the city sitting on the boards' of several financial institutions.⁵² Undoubtedly this connection with the banking world was the rationale behind Baldwin's decision to invite Hoare to become Treasurer. Hoare accepted the role with reluctance:

It is not a job that attracts me. It is outside my brief, and I am bad at getting money. I am, however, most anxious to make myself as useful as possible to you and the Party, and as you wish me to try my hand at it, I certainly will. I do so with the less

⁵¹ See Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp.165-171.

⁵² Hoare joined the following companies: Employers Liability Assurance; Clerical, Medical and General Life Assurance; Anglo-Portuguese Bank, and the General Reversionary and Investment Company; Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, p.115.

reluctance after the kind assurance that you gave me that the the post will not prejudice my political fortune.⁵³

Hoare's hesitancy in accepting Baldwin's offer was perhaps understandable, as traditionally the Treasurer's role was seen to be an unrewarding position, usually reserved for those involved in the management of the Party, such as Chief Whips or Party Chairmen. However, with the Conservative Party undergoing an internal programme of modernisation while in opposition, the position had assumed greater importance. The possibility of an early general election, due to the Labour Government's tenuous hold on power, also meant Conservative finances desperately required replenishing to ensure a campaign could be undertaken at short notice, again affording the Treasurer a much higher profile than normal. As the previous holder was judged rather lacklustre, news of Hoare's appointment was roundly welcomed, with the Party Chairman representative of this opinion: 'It is a great relief to hear that you are willing to become Treasurer of the Party, and I feel sure that we shall all be able to get a move on'.⁵⁴

Hoare's fear that becoming Party Treasurer would cause his career to falter proved to be unfounded, and in the subsequent months he became increasingly prominent in the Conservative Party. Following Davidson's resignation in June 1930, Neville Chamberlain was appointed Party Chairman, much to the chagrin of Headlam who thought him too ponderous, although preferable to Hoare.⁵⁵ Consequently, in one of his first acts, Chamberlain appointed Hoare as chair of a committee to investigate

⁵³ Hoare to Baldwin, 25 Dec. 1929, Baldwin MSS, 164/240-1.

⁵⁴ Davidson to Hoare, 30 Dec. 1929, Templewood MSS, VI/1.

⁵⁵ Headlam diary, 29 May 1930, p.189.

the reorganisation of the party structure.⁵⁶ Hoare also spear-headed the Conservative obstruction to the electoral reform proposals at the Ullswater Conference during the summer of 1930; the meeting eventually broke up without cross-party agreement. Chamberlain, along with most Conservatives, was jubilant at this outcome, extolling Hoare's skill in confounding the Liberals' attempt to secure proportional representation or the alternative vote.⁵⁷ Despite this success, Conservative anxiety over an electoral reform bill did not end with the abandonment of the conference, as they were unable to overturn the continued Labour and Liberal majority in Parliament which supported the reforms. However, Hoare again demonstrated his political acumen by conducting a skilful campaign of delay and continued amendment which consistently frustrated the Bill's supporters in the House of Commons.⁵⁸ During the first half of 1931, the Representation of the People Act underwent several readings in Parliament with him as the principal speaker against the government's proposals.⁵⁹ Three months after the Bill was first debated, Hoare was continuing to enthuse the Conservative benches with further repudiations of the Bill, declaring: 'By the end of the Third Reading discussion, there will scarcely be a single proposal left in the Bill which has not been altered or which has not been riddled with criticisms during discussion on the committee stage'.⁶⁰ The Bill foundered and Hoare was feted for his performance. This success and the belief that he could be counted on to resist any Labour moves towards unilateralism propelled him onto the Conservative delegation in an all-party sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence tasked with formulating British policy for the forthcoming World

⁵⁶ See Templewood MSS, VI/3.

⁵⁷ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 19 Jul. 1930, NCDL, 3, p.198.

⁵⁸ For further information on Hoare's role see chapter 3 in D.E. Butler, *The Electoral System in Britain 1918-1951* (1953); J.D. Fair, 'The Second Labour Government and the politics of electoral reform, 1929-1931', *Albion*, vol.13, no.3 (1981), pp.276-301; also Templewood MSS, VI/2.

⁵⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 2 Feb. 1931, vol.247, cols.1481-1492.

⁶⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, 12 May 1931, vol.252, col.1061.

Disarmament Conference scheduled for 1932; despite initial Conservative apprehension there was general agreement between the parties in the subsequent talks and the committee was united in rejecting further unilateral disarmament, stating that any future reduction of British armaments was to be wholly dependent on international agreement with the other leading Powers.⁶¹

Overall, though, it was the question of Indian reform that did most to raise Hoare's profile during the Conservative period in opposition. The level of parliamentary disputation regarding the extent of Indian autonomy intensified during the Labour administration, when in response to Indian antagonism towards the Simon Commission, MacDonald and his India Secretary, Wedgwood Benn, sanctioned a Viceregal statement clarifying Dominion Status. As a further sop, a Round Table Conference (RTC) was announced whereby both Britons and Indians could examine a possible framework for a new constitution for India. Most Conservatives, attuned to the incremental granting of autonomy (as epitomised in the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919), were aghast at the new direction of India policy under Labour, preferring to await the recommendations of the Simon Report. A substantial hardcore even continued to subscribe to Birkenhead's mantra that 'it was inconceivable that India will ever be fit for Dominion self-government'.⁶² Baldwin took a quite different view, considering that some kind of Indian self-rule was inevitable and that Britain would be better placed to retain her influence on the sub-continent if she accepted this fact. In addition, Baldwin was supportive of Lord Irwin, the Viceroy who had made the 'Dominion Status' statement, whom he described as both a political and

⁶¹ Hoare outlines the workings of the sub-committee in *Nine Troubled Years*, pp.117-9; also see Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, p.120-1; Templewood MSS, VII/1.

⁶² Birkenhead speaking at the end of 1924, D. Judd, *Lord Reading* (1982), p.220.

personal friend, whose 'ideals and views on political life approximate most closely to my own'.⁶³ Viewing the Labour policy on India as somewhat amenable to his own views, and determined to avoid the political strife that had occurred over Irish Home Rule, Baldwin proffered a bi-partisan approach on the issue in defiance of much of his own party, sensing 'that the Indian question would define his remaining time as party leader'.⁶⁴

Hoare's attitude towards his leader's policy was more oblique, accepting the need for reform but cautioning against the inherent communal problem in any future scheme. In the Commons debate on Indian reform following Irwin's announcement, Hoare broadly supported the Viceroy's statement, while simultaneously delivering a robust defence of Britain's traditional role in India which would undoubtedly appeal to most of his Conservative colleagues, whatever their thoughts on the subject:

No questions connected with the Empire interest Conservatives more than questions connected with India. Indian tradition and history appeals to us in a very distinct manner. Holding these views, we are only too anxious to take our part tonight in sending a message of good-will to India, and to help in the years to come, with Indian co-operation, to work out a framework for the future of India; to remove any suspicions which may at present cloud the relations between ourselves and India and bring about a state of affairs which will not only mean prosperity to Great Britain and India, but also strengthen the forces of civilisation throughout the whole world.⁶⁵

In a further debate six months later, Hoare remained broadly supportive of the new direction in Indian policy, although he again reassured Conservative MPs by

⁶³ Lord Butler, *The Art of the Possible* (1971), p.40.

⁶⁴ Middlemas & Barnes, *Baldwin*, p.698.

⁶⁵ Hoare's statement on 18 Dec.1929, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.233, col.1548.

advocating that the Simon Report should be 'studied and respected'.⁶⁶ He also wished to know the parameters of the upcoming RTC and, like most Conservatives, was perturbed that there were to be no pre-conditions as to what could be discussed at the forthcoming conference. Seeking to broaden Indian participation and thereby dilute nationalist solidarity at the RTC, Hoare urged the inclusion of representatives from both the untouchable classes and those of the more conservative and less vocal elements in Indian politics.⁶⁷ This intervention, whilst generally supportive of the bi-partisan approach, was adroitly aimed at positioning Hoare somewhere between the two extremes, with his caveats about the conference likely to win support from the more sceptical members of his party.

Hoare's stance over the question of Indian reform may well have been calculated to further his standing amongst fellow Conservatives, as he knew his party would need to be represented at the RTC and it would heighten his chances if he did not appear to favour strongly one side or the other. The realisation that Baldwin's leadership was also still under scrutiny, allied to the fact that he was leading a party largely sceptical of Indian self-government into a conference to debate that very issue, may also have determined Hoare's position on this matter. However, being politically astute, Hoare remained on the centre ground and became noticeably more vocal in his support for his leader; in his monthly newsletter to his Chelsea constituents Hoare called for the party to get behind Baldwin and condemned the continuing press campaign against the Conservative leader.⁶⁸ Despite this calculated approach, Hoare's manoeuvring initially backfired, as his stance was not appreciated by either

⁶⁶ Hoare's statement on 26 May 1929, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.239, col.893.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* col.894.

⁶⁸ Hoare's monthly newsletter to constituents, July 1930, Templewood MSS, VI/1.

Baldwin or the opponents of Indian reform when the time came to select a Conservative delegation for the RTC. Lord Salisbury, who represented the right of the party, suggested a Conservative delegation comprising of Lord Hailsham, Earl Peel, the Marquis of Zetland and Walter Elliot. Furthermore, on realising that Zetland was likely to abstain, Salisbury argued for Sir John Gilmour in preference to Hoare as he 'has a lot of backbone'.⁶⁹ The insinuation that he was not resolute in his views must have caused Hoare considerable discomfort, which was hardly mitigated by Baldwin's belated offer of a place at the RTC nearly two weeks later, in the wake of more Conservatives declining the opportunity to join the delegation.

Will you be one of our four on the Indian Conference? Austen will not serve.

Hailsham has personal reasons for not wishing to be included and I have asked

and excused the services of Zetland. I have asked Peel....⁷⁰

Stressing some apprehension about the role, Hoare accepted Baldwin's offer on 20 August 1930 and confidently suggested two possible candidates to fill a further vacant position. Surprisingly, he urged Baldwin to consider a couple of relatively junior Conservatives: Oliver Stanley, who he knew from the Electoral Reform Committee, and Eddie Cadogan, who had been a member of the Simon Commission (with a preference for the latter due to his knowledge of Indian problems).⁷¹ Baldwin decided on Stanley, possibly appreciating his father's influence in the vital Lancashire cotton region, which could prove crucial to any future agreement concerning India. Hoare immediately began to prepare for the RTC, urging Baldwin to press the government for the appropriate documentation on the current situation in

⁶⁹ Salisbury to Baldwin, 4 Aug. 1930, Baldwin MSS, 104/23-6.

⁷⁰ Baldwin to Hoare, 17 Aug. 1930, Templewood MSS, VI/1.

⁷¹ Hoare to Baldwin 20 Aug. 1930, Baldwin MSS, 104/40-1.

India to allow the formulation of a Conservative strategy prior to the conference.⁷² Even at this early stage in the proceedings, it was increasingly evident that Hoare was unlikely to take a 'back-seat' during the RTC, despite being markedly less eminent than the former India Secretary, Lord Peel, in the hierarchy of the Conservative delegation. Baldwin, though, was satisfied with the dynamics of his delegation, declaring to Irwin, 'My team is a good one'.⁷³ However, once ensconced in the Conservative delegation, Hoare's attitude to Indian reform appeared to veer to the right as he again stressed the likelihood of communal violence if India was permitted to achieve self-government; in October 1930 he informed his constituents that 'a strong British influence is absolutely essential' to prevent intra-faith violence, and warned against any withdrawal of that influence 'through weakness or mistaken sentiment'.⁷⁴

When the RTC finally opened on 13 November 1930, most participating British politicians were flabbergasted when the Indian delegates announced that they had agreed upon an All-India federal solution forming the basis for their negotiating position. This was entirely unexpected, as in the months leading up to the conference, there had been little evidence to suggest that the princely states would be willing to forgo their independence in order to merge into a united India. This was arguably the conviction of most Conservatives, as they knew it would delay any moves towards a self-governing sovereign country - perhaps permanently. This united Indian demand for an All-India Federation torpedoed the Conservative

⁷² Hoare to Baldwin, 27 Aug. 1930, Baldwin MSS, 104/43-4.

⁷³ Baldwin to Irwin, 16 Oct. 1930, P. Williamson & E. Baldwin (eds.), *Baldwin Papers: A Conservative Statesman 1908-1947* (Cambridge, 2004), p.239-40.

⁷⁴ Hoare's monthly newsletter to constituents, Oct. 1930, Templewood MSS, VI/1.

delegation's strategy of proposing a gradual advance to self-government as determined in the Simon Report, published a few months earlier. This surprising volte-face by the Indian delegates made Conservative opponents of the RTC even more vocal, with Winston Churchill wanting, in Baldwin's words, 'the conference to bust up quickly' and followed by a return to firm British rule.⁷⁵ Churchill's fears were widely shared, as many Conservatives were concerned that they could be hustled into agreeing to a form of abdication in India due to the confusion created by the unified Indian position at the RTC. Austen Chamberlain voiced his concerns to his step-mother that uncertainty as to the government's position was making many Conservatives anxious, especially as MacDonald seemed to have no clear idea how to guide the conference agenda nor which essentials of British rule should remain in place.⁷⁶ Hoare adopted a more circumspect attitude, believing that whatever the Indians had agreed prior to the conference would be unlikely to stand up to the rigours of practical examination. Subsequently, with their pre-conference strategy in tatters, the Conservative delegation became more agreeable to increased Indian autonomy, providing that adequate safeguards were retained in areas vital to British interests. The Government concurred with this principle and the conference ended with a general agreement to formulate a new constitution for India based on full autonomy in the provinces with a central Federal Government. Despite this apparent consensus, confusion as to which safeguards should be retained caused the Conservative delegation some concern, as clearly indicated in the official government report on the conference:

Lord Peel and Sir Samuel Hoare are not satisfied that the safeguards recommended for securing Imperial obligations will prove effective, and in

⁷⁵ Baldwin to Davidson, 13 Nov. 1930, *Baldwin Papers*, p.246.

⁷⁶ Austen to Mary Chamberlain, 18 Nov. 1930, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC4/1/1304.

particular, they fear that the financial proposals outlined in paragraphs 18 to 22 inclusive will disturb the confidence of the commercial classes and impair the stability of Indian credit.⁷⁷

The uncertainty over safeguards alarmed many Conservative hardliners, despite the fact that both Peel and Hoare had insisted their concerns were documented. In the Commons debate at the end of the RTC, Hoare sought to allay Conservative unease by linking All-India Federation with the Simon Report, whilst reiterating his insistence that any agreement was dependent upon adequate safeguards, which he took to be:

The obligation of the defence of India still rests upon us. Foreign affairs and international obligations must still be controlled by the Crown. In the interests of India, no less than in the interests of Great Britain, internal security and financial stability must be effectively safeguarded. In the interests of humanity, the pledges that we have given for the protection of minorities must be our solemn obligation. There must be no unfair economic and commercial discrimination against British traders. The rights of the services recruited by the Secretary of State must be preserved.⁷⁸

In the same debate, Churchill, whilst acknowledging his disagreement with the conclusions of the RTC, paid tribute to the Conservative delegation for the 'skill, patience, and tact with which they extricated themselves from an exceedingly difficult situation, and for the manner in which they have preserved our party to use its judgement upon future events'.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Churchill was conscious of the fact that Conservative policy had become more sympathetic to Indian self-rule and subsequently tendered his resignation from the Conservative Business Committee

⁷⁷ Extract from the Sub-committee No1 Federal Structure, Official Report of 1st RTC, 12 Nov. 1930-19 Jan. 1931, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC40/7/1.

⁷⁸ Hoare's statement, 26 Jan. 1931, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.247, cols.652-3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, vol.247, col.689.

(effectively the Shadow Cabinet) citing 'sincere and inevitable differences' in policy.⁸⁰ He was now able openly to challenge Conservative Indian policy, and his rationale was upheld by Austen Chamberlain, who suggested that Churchill had chosen 'his battleground well', as many people remained anxious about India.⁸¹ Baldwin was also aware of the unease over India at first hand, being in receipt of a statement from a branch of his Bewdley Constituency Association regretting his 'attitude on the Indian situation' and urging him to 'take a firm stand against the Socialist policy of surrender to sedition'.⁸² Hoare, though, was unperturbed by this Conservative unease and continued to support the leadership's Indian policy in the weeks and months after the conference; at the same time, Hoare continued to reassure apprehensive Conservatives by championing the need for adequate safeguards.⁸³ Moreover, the effect of Hoare's prominent role at the RTC was that by the summer of 1931 he was clearly established both as a senior figure in the leadership and a safe pair of hands on India.

The crisis of August 1931 which brought the National Government into office came as a surprise to Hoare. According to his memoirs, he had little inclination that his political fortunes were about to change when he travelled to London on 19 August, on a day-return from vacationing in Norfolk.⁸⁴ However, after being informed of the

⁸⁰ Churchill to Baldwin, 27 Jan. 1931, Baldwin MSS, 104/157.

⁸¹ Austen to Mary Chamberlain, 6 Feb. 1931, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC4/1/1306.

⁸² Extracts from Resolution from Abberley Branch of Bewdley Division Association, in letter to Baldwin from the Association, 26 Feb. 1931, Baldwin MSS, 104/204.

⁸³ Hoare believed that stringent safeguards were essential in persuading those Tory MPs inimical to constitutional change, such as Churchill, to abate their opposition to the RTC process and thus lessen the possibility of a serious rift within the Conservative Party over India. Although Churchill was not convinced by this argument, and subsequently left the Shadow Cabinet in January 1931, Hoare continued to reassure his party that Conservative support for Indian reform was dependent on Britain remaining in control of a number of important portfolios, such as defence: *The Times*, 17 Mar. 1931.

⁸⁴ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.15.

severity of the financial crisis engulfing Britain, Hoare quickly became disabused of any casualness. In the absence of Baldwin, due to his decision to remain on vacation in France, Hoare was invited by Neville Chamberlain on 20 August to partner him in the three-party talks which were seeking a solution to the crisis. After three days of talks, the decision to form a National Government had been taken and Hoare was given the India Office, although he alleges he was also considered for the roles of Foreign Secretary and Lord Privy Seal.⁸⁵ Hoare was highly appreciative of Chamberlain's faith in him, sensing a greater bond developing between the two men. Writing to offer his gratitude on being included in the three-party talks, Hoare gushed: 'I appreciated the chance of working with you last week. ... It is such a crisis as this that really tests a man's judgement, and now that the first chapter is over, you can be proud and happy that neither your judgement nor your nerve failed you'.⁸⁶ There was no doubt that the crisis had brought the two men closer together, and they had proved an effective team in the talks with the other party leaders. Nonetheless, with continued Conservative unease over Indian reform, Hoare had been presented a hugely demanding portfolio with the potential to undo any credibility he had achieved thus far. Chamberlain was certainly cognisant of the political problems involved in the present India policy, suggesting to Hoare's wife that despite the paramountcy of the financial crisis her husband's role 'may well turn out to be the most important as well as the most difficult of all our posts'.⁸⁷ This apprehension was shared by Hoare's sister, who warned that 'it couldn't be a more onerous post at the moment'.⁸⁸ This foreboding of the difficulties facing the India Office must have weighed on Hoare, who, despite the knowledge that the new

⁸⁵ Hoare's unpublished notes on 'The National Government', Templewood MSS, VI/1.

⁸⁶ Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, end of Aug. 1931, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/24/13.

⁸⁷ Neville Chamberlain to Maud Hoare, 26 Aug. 1931, Anderson MSS.

⁸⁸ Annie to Maud Hoare, 27 Aug. 1931, Templewood MSS, Anderson addition.

government was intended to be short-lived, was certainly mindful that the present Indian policy was unpopular amongst the majority of his party. Moreover, with the second RTC barely two weeks away, Hoare had little time to acclimatise to his new role before facing the uncertain challenge of formulating a Bill for constitutional reform.

Just days before the second RTC was due to start, Hoare was embroiled in a major row over whether the right to direct India's financial matters rested in London or Delhi. By statute the Government of India, headed by the Viceroy (now Lord Willingdon), had the final say in financial matters. However, London was alarmed at plans emanating from Delhi that, in order to resolve its problem of falling revenues due to the world economic crisis, it intended to stimulate the Indian economy by decoupling the rupee from the pound and devaluing it against other world currencies. The Government of India hoped this measure would allow interest rate cuts, raise prices and boost exports. Furthermore, Delhi requested a £100 million loan from Britain in order to service India's obligations whilst this objective was achieved. Whitehall insisted that the Indian Government should instead deliver a balanced budget to achieve its aims. However, legally this directive had to be at the behest of the Government of India and therefore Hoare attempted to persuade the Viceroy to introduce economies. As the Indian Army and Civil Service accounted for most of the budget once the inviolable pensions and sterling debt to the City had been serviced, this patently indicated salary cuts. This was anathema to the Government of India, who protested its independence in financial matters alongside the fact that the salaries were protected by law, and that any cuts would hit India unfairly. Hoare and Treasury officials were equally adamant that the rupee should remain tied to sterling,

that no loan would be forthcoming and a balanced budget should be achieved by cuts in expenditure. Hoare conveyed Whitehall's view that any necessary economies should be seen to be implemented by Delhi, as any legislation from London to force the cuts would be politically impossible in the present circumstances, as it would alienate the British public as to the practicality of future safeguards in any new Indian Constitution.⁸⁹ Willingdon, though, was not receptive to Hoare's solicitations and urged the necessary legislation in order to guarantee London as the final arbiter regarding the cuts that were needed to balance India's budget. Moreover, the Viceroy applied further pressure on London through his insistence that he and his cabinet would rather resign than be forced to implement cuts at Whitehall's behest. In a notable display of brinkmanship, Hoare insisted to his Permanent Undersecretary at the India Office, Findlater Stewart, that 'if it was a question of resigning, I was equally prepared to resign if I did not have my way'.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, with cabinet support, Hoare again stressed the detrimental effect that London's interference would have on an already sceptical Conservative Party, that even Simon was 'bitterly opposed to it and his opposition would carry great weight', and could not the Viceroy urge a 'rise in income tax or an appeal for a temporary cut in salaries'?⁹¹

On 17 September with the flight from the rupee increasing, the cabinet learned that the Viceroy had finally accepted the need for economies to be implemented by the Government of India. Hoare duly informed his government colleagues that Delhi now seemed likely to support an increase in the tariff from 31 to 40 per cent on all foreign

⁸⁹ Hoare to Willingdon, 2 Sep. 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/1-6.

⁹⁰ 'First National Government', Templewood MSS, VII/1.

⁹¹ Hoare to Willingdon, 11 Sep. 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/7-11.

goods if it would help the financial situation, although emphasising the likelihood that it would favour British manufactures at the expense of the Indian population.⁹² On the same day, Hoare seemed at his wits end as a result of the continual problems associated with his role. Writing to the Viceroy, he voiced his unhappiness:

I have been working night and day. What with the Round Table Conference, the constant emergency Cabinets and the many grave problems at the India Office. I am really beginning to wonder whether any human-being can struggle with it all.⁹³

Several days later, Hoare informed the cabinet that the Indian Government was prepared to go some way to balance its budget and that the Viceroy was seeking the voluntary cuts previously mentioned despite being against the proposed increase in the tariff.⁹⁴ (The knowledge that two days earlier Britain had abandoned the Gold Standard and devalued the pound while keeping the rupee tied to sterling must have significantly irked Delhi.) On the following day an exasperated Hoare dispatched a further telegram to the Viceroy, bluntly reiterating the appeal to the Indian Government to oversee the heatedly contested budgetary measures, ending with the plea:

In asking you to collaborate in carrying through a policy which I know is unwelcome to you, HMG realise that they are imposing on you and your Financial Member a difficult duty. But they do emphatically regard it as a duty at this period of grave emergency, being convinced that the policy they have laid down is in the highest interests of India.⁹⁵

With the British Government avowedly determined on measures to balance India's budget, the Viceroy reluctantly acquiesced. Hoare, though, appreciating the

⁹² Cabinet 58 (31), 17 Sep. 1931, CAB (68).

⁹³ Hoare to Willingdon, 17 Sep. 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/12-5.

⁹⁴ Cabinet 62 (31), 22 Sep. 1931, CAB (68).

⁹⁵ Telegram to Viceroy, marked secret, shown to cabinet on 23 Sep. 1931, CAB 23 (68).

deleterious effect of the dispute on the relations between Delhi and London and its possible implications for him as Secretary of State, was eager to quell any lingering resentment towards himself on the part of the Viceroy:

At no stage in the proceedings have I relied upon my own inadequate knowledge. At every stage I have gathered together the most expert opinion that I could collect and have kept the Prime Minister and the Cabinet fully informed of the discussions. By instinct I hate controversy of every kind, and I can really reassure you that I do not enter it lightly. Indeed, I do not enter it at all until I am simply dragged into it. ... I tried throughout to be fair to the views of the Government of India and to put to my colleagues the difficulties with which you were faced. This does not mean that I did not myself completely agree with the expert opinion in London and with the Cabinet, but it does mean that we did not take a rash partisan decision.⁹⁶

With the Indian budget row as a backdrop, Hoare was faced with the second RTC, which had begun on 7 September 1931. Originally, following the first RTC, there had been some confusion as to how the negotiations on a new Indian constitution would progress. An initial plan to hold a further conference in India had been boycotted by the Conservatives. Indeed, the very notion of further talks with Indian representatives was opposed by large numbers of Conservative MPs, with those from the cotton producing Lancashire constituencies prominent in 'urging the withdrawal of the Party from the Round Table Conference'.⁹⁷ However, MacDonald had already decided to resume the conference format in the spring of 1931, and had gained Baldwin's agreement on this.⁹⁸ A fundamental factor in this decision was the knowledge that

⁹⁶ Hoare to Willingdon, 25 Sep. 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/16-20.

⁹⁷ Chorlton to Stonehaven, 22 May 1931, Baldwin MSS, 105/25-6.

⁹⁸ MacDonald to Baldwin, 28 May 1931, Baldwin MSS, 105/40.

Gandhi, after three weeks of negotiations with Irwin, had agreed to suspend Congress's campaign of civil disobedience in order that both he and representatives from his Congress Party could attend the next conference. Large numbers of Conservatives, from Churchill to Hoare, were outraged that the chief proponent of subversion had been entertained in this way. Nevertheless, the Labour Government and the Viceroy regarded it as a necessary step towards achieving eventual agreement.⁹⁹ Conservatives continued to view the conference method with suspicion, and Hoare subsequently urged the strengthening of the British delegation, suggesting that both Simon and Hailsham be permitted to bring their expertise to the negotiating table.¹⁰⁰ MacDonald eventually accepted the need to broaden British representation and Baldwin recommended Hailsham to sit on the reformed Federal Structure Committee. (Hoare's other potential delegate was deemed too controversial to Indian susceptibilities; Simon remained a spectator to events.) According to Hoare, Hailsham's inclusion was vital to the success of the talks, as without him 'it would be most difficult to carry the right of the party with us in the event of constitutional changes appearing to be practical'.¹⁰¹ Unenthusiastically Hailsham accepted the position, although correspondence with Beaverbrook demonstrates the incredulity of both men towards Indian reform.¹⁰²

In contrast to the initial RTC, the second conference was a disappointment to the British supporters of Indian reform. Much of the previous agreement between the

⁹⁹ Hoare said 'The pact was in many respects objectionable', Hoare to Willingdon, 31 Dec 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/114-125.

¹⁰⁰ Hoare to Baldwin, 30 May 1931, Baldwin MSS, 105/41.

¹⁰¹ Hoare to Baldwin, 30 May 1931, Baldwin MSS, 105/41.

¹⁰² Letters between Beaverbrook and Hailsham, 11-14 July 1931, demonstrate their scepticism over Indian reform, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/150.

original Indian delegates had broken down (as Hoare had predicted), with those from British India concerned about their representation in any new constitutional settlement, and the Princes shying away from federation following the realisation that joining it would mean abdication of power. The arrival of Gandhi at the conference was also fraught, with many Conservatives still angry over his role in creating unrest in India. When introduced to Gandhi, Hoare stressed the need for 'law and order to be maintained in India if there was to be any constitutional advance, and that acts of terrorism would seriously undermine British support'.¹⁰³ Gandhi responded gracefully, and he and Hoare were noted to be on good terms during the conference sessions. However, Gandhi's presence and his claim that Congress represented all the peoples of India soon drew derision from the other Indian delegates. According to the Congress leader, as well as representing all Indians, his party was of the view that Hindus and Muslims should live together without either separate electorates or safeguards for minorities, and that the Untouchables belonged within the main body of Hinduism. As a result of this Congress dogma, both the Federal Structure and Minorities Committees became deadlocked. An increasingly exasperated Hoare complained to the Viceroy:

The delegates are much further off agreeing with each other than they were last year, and I do not believe that there is the least chance of a communal settlement in the Minorities Committee. If this state of affairs continues, I think that it is out of the question to expect any resounding results from the Conference.

Hoare continued that, in view of these developments, the only way forward was to consider Indian opinions, but nonetheless to draft an India Bill in accordance with

¹⁰³ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.58.

British views.¹⁰⁴ In addition to disconcerting the different strands of Indian opinion, Gandhi also alienated the British delegates by insisting that Britain should grant self-rule to India without safeguards. Hoare quickly concluded that Gandhi 'cannot accept anything like our terms and we cannot possibly accept his'.¹⁰⁵ Subsequently most of the British delegates came away from the second RTC with the distinct impression that the whole conference had been inconclusive.¹⁰⁶

While the second RTC was in session, the emergency administration's leaders agreed to fight a general election on a National Government ticket, with polling day set for 27 October 1931. With the security of a safe parliamentary seat, Hoare continued at the RTC and made little contribution to the government campaign, although he was called upon to vigorously deny press claims in the *Daily Herald* that if the Conservatives achieved success at the ballot box they would pull out of the Indian talks.¹⁰⁷ The National Government won a resounding victory at the polls, and MacDonald reformed his cabinet with some noteworthy alterations; Simon's move to the Foreign Office was the most significant. Hoare retained his portfolio at the India Office, although in private he was increasingly showing signs of disillusionment with the seemingly intractable problems associated with constitutional reform, leading him to confide in Willingdon: 'I would have gladly left the India Office, and it was, therefore, with no ulterior motive that I told the Prime Minister and Baldwin to hold themselves free to put in someone else and let me drop out'.¹⁰⁸ With an apparent stalemate at the RTC and increasing signs of renewed trouble in India, Hoare's

¹⁰⁴ Hoare to Willingdon, 2 Oct. 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/21-7.

¹⁰⁵ Hoare to Willingdon, 19 Nov. 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/69-75.

¹⁰⁶ Butler, *Art of the Possible*, p.44.

¹⁰⁷ *The Times*, 23 Oct. 1931.

¹⁰⁸ Hoare to Willingdon, 12 Nov. 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/65-8.

despondency only increased. Corresponding with the Viceroy, he railed against his misfortune:

I knew that I should have a nasty job when I took on the India Office, but I had no idea it would be as bad as it is. If things go on much longer as they are now, it will be physically impossible for any Secretary of State to stand the strain.¹⁰⁹

This impasse at the second RTC prompted the British Government to doubt the wisdom of a federal solution altogether. Whitehall's apprehension over Indian reform, along with Simon's inclusion in the cabinet, made Delhi increasingly fearful that the government was backtracking over federation. Sensing this unease, Hoare wrote to reassure Willingdon: 'No-one in the Government has ever had the least intention of simply going back to Simon'.¹¹⁰ Notwithstanding this communication, Hoare himself exhibited signs of doubt in proceeding down the federation route, toying with the idea of initial provincial autonomy and federation at an unspecified later date - basically the Simon approach to Indian reform. Corresponding with Beaverbrook, Hoare gave further indication of his newfound scepticism over India reform, stating that 'we shall agree in more ways than you imagine'.¹¹¹ His frustrations were also becoming apparent over what he perceived to be the unwarranted optimism of official reports circulating in Delhi, suggesting a successful outcome at the RTC. Writing to quash these rumours, he admonished the Viceroy:

A good many of your officials, to judge from their speeches, seem to think that there is going to be a Government of India Act in the next twelve months, and that all the difficulties are surmounted. I do hope that you will get it into their heads that

¹⁰⁹ Hoare to Willingdon, 19 Nov. 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/69-75.

¹¹⁰ Hoare to Willingdon, 26 Nov. 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/76-83.

¹¹¹ Hoare to Beaverbrook, 8 Dec. 1931, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/307a.

there is not the remotest chance of a Government of India Act for two years at the earliest.¹¹²

Despite this increasing pessimism following the breakdown in the negotiations at the second RTC, Hoare was comforted by the appreciation expressed by some of his fellow ministers. Lord Sankey conveyed the general consensus: 'No man has had such an anxious and difficult task as you have had and you deserve all our thanks and congratulations on the results'.¹¹³ A more significant fillip came from his closest colleague and ally, who commented: 'I always felt confident that when your opportunity came you would arise to it. You have had as difficult a series of problems to face as one could conceive'.¹¹⁴ Further incentive came from the fact that India's finances were showing signs of recovery by the end of 1931, with Hoare receiving the congratulations of his cabinet colleagues for his perseverance in persuading the Government of India to balance its budget.¹¹⁵

This reassurance came at an opportune moment, as Hoare began the New Year facing further problems over India. The fear that Congress would resume its campaign of non-cooperation proved to be well-founded. Willingdon reacted firmly to the renewed outbreak of unrest and within weeks of the start of 1932 thousands of Indians were in gaol, including Gandhi and most of the Congress leadership. The resort to ordinances by the Government of India was wholly supported by Hoare, who stressed he was relaxed about leaving it to the man on the ground, and that he

¹¹² Hoare to Willingdon, 8 Dec. 1931, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/1/100-10.

¹¹³ Sankey to Hoare, 23 Dec. 1931, Templewood MSS, VII/1.

¹¹⁴ Neville Chamberlain to Hoare, 19 Jan. 1932, Templewood MSS, VII/1.

¹¹⁵ Cabinet 42 (32), 20 Jan. 1932, CAB (70).

and the Viceroy were as one in making the suppression of terrorism their first and permanent duty.¹¹⁶ Moreover, in order to reinforce the Viceroy's policy Hoare regularly reiterated his conviction that Willingdon's clampdown on Congress was essential to maintain law and order, to the obvious appreciation of his fellow Conservatives.¹¹⁷ A noticeable thaw in the relations between Secretary of State and Viceroy thus ensued.

Notwithstanding the difficulties associated with the new outbreak of civil disobedience, Hoare was also tasked with formulating the parameters of an India Reform Bill. At the beginning of 1932 three special sub-committees were dispatched to India to investigate the minutiae involved in devising a new constitution for the All-India Federation. J.C.C. Davidson headed the inquiry into the financial position of the princely states in the federation; Lord Eustace Percy was to examine the financial relationship between the federal centre and the individual federal units; while Hoare's Liberal friend, Lord Lothian, was to investigate the franchise. All three men were, naturally, supporters of the government's India policy and could be relied on to deliver practicable measures. In the meantime, Hoare was still in two minds as to the most favourable way forward regarding a bill for Indian constitutional reform. Only days after the special commissions left for India, he confided to the Governor of Bombay that he was increasingly attracted once again to the idea of initial provincial autonomy in British India in advance of any federation.¹¹⁸ Hoare may have been influenced along these lines during meetings of the cabinet India Committee by

¹¹⁶ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.80.

¹¹⁷ House of Commons speech, 29 Feb. 1932, *Speeches by the Right Hon. Sir Samuel Hoare 1931-1935* (1935), pp. 11-4.

¹¹⁸ Hoare to Sykes, 20 Jan. 1932, Templewood MSS, VII/4.

Simon and Hailsham who championed this viewpoint.¹¹⁹ However, on their return from India, the chairmen of the three commissions persuaded the India Committee members, including Simon and Hailsham, that delaying federation would estrange the Hindu majority whilst providing an excuse for the less enthusiastic princely states to renege on their commitment to federate. Nonetheless, despite the strength of this argument, agreement was only achieved on the condition that there was to be no further RTC and that no date was to be set for federation.¹²⁰ Hoare acceded to the committee's demands.

The India Secretary had little trouble agreeing to the abandonment of further conferences as he believed them to be of little use, and served only to prolong the negotiation stage. Moreover, when the Governor of Bombay informed him that there was expectation in India of a further conference, Hoare indignantly replied: 'I do not know upon what you base this statement. We have given no pledge about this at all'.¹²¹ MacDonald, though, was known to favour a third RTC in order to address some of the misunderstandings that had come to light during the previous conference. However, despite this support for a further conference, Hoare was determined to avoid such an outcome, informing Willingdon of his reservations:

I am most reluctant to bring a number of Indians over to London. Not only will they never agree, but they will waste invaluable time when we should be devoting ourselves to the very difficult task of getting a Bill into shape and they will create a

¹¹⁹ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p.83.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p.83.

¹²¹ Hoare to Sykes, 23 Feb. 1932, Templewood MSS, VII/4.

deep suspicion in the minds of the greater number of the Members of the House of Commons.¹²²

Hoare maintained his antagonism towards a further RTC when he emphasised to the Prime Minister that 'having a crowd of Indians in London' may well cause additional delay in preparing any India Bill.¹²³ To reinforce this message, Hoare attempted to persuade the Viceroy of the undesirability of a further conference by stressing the need to avoid aggravating the sceptics of Indian reform lest it could undermine plans for a single Bill.¹²⁴ Despite the India Secretary's opposition, MacDonald prevailed and a third RTC was scheduled for the end of the year, with a somewhat chastened Hoare alleging that 'he had always contemplated that we should have a small autumn conference'.¹²⁵

The third RTC began on 17 November 1932 and ended on Christmas Eve. It was noticeably smaller than its two predecessors with the number of Indian delegates halved in number. Congress was banned and the Labour Party boycotted the event. A further divergence from previous conferences was evident through the inclusion of Simon in the British delegation. During the conference, Hoare was determined to avoid any prevarication amongst the delegates and relentlessly advanced the discussions to avoid any delay in concluding the talks, 'working himself to a frazzle' in one colleague's words.¹²⁶ This stratagem largely succeeded and the conference raised no new difficulties, with Hoare again being feted by many colleagues for his demeanour during the two years of Indian negotiations. Indeed, Hoare's reputation

¹²² Hoare to Willingdon, 5 May 1932, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/2/311-5.

¹²³ Hoare to MacDonald, 20 May 1932, Templewood MSS, VII/1.

¹²⁴ Hoare to Willingdon, 27 May 1932, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/2/327-32.

¹²⁵ Hoare to Willingdon, 9 Sep. 1932, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/2/411-6.

¹²⁶ Impressions of the 3rd RTC, in Davidson, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p.394.

was such at the end of 1932 that many echoed the sentiments of the *Daily Express* in arguing his suitability as a future Conservative leader.¹²⁷ Bruce Lockhart in his 1932 memoir reduced the odds on Hoare rising to the top post, declaring them at two to one.¹²⁸ Many Indian participants also voiced their admiration for Hoare and his dedication to Indian reform, with the princely states particularly effusive: The Chief Minister of Baroda apprised Hoare that 'the States feel that they have a friend in you'.¹²⁹ Another favourable consequence of the third RTC for Hoare was the positive impression he made on Simon, who praised the Secretary of State's performance after they had formed a good working relationship during the negotiations.¹³⁰ This reconciliation between the chief conflicting advocates of Indian reform was deeply appreciated by Hoare, as was the succour given by Simon to the government's Indian policy during the conference. 'You have been a tower of support', Hoare wrote to Simon as the conference closed.¹³¹ Moreover, having overseen the Indian negotiations in all their complexity during his two arduous years as India Secretary, Hoare was now confident that 'the time had arrived for putting our proposals into the form of a carefully drafted White Paper'.¹³²

¹²⁷ *Daily Express*, 1 Jan. 1933, in Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p.91.

¹²⁸ R.H. Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent* (1932), p.138; when Bruce Lockhart first met Hoare in 1914, he stuck at a thousand to one.

¹²⁹ Krishnmachari (Minister of Baroda State) to Hoare, 26 Dec. 1932, Templewood MSS, VII/1.

¹³⁰ Simon to Sir Dinesha Wacha, 29 Dec. 1932, Simon MSS, 75/49.

¹³¹ Hoare to Simon, end Dec. 1932, Simon MSS, 75/74.

¹³² Hoare to Simon, 30 Dec. 1932, Simon MSS, 75/57.

CHAPTER TWO – AT THE INDIA OFFICE: OPPOSITION AND THE CASE OF PRIVILEGE

The conclusion of the third RTC marked the end of the consultative stage of the India Bill. Much of the detail for a White Paper had already been finalised in the weeks before the conference opened, which accounted for Hoare's lack of zeal in relation to the final RTC, lest the Indian delegates should undermine his draft proposals. Now, with the Indian delegation having left London, Hoare confidently proclaimed in a BBC broadcast that the time was ripe to formulate the proposals into a White Paper and to place it before a 'strong committee which was representative of opinion in parliament'.¹³³ Simultaneously, Hoare sought to reassure those listeners dubious of the government's recommendations for constitutional change in India, suggesting that the latter corresponded with the views of several eminent politicians known for their Indian connections; Lord Hailsham, Lord Reading and Sir John Simon.¹³⁴ With antipathy towards the Indian reforms expected to intensify as the proposals reached the parliamentary stage, Hoare and the government adopted a wise course of action.

¹³³ The controversial nature of Indian reform had long persuaded the government to advocate the creation of a Joint Select Committee to examine any draft White Paper. This formula had two advantages: Firstly, it would allow the technicalities of the Bill to be discussed by well-informed members who all had an interest in India, without the normal business of parliament disrupting the proceedings; Secondly, opposition to the White Paper would be confined to closed session.

¹³⁴ Radio broadcast by Hoare, 27 Dec. 1932, *The Listener Magazine*, 4 Jan. 1933.

The invariable fear of supporters of Indian constitutional change was that their opponents would be able to gather sufficient parliamentary support to make the passing of legislation unrealistic. From the time of Irwin's 'Dominion Status' statement, Conservative opponents of Indian constitutional reform had been determined to undermine any attempt to devolve power in India. Churchill had become a key exponent of this opposition when he left the 'shadow cabinet' at the beginning of 1931 over fears that the Conservative leadership was overly sympathetic to Labour's Indian policy. He joined a cabal of Conservative 'die-hards' on the right of the party who were both opposed to Baldwin's leadership and rigidly hostile to the RTC-inspired Indian reforms. (A more moderate section of the Conservative Party, headed by Lord Salisbury, also opposed the government policy.) It is generally reckoned that the Churchill group of die-hards numbered around 50 Conservative MPs during the 1929-31 Parliament - a not inconsiderable number out of a total of 261. The trepidation among the Conservative leadership was that this die-hard group could be swelled by large numbers of less ideological MPs sceptical of constitutional change. This fear led to the strict marshalling of Conservative MPs during the division which followed the debate on the first RTC; in the event, only 43 Conservatives followed Churchill into the division lobby, against 369 MPs supporting the government policy. However, it was a much closer affair in the Lords, with 58 out of 164 Peers' opposing the government. Further disquiet for Conservative supporters of constitutional reform was the disclosure that 44 of their parliamentary colleagues had established a dedicated organisation, the India Empire Society (IES), to fight the government policy. Propitiously for Baldwin, the general election on 27 October 1931 (in the midst of the second RTC), entirely transformed the situation. Conservative

MPs now numbered an unprecedented 473 out of a government total of 554, thereby producing a potentially overwhelming level of support for Indian constitutional reform, as the number of die-hards was thought to have only slightly increased. However, even with this irresistible numerical advantage Hoare remained apprehensive of success, due to both the continuing ambiguity of many leading figures in his party, and the general susceptibility of Conservatives to the jingoistic message espoused by those opposed to Indian self-rule.

Throughout much of 1932, opposition to Indian reform was rather muted while the proposals were being investigated and framed. That said, Hoare was required to be continually vigilant in order to counter any revelations with the potential to inflame Conservative anxiety over India reform. A week before the final RTC, he became alarmed at reports of negative murmurs emanating from the Indian Central Legislative Assembly in regards to the Ottawa Agreements on Imperial economic unity, having praised them only two months previously.¹³⁵ Although not binding, Hoare was deeply nervous of the home reaction to any rejection of the settlement by an Indian representative body, consequently expressing his fears to the Viceroy:

I do hope that this does not mean that the resolution is in any real danger of defeat. My colleagues here agree with me in taking the most serious view of a repudiation of the Agreement. The defeat of the resolution or of the Bill would give the most effective material to Winston and his army and it would turn almost every neutral against proceeding with any reform proposals,¹³⁶

¹³⁵ *The Times*, 22 Aug. 1932.

¹³⁶ Hoare to Willingdon, 10 Nov. 1932, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/2/531-3.

Forces nearer to home were also attempting to embarrass the Secretary of State over Indian constitutional reform. At the start of January 1933, the editor of the *Morning Post*, H.A. Gwynne, contacted a leading opponent of Indian reform, Lord Greenway, highlighting potential flaws in the scheme. Greenway immediately forwarded Gwynne's concerns to Hoare, pointing out that under the proposals it was unclear whether or not a native Indian could become Governor-General (Viceroy), and that if this was indeed the case, could he not under 'Dominion Status' retreat from the Empire and thus over-rule any safeguards.¹³⁷ Quick to see the danger of this rumour, Hoare promptly replied that Britain retained any decision on candidates in regard to the Viceroyalty.¹³⁸ On the same day, Gwynne informed Greenway of another discrepancy, namely that Hoare had stated that federation could not be enacted unless all the Princes acceded to it.¹³⁹ Again Hoare was forced to refute the claim, albeit in the knowledge that the solidarity of the Princes over federation was a definite concern for the government. Although these claims would not detract the government from its course, Hoare must have been acutely aware of the drip-drip effect of these inimical narratives on apprehensive Conservative MPs, and was therefore understandingly anxious to pass 'the whole question safely into the hands of the Joint Select Committee'.¹⁴⁰

The creation of the Joint Select Committee (JSC) was to prove a further headache for Hoare and the government, as previous guarantees had been provided that its composition would be satisfactory to all parties interested in the Indian question.

¹³⁷ Greenway to Hoare, 6 Jan. 1933, Churchill MSS, CHAR2/192/4-5.

¹³⁸ Hoare to Greenway, 11 Jan. 1933, Churchill MSS, CHAR2/192/9.

¹³⁹ Gwynne to Greenway, 11 Jan. 1933, Churchill MSS, CHAR2/192/10.

¹⁴⁰ Hoare to Willingdon, 10 Feb. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/599-606.

With such a prominent issue, Hoare realised that there was a danger that the committee could become oversubscribed, with the consequent wrangling over representation creating serious delay in debating the White Paper. He thereby concluded that there should be a total of 32 members, split equally between the two 'Houses', aided and assisted by a number of Indian assessors and relevant experts. Additionally, to fulfil its remit the committee needed to appear equitable in order to avoid the charge that it was 'stacked' with government supporters; corresponding with the Chief Whip, Margesson, Churchill asserted that as his views on India were supported by at least half the Conservative Party in the country, opponents to the Bill were entitled to eight places on the JSC.¹⁴¹

The question of who should chair the JSC, with discretionary powers over the direction of committee business, was also a potential problem for Hoare in regard to impartiality. In order to counter any charges of government bias, he acted in consultation with the most prominent respectable opponent to Indian reform, Lord Salisbury, in resolving these issues.¹⁴² However, the composition of the JSC continued to be a laborious affair, causing Hoare much anxiety. As he lamented, 'Everyone wants to be on it and everyone is equally unanimous that it ought not to be a big committee'.¹⁴³ Consequently, Hoare hankered for its completion in advance of the Easter recess, as he realised that many of his Conservative colleagues were

¹⁴¹ Churchill to Margesson, 1 Mar. 1933: M. Gilbert (ed.), *Winston. S. Churchill: Volume V, Companion Documents, Part 2 1929-1935* (1981), p.534-5; Hoare subsequently informed Willingdon that he had offered Churchill 'fair representation' on the JSC through the offices of Margesson: Hoare to Willingdon, 17 Mar. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/633-8.

¹⁴² Hoare to Willingdon, 10 Feb. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/599-606.

¹⁴³ Hoare to Willingdon, 17 Feb. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/607-613.

becoming increasingly 'jumpy'.¹⁴⁴ Above all, the India Secretary feared that any further delay would allow dissidents the opportunity to use the upcoming parliamentary break to further unsettle government back-benchers with anti-White Paper propaganda in the constituencies.¹⁴⁵

Hoare felt his apprehension justified as it was evident that opponents of the White Paper were becoming increasingly active. On 22 February 1933 a Private Members motion by Page Croft, calling for a reversion to Simonism, was easily defeated by 297 to 42, albeit with the deployment of government whips.¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, despite this comfortable margin, the government had cause to be wary. Conscious of the mathematical problem of challenging the present India policy in parliament, the opponents of Indian self-rule had begun to adopt the more profitable tactic of pressurising the government by appealing to delegates at meetings of the National Union of Conservative Unionist Associations (NUCUA); though the National Union did not have the power to dictate Conservative Party policy, the leadership would be loath to ignore the views of its rank and file members.¹⁴⁷ An early opportunity for dissidents to appraise this new approach came only days after Page Croft's motion, when a scheduled NUCUA Central Council meeting on 28 February, attended by Hoare, was due to debate the government's India policy. Due the unpredictability of these party meetings, R.A. Butler, remarked to his superior's wife that whilst he did not 'attach much importance to the National Union', he was in no doubt that

¹⁴⁴ Hoare to Willingdon, 17 Feb 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/607-613.

¹⁴⁵ Hoare to Willingdon, 25 Feb. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/614-9.

¹⁴⁶ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p.94.

¹⁴⁷ For more information on the influence of the NUCUA, see: S. Ball, 'The National and Regional Party Structure' in A. Seldon & S. Ball (eds.), *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford, 1994), pp.169-220.

managing it effectively would be her husband's principal role at the conference as it was 'a big job to handle'.¹⁴⁸

During the meeting of the Central Council, Hoare spoke eloquently in defence of the government policy, firm in the belief that most Conservatives would 'judge the White Paper proposals on their merits' providing both safeguards and genuine federation was achievable.¹⁴⁹ However, his optimism proved to be misplaced, as during a further meeting of the Central Council on 28 February, a motion opposing the India policy was only narrowly defeated by 181 to 165, significantly with 151 abstentions. With the closeness of the vote all too apparent, a clearly relieved Baldwin lauded Hoare for his timely intervention prior to the ballot: 'I wanted to tell you how proud I am and with what keen pleasure I watch you go on from strength to strength'.¹⁵⁰ The Conservative leader was clearly only too aware how close run the vote had been.

With this renewed concern over opposition to the scheme, and the knowledge that the White Paper was expected to be published by the end of March 1933, Hoare sought to expedite the process of constructing the JSC. In relation to the Chairman, Hoare was frustrated that his first choice of Lord Sankey was unacceptable; such an appointment would break the precedent of not employing a government minister to oversee a committee charged with scrutinising sensitive legislation. Hoare thought he had solved the dilemma by inviting Salisbury; this had the dual appeal of appearing impartial and making the most respected opponent of the White Paper

¹⁴⁸ Butler to Maud Hoare, 28 Feb. 1933, Anderson MSS.

¹⁴⁹ Hoare to Willingdon, 25 Feb. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/614-9.

¹⁵⁰ Baldwin to Hoare, 28 Feb. 1933, Templewood MSS, VII/2.

‘more responsible and cautious’ as he would hold the senior committee position.¹⁵¹

Salisbury, however, in all likelihood suspecting his motives, quickly disabused the India Secretary of the idea. Hoare eventually settled on Lord Peel for the post.

Complaining to Willingdon, that ‘everyone wants not only representation but over-representation’, Hoare demonstrated signs of increasing exasperation at the futility in attempting to assuage all the different interests. With the White Paper due for publication within a few days, Hoare bemoaned that there were still ‘many ragged ends to be tied up’ before he could publicly announce the membership of the JSC.¹⁵²

A week later however, Hoare had more cause for optimism following the news that both Lord Derby and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang, would join the committee.¹⁵³ Sir Malcolm Hailey, invaluable according to Hoare for his ability in

explaining the technicalities of the White Paper, likewise consented.¹⁵⁴ The former

Conservative leader, Sir Austen Chamberlain, was also singled out for inclusion on the JSC, with Hoare flatteringly informing him ‘that there is no judgement that we

should value more greatly than yours’.¹⁵⁵ Chamberlain accepted with the caveat that

he ‘must reserve complete liberty to form an independent judgement on matters of such vital consequence as will come before the India Committee’.¹⁵⁶ However, as

with Derby, Chamberlain was privately less than enthusiastic at sitting on the JSC.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Hoare to Willingdon, 3 Mar. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/620-8.

¹⁵² Hoare to Willingdon, 10 Mar. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/629-632.

¹⁵³ Derby was of two minds whether to join the JSC, accepting and then writing to Hoare on 21 March stressing other commitments and that he would be of more use to the Gov. outside the committee. Hoare replied the same day convincing him to remain on the committee, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/45.

¹⁵⁴ Hoare to Willingdon, 17 Mar. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/633-8.

¹⁵⁵ Hoare to Austen Chamberlain, 21 Mar. 1933, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC40/1/1.

¹⁵⁶ Austen Chamberlain to Hoare, 23 Mar. 1933, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC40/1/4.

¹⁵⁷ Austen Chamberlain to Canning, 24 Mar. 1933 Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC40/1/24.

Simultaneously, Hoare remained hopeful of enticing 'Winston and his friends' to sit on the JSC, despite the fact that many contemporaries continued to believe that India was merely Churchill's 'ploy to smash the government'.¹⁵⁸ Relative to their strength in the Party, Hoare suggested that the dissidents should occupy four places on the JSC, again split equally between MPs and Peers. Churchill rejected the India Secretary's overtures, claiming government bias and arguing he had no wish 'to be voted down by an overwhelming majority of the eminent persons' whom Hoare had selected.¹⁵⁹ Churchill's stance was replicated by two further influential die-hards, Page Croft and George Lloyd. However, this boycott by Churchill and others was not appreciated by some of their close allies who were disposed to take their place on the committee, with Lord Burnham 'deploring' Winston's refusal, suggesting his absence would weaken those who chose to oppose the Bill within the JSC.¹⁶⁰ Hoare achieved greater success in persuading Salisbury to join the JSC, stating with relief that if he had followed Churchill's example 'it really would open the committee up to the charge that it was a de facto government body'.¹⁶¹ Moreover, Salisbury also proved useful in proposing other opponents of the White Paper, in order that the equilibrium so desired by Hoare could be maintained. The India Secretary thereby succeeded in achieving a degree of objectivity whilst constituting the committee, eventually deciding on five dissident voices¹⁶² and eight 'non-committed'

¹⁵⁸ Hoare to Willingdon, 17 Mar. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/633-8.

¹⁵⁹ Churchill to Hoare, 5 Apr. 1933, Churchill MSS, CHAR2/193/23.

¹⁶⁰ Burnham to Churchill, 7 Apr. 1933, M. Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S Churchill, vol. 5 Companion, part 2 Documents: The Wilderness Years 1929-1935* (1981), p.568.

¹⁶¹ Hoare to Willingdon, 12 Apr. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/673-9.

¹⁶² Lord Salisbury, Lord Burnham, Lord Rankeillor, Sir Joseph Nall, and Sir Reginald Craddock.

distinguished Tories,¹⁶³ with supporters of the government policy making up the remainder.

The desire for conciliation and even-handedness was not appreciated by everyone, with Robert Bernays sniping at Hoare's motivations in seeking to achieve a degree of equity on the JSC:

Obviously the government must have a majority on the committee or it ceases to be a government. It was Hoare's fault for making that silly statement at the Blackpool Conference that the committee would be impartial. His main fault is timidity. At the back of his mind, I think, he is determined not to sacrifice his chances for the premiership on India.¹⁶⁴

Nonetheless, Hoare achieved his desire to create a committee which he felt would be able to deflect any charges that it was merely a government stooge. That said, this sentiment was not uniformly shared by his fellow MPs, as a dissident amendment to decrease government representation on the JSC achieved nearly 80 Conservative votes. Furthermore, after successfully navigating the hurdles encountered whilst constituting the JSC, Hoare was faced with yet another crisis when Peel was taken ill, forcing his withdrawal. Emergency talks with Salisbury resulted in the candidature of Lord Linlithgow, which was quickly finalised with little time to spare before the planned unveiling of the JSC to parliament.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Sir Austen Chamberlain, Lord Derby, Lord Hardinge, Lord Zetland, Edward Cadogan, Eustace Percy, Eddie Winterton, and Cosmo Lang.

¹⁶⁴ Bernays diary, 11 Apr. 1933, N. Smart (ed.), *The Diaries and Letters of Robert Bernays, 1932-1939* (Lampeter, 1996), p.69.

¹⁶⁵ Hoare to Willingdon, 12 Apr. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/673-9.

Hoare's displeasure at the length of time it was taking to construct the JSC was to a large extent fuelled by his awareness that the White Paper was due to be published by the end of March. Protocol then stipulated that it should be debated in parliament forthwith, thus risking further equivocation amongst JSC candidates. If this turn of events transpired Hoare would become preoccupied with the task of defending the White Paper, thus resulting in further passivity in finalising the JSC; in Hoare's eyes, it would have been far more advantageous if both the publication of the White Paper and the announcement of the JSC could be synchronised. However, this aspiration was to prove overly optimistic, with the White Paper being unveiled on 17 March; the aforementioned parliamentary debate was scheduled ten days later in order to allow prospective contributors time to prepare. In anticipation of the publication Churchill and other Conservative opponents of Indian reform had organised themselves into the India Defence Committee (IDC), through which they planned to coordinate their efforts in Westminster. Encouraged by their recent 'success' at the NUCUA meeting and supported by a venomous press campaign headed by the *Morning Post*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*, Churchill remained confident of creating an upset for the government in the forthcoming debate.

The debate lasted for three days. Hoare opened for the government, and speaking for over an hour and a half in his 'matter of fact, rather dull but confident' manner, gave the proponents of the White Paper the edge in the first sitting.¹⁶⁶ On the second day, Churchill electrified the House with a vigorous attack on the proponents of constitutional reform, which created much trepidation on the government benches. However, this triumph was not to be repeated on the final day, as Churchill's much

¹⁶⁶ Amery diary, 27 Mar. 1933, p.291.

anticipated speech was judged too 'long-winded' and degenerated into confusion following an altercation involving the senior backbench MP Wardlaw-Milne, and consequently he lost 'the ear of the House'. This unexpected failure on the part of Churchill disorientated the opponents of the White Paper, with the result that they failed to forward a division on the proposed Bill. The government was jubilant at this *volte-face*, with Headlam predicting that Churchill calamitous speech would lose him 'a lot of ground politically'.¹⁶⁷ Churchill's failure was all the worse due to his braggadocio preceding the speech, with his prediction that he was 'going to bring down the government' appearing particularly fanciful in the wake of his subsequent performance.¹⁶⁸ Hoare was notably gratified with the outcome, informing Willingdon that Churchill's 'much advertised speech was one of the greatest failures of his life'.¹⁶⁹ Crestfallen, Churchill promised to maintain the fight, although his performance in the debate may well have been a contributing factor as to why he declined Hoare's offer of a place on the JSC a few days later. Nonetheless, the government's triumph in the debate could not allow the India Secretary too much complacency. With Churchill's refusal to join the JSC, he would be unhampered in his efforts to ferment opposition to the White Paper in the constituencies, where Hoare knew the 'flaming rhetoric' of Winston and Page Croft would 'stir up all the old men and old ladies'.¹⁷⁰ Events were to vindicate the India Secretary's judgement.

The deliberations of the JSC were to be a stressful affair for Hoare, despite his previously stated desire that he would be relieved when he could get away from the

¹⁶⁷ Headlam diary, 29 Mar. 1933, p.265.

¹⁶⁸ Bernays diary, 31 Mar. 1933, p.63.

¹⁶⁹ Hoare to Willingdon, 31 Mar. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/653-8.

¹⁷⁰ Hoare to Sir George Stanley, 4 Apr. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/9/7-8.

parliamentary hubbub and into the quieter atmosphere of the Joint Select Committee.¹⁷¹ He was soon under no illusion as to the enormity of the task in attempting to review all the two hundred clauses of a vastly complicated Bill in the face of dissident hostility. The desire to conclude the business of the JSC before the autumn was also uppermost in Hoare's mind, as he wished to avoid both reconstituting the committee and the subsequent Commons debate, if it had to be reformed when parliament reconvened in the new year.¹⁷² Perturbed by this dilemma Hoare expressed his frustration at the actions of the 'demented' Salisbury as he 'rained more and more letters of inquiry onto him in the hope that no answers would be forthcoming'.¹⁷³ A week later, Hoare was becoming even more exasperated at the 'tiresome' spoiling tactics employed by his opponents on the JSC, highlighted by Salisbury's request to re-examine all the evidence from the various committees and investigations relating to India reform since the Simon Commission, bemoaning to Willingdon:

They make all the trouble that they possibly can and appear to have become completely biased and partisan in all the views that they express and in the questions that they ask the witnesses. In the midst of my troubles Salisbury weighed in with an enormous memorandum containing practically every question that was ever raised before the Simon Commission and demanding that I should have witnesses back from India to deal with every one of his specific points.¹⁷⁴

This dilemma culminated in a masterstroke from the India Secretary. With the consent of the JSC Chairman, Linlithgow, Hoare offered to step up to the witness box himself, and with the aid of his advisors answer any questions put to him. Hoare

¹⁷¹ Hoare to Willingdon, 23 Mar. 1933, templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/642-9.

¹⁷² Linlithgow to Austen Chamberlain, 13 June 1933, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC40/1/12.

¹⁷³ Hoare to Willingdon, 23 June 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/737-40.

¹⁷⁴ Hoare to Willingdon, 30 June 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/741-5.

hoped this would undermine the obvious delaying tactics being adopted by 'Salisbury and his friends' and enable the committees' deliberations to be kept apace. This decision to adopt the witness chair proved successful in expediting the discussions, although Hoare's newfound role did not impress everyone, with Austen Chamberlain commenting: 'Since the Secretary of State has been in the witness-chair we have really got down to business, but for sixty people to examine a witness is not very satisfactory and we jump from one subject to another in a very un-business-like way'.¹⁷⁵ Despite Chamberlain's reservations, Hoare stuck to his task in the belief that he could still finish the JSC stage by the end of the year.¹⁷⁶ A further worry for the government came in October 1933 when Churchill, seeking to imitate the India Secretary, took the witness stand at the JSC; nevertheless, Hoare remained unruffled as he correctly predicted that Winston would make a bad showing if he was restricted to the details.¹⁷⁷ In contrast, Hoare was lauded for his performance as 'star-witness', with the Prime Minister prominent among his admirers:

I should like to put on record in writing my admiration for the manner in which you presented your evidence to the Joint Select Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform and for the skill with which you handled your protracted cross-examination. The proceedings must have imposed a great strain upon you, both physically and mentally, and your triumphant success has aroused general applause, in which I heartily join.¹⁷⁸

Despite this acclamation, Hoare failed in his attempt to complete the JSC stage of the India Bill before the end of 1933, with Sir Austen Chamberlain's opposition to certain elements of the White Paper chiefly responsible.

¹⁷⁵ Austen Chamberlain to Sir John Anderson, 26 July 1933, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC40/1/9.

¹⁷⁶ Hoare to Willingdon, 5 Oct. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/825-31.

¹⁷⁷ Hoare to Willingdon, 26 Oct. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/851-6.

¹⁷⁸ MacDonald to Hoare, 8 Nov. 1933, Templewood MSS, VII/2.

As arguably the pre-eminent Conservative sitting on the JSC, Austen Chamberlain's views on the White Paper carried great weight. Although pledging to be 'helpful' to the government when accepting the role, it quickly became apparent to other members of the JSC that he was unhappy with the size of the federal chambers and the fact that they would be directly elected. The issue of representation had dogged the question of federalism since the first RTC, with the various Indian interests striving to protect their position. The Lothian Committee had recommended a Lower House of 450 representatives, with 300 occupying the higher equivalent, and direct election to both. This was opposed by many Indian minority groups who feared they would lose out. In February 1933 Hoare had ruled that the size of the upper chamber should be 250 seats with 100 of these reserved for the princes. This would give the princes 40 per cent of the upper chamber, which when added to the 30 per cent allocated to the Muslim constituency, would alleviate any fears of a Congress majority. A similar distribution would apply to the lower chamber. However, Chamberlain was unconvinced by Hoare's arguments and urged both the adoption of smaller chambers and a reversion to the Simonite policy of indirect elections.

Hoare's dilemma over Chamberlain's viewpoint was the fact that both Lothian and the Government in India were satisfied with the White Paper proposals as they stood, with the India Secretary reluctant to re-ignite a dispute with the Viceroy, or indeed with the Liberal contingent in the JSC. Deadlock ensued as Chamberlain, supported by Derby and others of the uncommitted group, refused to rescind his opposition to the contested factors, while Hoare remained compelled to uphold the

principles of the White Paper. The upshot of this situation was that failing agreement the committee had to be reconstituted when parliament reconvened in 1934. A possible rationale behind Hoare's apparent reluctance to compromise with Chamberlain could have been the fact that, despite the activities of the IES and the IDC in the constituencies, he was becoming more confident that the government was winning the argument over Indian constitutional reform; despite a difficult inception, the 'independent' Union of British India (UBI) had grown in stature and influence, dispatching various dignitaries with Indian experience across the country to counter dissident propaganda on the White Paper.¹⁷⁹ In response to this government success, the IES and IDC merged to form one organisation; the India Defence League (IDL). Hoare would also have been encouraged by the successful India debate at the NUCUA Central Council meeting of 28 June, which he described as 'quite satisfactory' after gaining a 'two and a half to one' majority.¹⁸⁰ Encouraged by these favourable reports, Hoare could understandably have concluded that Chamberlain might well reconsider his objections to the White Paper, thus preventing any likelihood of a rift between London and Delhi.

Although Hoare began 1934 buoyed by the news that he had received a G.C.S.I. in the New Years' Honours List, he remained confounded by Chamberlain's steadfast refusal to countenance the White Paper in its present form. Faced with this dilemma, Hoare indicated he was prepared to contemplate a reversal in his support of the contested elements, despite previously promising the Viceroy he would attempt to dissuade Chamberlain from his present stance; in a clear sign that his resistance to

¹⁷⁹ Butler, *Art of the Possible*, p.51.

¹⁸⁰ Hoare to Willingdon, 30 June 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/741-5.

Chamberlain was faltering, Hoare informed Willingdon that both London and Delhi needed to be aware of the potential danger to the reforms if he (Chamberlain) was to 'carry' the committee.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, Hoare voiced his concern that even with a victory over Chamberlain in the JSC, the government still required either his 'support or neutrality' in regards to the India Bill or 'we cannot hope to carry the proposals in either House'.¹⁸² Significantly, Hoare was far from alone in urging greater latitude in order to appease Chamberlain, with R.A. Butler fully supportive of the Secretary of State's efforts to resolve the impasse:

I appreciate the value of standing pat on the White Paper and the importance of Indian opinion; but politically here we must have an extra wing to fly with, and that wing will be provided by the majority of the members of the Joint Select Committee, who will become apostles after the issue of our Report. It is a case of throwing over parts of one's equipment to save the ship.¹⁸³

Nevertheless, Hoare demonstrated continued reluctance to force the issue with Delhi, and hesitated while Willingdon contemplated whether the introduction of smaller chambers and indirect election was a price worth paying to placate Chamberlain. If anything, Hoare continued to place the onus on Chamberlain for the stalemate, suggesting that the whole White paper would need to be rewritten should his recommendations be followed through.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, Hoare's equanimity in the face of this dispute, and his reluctance to offend the Viceroy's sensibilities, was the cause of much consternation among the 'friendly' uncommitted group on the JSC, leading Derby to speculate: 'If Sam goes on as he is going now he will split the party from

¹⁸¹ Hoare to Willingdon, 5 Jan. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/953-4.

¹⁸² Hoare to Willingdon, 16 Jan. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/955-7.

¹⁸³ Butler to Brabourne, 25 Jan. 1934, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/269.

¹⁸⁴ Hoare to Austen Chamberlain, 22 Jan. 1934, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC40/3/7.

top to bottom'.¹⁸⁵ Realising the dangers to the Bill if the stand-off continued, the government sought to defuse the row and, to the surprise of many, Hoare assented to Chamberlain's requests for smaller chambers and indirect elections; Hoare's change of heart came as a shock to fellow members of the JSC, with Zetland professing his incredulity to Chamberlain: 'You must have been amazingly persuasive to secure so great a degree of acquiescence in our views on the part of Sam Hoare'.¹⁸⁶ Informing Willingdon of the new situation, Hoare implied that he had come under some pressure by cabinet colleagues to resolve the issue as quickly as possible 'in case the government loses a vote on it'.¹⁸⁷ Hoare emerged from the dispute somewhat depressed at being overruled, and subsequently appealed to Chamberlain not to countenance further alterations to the scheme, as the changes just agreed would be judged 'extremely unfavourable' by the Viceroy.¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless, with Austen Chamberlain and his group now recommitted to the government policy, Hoare must have felt some relief that the progression of the India Bill could now continue unabated. However, providence was quickly to deny the India Secretary any respite.

On the morning of 16 April, Hoare received a letter from Churchill requesting him to attend the House of Commons that day, as he was to inform the Speaker that he believed a breach of parliamentary privilege had been committed:

Evidence has been placed in my possession showing that the India section of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce completed their evidence for the Joint Select

¹⁸⁵ Derby to Hardinge, 3 Apr. 1934, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/10.

¹⁸⁶ Zetland to Austen Chamberlain, 14 Apr. 1934, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC40/1/34.

¹⁸⁷ Hoare to Willingdon, 13 Apr. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1030-42.

¹⁸⁸ Hoare to Austen Chamberlain, 13 Apr. 1934, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC40/1/33.

Committee about the middle of June and a hundred copies were sent to the secretary of the said committee for circulation to its members preparatory to the hearing of the evidence which had been fixed for June 30. A member or members of the Joint Select Committee used influence with the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to procure the withdrawal of the evidence and the substitution of evidence which differed from that which had already been deposited with the secretary of the Joint Select Committee. The altered and substituted evidence was in fact tendered at the end of October and heard by the Committee on November 4, and has since been published. Information at my disposal shows that you were cognisant of these proceedings which I am advised constitute a breach of privileges of the House of Commons and are in any case most irregular and regrettable.¹⁸⁹

Hoare was incredulous at Churchill's allegation, having no inkling of what was afoot. Only a month previously, Churchill had penned a warm letter to the India Minister, reminiscing of their time in Baldwin's second government, and wishing him well after a recent bout of influenza.¹⁹⁰ Even more bizarrely to Hoare's eyes was the knowledge that he had dined with Churchill at the home of Philip Sassoon on the very night that he composed the charge, oblivious of any imminent fissure between them.¹⁹¹

Hoare attended parliament as requested, fully expectant that Churchill's accusation would be rejected. However, the Speaker declared that there was indeed evidence to support Churchill's charge that Hoare and Derby had influenced a report presented to the JSC, and referred the case to the Committee of Privileges. The

¹⁸⁹ Churchill to Hoare, 15 Apr. 1934, Templewood MSS, VII/3.

¹⁹⁰ Churchill to Hoare, 11 Mar. 1934, Templewood MSS, VII/3.

¹⁹¹ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.92.

Speaker's decision left Hoare 'very shaken' according to Butler,¹⁹² while Amery noticed him to be 'very nervous and evidently worried' after the session had ended.¹⁹³ Although Hoare's spirits may have been raised to a degree after receiving a message from his dutiful wife, who having watched the unfolding scenario from the public gallery, reported that 'Winston had thoroughly bored the House', he undoubtedly realised the seriousness of his predicament.¹⁹⁴ Conversely Churchill was elated, with much evidence that his recently absent swagger had returned following reports from the Commons' Smoking Room that 'he would break this bloody rat Hoare's neck if I risk my own'.¹⁹⁵

Derby had received the same missive as Hoare, and immediately replied with a strong rebuttal to Churchill's insinuations:

No alteration whatever in the evidence was made by me. I do not wish you to suppose by that I am pretending ignorance of what was going on at the time. As you know I am always in close touch with my Lancashire friends and I am aware of the alterations which they were debating themselves, but the actual evidence was dealt with by a Special Committee of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, who did alter the original report largely as a result of information which reached them from their Mission on India. But I want you to clearly understand that the evidence given before the Select Committee is the evidence passed by the Special Committee of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce untouched by me.¹⁹⁶

Nevertheless, Derby was clearly disconcerted by Churchill's charges, immediately writing to the Secretary of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce (MCC), Sir

¹⁹² Butler to Brabourne, 19 Apr. 1934, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/201.

¹⁹³ Amery diary, 16 Apr. 1934, p.379.

¹⁹⁴ Maud to Sam Hoare, 16 Apr. 1934, Templewood MSS, VII/3.

¹⁹⁵ Butler to Brabourne, 19 Apr. 1934, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/203.

¹⁹⁶ Derby to Churchill, 16 Apr. 1934, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/43.

Raymond Streat, to pour scorn on the implied allegation of dishonesty, though adding that 'he was in no ways ashamed of the part [he] played in endeavouring to get the evidence put in such a form as would prevent unnecessary irritation of the India Delegates on the Select Committee'.¹⁹⁷ Derby was of the opinion that a statement from the MCC President would be sufficient to exonerate him. However, the Secretary of the MCC was more circumspect, advising Derby to await 'news from London' before making any statement. Streat believed Derby's best defence against the charges was to imitate Hoare's stance, and persistently maintain that he was merely attempting to facilitate 'better feelings between India and Lancashire'.¹⁹⁸ It was swiftly realised by both Hoare and Streat that a straight denial of the principal charge of altering evidence would fail to deflect the underlying premise of Churchill's accusation that pressure had been brought upon the MCC regarding its evidence to the JSC. A subtler line of defence was therefore required.

The context of Churchill's charge against Hoare and Derby could be identified as the shifting economic relationship between Britain and India. As a result of the 1919 Indian reforms, the Government of India had been granted control of its own financial affairs (the Fiscal Autonomy Convention), including the usage of discretionary tariff powers. Consequently, the tariff on imported goods increased with a detrimental effect on British exporters to the sub-continent - the cotton industry was particularly hard-hit. Despite the fact that British businesses were given lower tariff rates than their competitors, the already declining Lancashire cotton industry nonetheless suffered a sharp diminution in exports to the sub-continent. During the second

¹⁹⁷ Derby to Streat, 16 Apr. 1934, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/43.

¹⁹⁸ Streat to Derby, 16 Apr. 1934, Derby MSS, 920DER(17), 37/43.

Labour government alone, British exports to India had slumped from £40 million in 1929 to barely £17 million two years later, with cotton manufactures bearing the brunt. Accentuating the difficulties for exporters to the sub-continent, successive governments since 1919 had eschewed legal intervention in trade negotiations with India, insisting that British businesses should deal exclusively with their Indian counterparts when brokering any deals between the two countries. Thereby, without any government help, British industry was at the mercy of the Indian market, fostering significant resentment amongst Britain's exporters, in particular those from Lancashire.

As the main competition for Lancashire cotton products, (aside from the Indian market), came from Japan, British manufacturers were understandably concerned with tariff rates and persistently sought the abrogation of the Fiscal Autonomy Convention in regards to their goods. Since the world recession broke, and India increasingly required both revenue and protection for her nascent cotton industry, the tariff rate on British imports had steadily increased (although admittedly at a far lower rate than that imposed on Japanese goods). With the British government now committed to granting India a new constitution, the main body representing the Lancashire cotton industry, the MCC, grew increasingly anxious that control over Britain's preferential tariff rates would be one area relinquished by the Government of India, and handed over to Indian politicians.

Recognising the real possibility that the 'Lancashire people' could cause trouble over the tariff, Hoare, in the midst of organising the JSC, urged the Viceroy to 'issue a

statement as soon as possible as to the continuance of the existing tariff for the present'.¹⁹⁹ However, the MCC was not prepared to be beguiled by statements from Delhi, and - realising that any declaration over the tariff was likely to be only temporary - demanded some assurance from the British government that Britain's advantage in rates would be safeguarded. On 5 May 1933, Hoare wrote to the MCC President, Richard Bond, explaining that the government could not insist on any preferential tariff rates in the India Bill and that it would be best left to the affected parties to decide on trade issues.²⁰⁰ An indignant Bond replied two weeks later deploring Hoare's statement, insisting that he and his colleagues were united in their belief that Britain's cotton industry required protection from the possibility of 'nefarious' Indian politicians arbitrarily setting the terms of trade in any future self-governing India:

Before arranging for a tremendous advance in the self-governing powers of India, the British Government has a duty to its own people to ensure reasonable treatment of all legitimate British interests in India and certainly not least for the established export trades. No British interest in India comes near to equalling in importance and magnitude that of the British cotton industry. For proposals to be brought forward by a British Government in which nothing whatever is provided by way of security or safeguard for that interest, and equally for other British export trades, seems to my colleagues and myself to be tantamount to an abandonment of the vital interests of our own country.²⁰¹

Patently the MCC was deeply unhappy with the government's stance over tariffs, which was of particular concern to Hoare, knowing they would be presenting evidence to the JSC in the near future. There was now the distinct possibility that

¹⁹⁹ Hoare to Willingdon, 10 Feb. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/599-606.

²⁰⁰ Hoare to Bond, 5 May 1933, Churchill MSS, CHAR2/217/29-30.

²⁰¹ Bond to Hoare, 23 May 1933, Churchill MSS, CHAR/217/31-6.

their report to the JSC would be highly pernicious to the White Paper. Hoare was thereby surprised, and doubtless relieved following an invitation from the 'King of Lancashire', Lord Derby, for him and the President of the Board of Trade, Walter Runciman, to attend a dinner on 27 June to speak unofficially to representatives of the MCC and discuss their disagreements in regards to government policy.²⁰²

Derby's impromptu intervention and his eagerness to act as a conciliator was the result of a discussion with some of the 'Manchester men' on 25 May, during which there may have been some indication of a common desire to defuse the potential row, thus warranting a meeting with the ministers responsible for government policy in this area.

Prior to the dinner, Streat wrote to Derby informing him that Sir Joseph Nall (a Lancashire MP and dissident member of the JSC) had suggested that Hoare should see an advanced copy of the MCC report, shortly to be presented to the JSC, in order to acquaint himself with their grievances.²⁰³ Streat then suggested that Derby show Hoare his copy in order to forewarn him of the MCC recommendations for changes to the White Paper, albeit with the caveat that it was too late to make alterations to this document. (Streat readily admitted that he had wrongly allowed both Derby and Nall to receive copies prior to the JSC.) Although it is not known whether Hoare read the MCC report prior to the meeting, it would seem improbable he eschewed the opportunity, though he unconvincingly states in recollections of the dinner that the report was never mentioned.²⁰⁴ Several weeks later, Hoare appeared to have definitely read the MCC evidence, as just before its delivery to the JSC

²⁰² Derby to Hoare, 25 May 1933, Derby MSS, 920DER(17), 37/41.

²⁰³ Streat to Derby, 24 June 1933, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/40.

²⁰⁴ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.97.

secretary he wrote to Derby deploring its demands for British preference in relation to the Fiscal Autonomy Convention, and the detrimental effect it could have on Anglo-Indian relations.²⁰⁵

The aggravation generated by the MCC report caused much irritation to Derby, who confided to Sir Louis Kershaw of the India Office that he wished he 'could persuade the Manchester people to withdraw it altogether'.²⁰⁶ Hoare agreed with Derby's sentiments: 'Like you I deplore that the memorandum cannot be entirely rewritten as I feel strongly that unless it is toned down considerably it may do a great deal of harm'.²⁰⁷ This was especially pertinent as a trade mission from Lancashire was due to visit India during August in an attempt to negotiate a deal with Indian mill owners for British preference, and secure their support for the continuation of tariffs at 25 per cent for British exports. Following an appeal by the leader of the mission, Sir Clare Lees, Derby informed Hoare that Lees had 'begged' him to prevent the MCC evidence being released to the JSC before 20 October if possible, so as not to endanger their negotiations in India.²⁰⁸ Although Hoare was abroad at the time, his personal secretary replied on his behalf, stating that the Secretary of State 'is most anxious to support the request'.²⁰⁹ In the event the submittal of the MCC evidence was successfully postponed for a number of weeks, yet with little indication when the talks in India would be concluded, Hoare warned Derby of the futility in attempting to attain further deferments: 'It is quite impossible for us to get Linlithgow to put off the Lancashire evidence arbitrarily and the only hope I can see is that you should try and

²⁰⁵ Hoare to Derby, 17 July 1933, Churchill MSS, CHAR2/216/23-6.

²⁰⁶ Derby to Kershaw, 26 July 1933, Derby MSS 920DER(17) 37/44.

²⁰⁷ Hoare to Derby, 31 July 1933, Derby MSS 920DER(17) 37/44.

²⁰⁸ Derby to Hoare, 20 Aug. 1933, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/40/32-3.

²⁰⁹ Turnbull to Derby, 21 Aug. 1933, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/40/34.

persuade the Lancashire people to withdraw it in their own interests'.²¹⁰ Derby failed to reply, and Hoare appeared distinctly worried in his correspondence with the Viceroy:

I have been doing my utmost to stave off the evidence of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. As you know, it is likely to be of a threatening and provocative character and I have been nervous of it embarrassing the trade discussions in India. The trouble is that we are getting through with our evidence fairly quickly and the Indians, who are determined to return on November 10, are demanding to have it without delay. I intend to have another word with the Chairman to see whether we can postpone it, but I may find it impossible.²¹¹

A fortnight after Hoare had apprised Willingdon of his concerns, the MCC report was presented to the JSC. Hoare admitted to nerves, but on hearing the report he dispatched hearty congratulations to Derby on the 'excellent way' in which the MCC had worded their evidence.²¹² The supposition that Hoare was not totally oblivious to this unexpected outcome, allied to his awareness of the content in the original MCC evidence, is afforded some credence in his regular communication with Willingdon:

Derby has been exceedingly good with the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. He has induced them to withdraw a dangerous and aggressive memorandum that they sent in to the Committee and that fortunately I had prevented from being circulated. They have now substituted a very harmless document that ought not to bring them into serious conflict with the Indians.²¹³

²¹⁰ Hoare to Derby, 4 Oct. 1933, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/45.

²¹¹ Hoare to Willingdon, 20 Oct. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/844-50.

²¹² Hoare to Derby, 3 Nov. 1933, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/45.

²¹³ Hoare to Willingdon, 3 Nov. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/857-66.

Derby, though, was more circumspect about his role in the matter, insisting that it was two leading members of the MCC, Thomas Barlow and Harold Rodier, who were chiefly responsible in getting 'the bitter parts of the Memorandum cut out'.²¹⁴

Reactions to Churchill's charges were mixed. Amery believed the whole affair to be a 'mare's nest'.²¹⁵ Headlam agreed, branding the charge 'a lot more smoke than fire' with the offences 'a failure in tact and common sense if nothing more'.²¹⁶ Sir Joseph Nall suggested that any wrong-doing was in all likelihood the work of somebody inside either the India Office or the Board of Trade, and thought both Hoare and Derby 'unfairly pilloried'.²¹⁷ One Conservative MP even proffered the view that the Privilege Case could avail Hoare's standing in the party: 'This charge by Winston Churchill against him will do Sam Hoare more good than anything he could have done himself'.²¹⁸ In contrast, Bernays concluded that if there is even a 'breath of criticism of Hoare's action, it will be the end of him and extraordinarily damaging for the government'.²¹⁹ The Duke of Westminster was even more forthright, stating that the charges had 'cornered' Hoare and Derby, and he could not 'see how these rascals can get out of it'.²²⁰

On the 20 April, Hoare contacted Derby to report that his solicitor had assured him they had a good case. Evidently recovered from the shock of four days earlier, Hoare

²¹⁴ Derby to Hoare, 4 Nov. 1933, Derby MSS 920DER(17) 16/1.

²¹⁵ Amery diary, 16 Apr. 1934, p.379.

²¹⁶ Headlam diary, 16 Apr. 1934, p.300.

²¹⁷ Nall to Derby, 25 Apr. 1934, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/43.

²¹⁸ Glyn memoranda, Apr./June 1934, Glynn MSS (Berkshire Record Office) D/EGL/095/5.

²¹⁹ Bernays diary, 17 Apr. 1934, p.127.

²²⁰ Duke of Westminster to Churchill, 17 Apr. 1934, Gilbert, *The Wilderness Years*, p.764.

asserted that he had never been so 'determined to win anything as this affair'.²²¹

However, shortly before this correspondence, Streat detected little sign that the India Secretary, or those around him, appreciated the need for solidarity in this case:

I had lunch with Croft, Private Secretary to Sir Samuel Hoare, who came to my club. He said he thought his boss was alright, meaning that the available evidence would clear him. He seemed to me a trifle indifferent to the peril surrounding Lord Derby, and I pointed out with some little heat that in a show of this kind everybody must stand together – united we stand, divided we fall sort of thing. I convinced him, I think, that it would be no good for Sir Samuel to clear himself if Lord Derby was the subject of an adverse decision, since Lord Derby could only have acted as it were as an agent for Sir Samuel and the government.²²²

If Croft was correct in suggesting that Hoare's mindset at the start of the Privilege Case was one of self-preservation, there is little evidence to suggest it remained that way. Hoare quickly perceived the validity of Streat's contention, acknowledging that even if he was caught on a mere technicality, his position 'will immediately become impossible in the Government'.²²³ With the possibility that his political career was at stake, Hoare had little choice but join Derby in fighting the charges head on.

In taking this decision to confront Churchill's charges Hoare could boast much reason for optimism. Despite Churchill stating his dissatisfaction with the composition of the Committee of Privileges, the government refused to countenance any call for a fresh committee to be formed; Lord Rankeillor maintained that Churchill held a valid grievance, pointing out to Baldwin that five of the committee's members were either

²²¹ Hoare to Derby, 20 Apr. 1934, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/43.

²²² Streat diary, 18 apr. 1934, M. Dupree (ed.), *Lancashire and Whitehall: The Diary of Sir Raymond Streat, vol.1, 1931-39* (Manchester, 1987), p.318.

²²³ Hoare to Willingdon, 20 Apr. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1043-6.

in the government or on the India Committee.²²⁴ However, with the government remaining steadfast, Churchill's repeated requests for a replacement body merely succeeded in alienating several of the committee members. Churchill was also disadvantaged due to the fact he was only in possession of part of the relevant correspondence forming the basis of his case, thus providing much opportunity for the defendants to expose 'holes' in his allegations. Furthermore, although the Committee of Privileges insisted that all documents be made available on request, it was far from straightforward for Churchill's to request particular correspondence if he was not certain of its existence; the Derby Papers include one file marked: 'To be released to Committee of Privileges only on request'.²²⁵ Moreover, many of the charges could be easily refuted by the defendants: for example, the dinner attended by Hoare was made at the request of the MCC, while the Indian Mission's appeal to delay the MCC report was legitimate. The fact that the JSC was adjudged to be merely an advisory committee, as opposed to the judicial body that Churchill believed it to be, also weakened the accusation that Hoare illegitimately influenced committee members.

Nonetheless, Hoare was driven to spend many weeks preparing his defence against Churchill's accusations. The potential consequences spurred him on in his preparations but, with less than a fortnight having passed since he first heard Churchill's accusations, Hoare was describing the burden of work involved becoming intolerable, spending every day 'going through endless files and letters, as to what

²²⁴ Rankeillor to Baldwin, 21 Apr. 1934, Baldwin MSS, vol.169/294.

²²⁵ Derby MSS, 920DER(17).

happened on this day or that day during the last year and a half'.²²⁶ However, according to Butler, the India Secretary remained resolute in his determination to meet the charges head on: 'He is determined to win his case, and certainly realises the effect on his future if he were in any way prejudiced by the findings of the Committee of Privileges'.²²⁷ That said, although the affair was undeniably stressful for both Hoare and Derby, it soon became apparent that the result was not in doubt – both the accused would be cleared.

In all probability, Hoare had been confident of the outcome for some time, spending much of May in preparation for the Commons debate that would inevitably follow the verdict. In what proved to be a perceptive move, Hoare had entreated Amery to speak in the upcoming debate, subsequently granting him access to all the available evidence; Amery concluded that the 'the whole thing was a very unfair attack on him [Hoare]'.²²⁸ On 7 June, the day before the Committee of Privileges was to deliver its verdict, Derby informed Streat that he had heard 'indirectly' that he was to be exonerated.²²⁹ Churchill is also believed to have been made aware of the likely outcome, as there had been reports of his wife 'going about London' saying that Winston had been 'most reluctant to raise the question in the House and that he only did so as he was impelled by a sense of public duty'.²³⁰ When the Committee of Privileges duly acquitted Hoare and Derby from any wrongdoing on 8 June, Churchill was incandescent, pledging to fight for the publication of all the evidence and

²²⁶ Hoare to Willingdon, 27 Apr. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1047-51.

²²⁷ Butler to Brabourne, 26 Apr. 1934, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/192.

²²⁸ Amery diary, 12 May 1934, p.380.

²²⁹ Derby to Streat, 7 June 1934, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/9.

²³⁰ Hoare to Stanley, 7 June 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1077-80.

ignoring all pleas to desist from such action.²³¹ In the allotted debate on 13 June, Churchill remained unrepentant and was finally deflated by Amery who convulsed the House with his masterly putdown: 'fiat justitia ruat caelum – if I can trip up Sam, the Government is bust'.²³²

Although the exoneration of both Hoare and Derby was widely predicted, not all observers were convinced of their innocence. Headlam perceived that technically both Hoare and Derby were in the wrong, as he was unequivocal that no member of a committee should 'persuade or try to persuade any witness to alter evidence submitted to the committee'.²³³ Viscount Snowden, the former Labour Chancellor, a supporter of the White Paper and certainly no friend of Churchill, also cast doubt on the verdict when he informed Sir Archibald Sinclair: 'The House has failed to appreciate the significance of the omissions in the Report of the Committee', and that 'he was definitely of the opinion that a breach of privilege had been committed'.²³⁴ However, despite the scepticism of some, the man arguably central to the affair, Sir Raymond Streat, remained wholly convinced of Hoare's innocence when recording his private views on the matter:

I do not think Sir Samuel Hoare ever put pressure on us to alter the Evidence. The most he did was, after the Mission was decided on, to suggest to Lord Derby to point out privately some dangers he thought the Evidence might create for the Mission. I don't regard this as improper after we had got Lord Derby to urge our

²³¹ Nall to Derby, 9 June 1934, Derby MSS, 920DER(17) 37/10.

²³² Amery diary, 13 June 1934, pp.382-3.

²³³ Headlam diary, 13 June 1934, pp.305-6.

²³⁴ Sinclair to Churchill, 18 June 1934, in I. Hunter (ed.), *Winston and Archie: The Collected Correspondence of Winston Churchill and Archibald Sinclair 1915-1960* (1988), p.203.

interests on Sir S. Hoare. The fact that he didn't follow it up removes the faintest suggestion of pressure.²³⁵

²³⁵ Streat diary, 4 May 1934, p.328.

CHAPTER THREE – AT THE INDIA OFFICE: “PASSING THE BILL”

Even though Hoare was greatly relieved at the not guilty verdict of the Committee of Privileges, the affair had taken its toll on the India Secretary. According to W.P. Crozier of the *Manchester Guardian*, following an interview on the eve of the Privilege Report debate, Hoare appeared: ‘Anxious in both his looks and in his tone. He seemed to me “fine-drawn”, as though he was a nervous man suffering under a heavy burden of anxiety’.²³⁶ This impression was corroborated by Butler, who informed Bernays that Hoare had endured six weeks of sleepless nights over the Privilege affair.²³⁷ Hoare’s angst was perhaps understandable, as it was apparent that any other verdict than that given by the Privilege Committee would have required him to resign. Consequently, Bernays jibed: ‘Poor Hoare, childless and unbending. His career means everything to him’.²³⁸

A further dilemma for Hoare, contiguous with the Privilege Case, was foreboding of a further rupture between London and Delhi in relation to the General Assembly

²³⁶ Extract from interview with Hoare, 12 June 1934, in A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *W.P. Crozier “Off the Record”: Political Interviews 1933-1945* (1973), pp.23-4.

²³⁷ Bernays diary, 20 June 1934, p.144.

²³⁸ Ibid.

elections scheduled for the summer of 1934. Ministers were apprehensive of the possible adverse effect on the India Bill if the Congress Party achieved substantial gains, fearing such an outcome could unsettle the uncommitted Conservatives, both on the backbenches and within the JSC; a direct consequence of the government's decision to endorse indirect elections was a surge in support for the Congress Party. When the cabinet met to discuss this dilemma on 18 April 1934, Hoare informed his cabinet colleagues that the Viceroy was against any delay in holding the elections for fear their postponement would further strengthen Congress. However, Ministers disregarded Delhi's concerns and Hoare was directed to notify the Viceroy that Britain wished him to defer the elections until 1935, preferably after April when the 'Government would know the fate of the India Bill'.²³⁹ The Viceroy was outraged at this intrusion into Indian domestic matters, and informed Hoare that he strongly objected to London's interference. Subsequently, the India Secretary defended the Viceroy's exclusivity, stating that a breach with Delhi at this juncture would only benefit the opponents of the White Paper, both at home and in India. This argument persuaded the cabinet to disavow its hard-line approach to the elections, and the India Secretary was enjoined to inform Delhi that a short delay would suffice, rather than prolonged postponement.²⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Hoare remained appreciative of the cabinet's concerns, subsequently urging Delhi to reflect on the likely impact in Westminster if Congress did achieve success at the polls:

As to the date of the elections, the Cabinet, while accepting your very strong request to hold them this year, did not in any way withdraw from their equally strong view that this course will involve the greatest possible risk to any Government of India Bill. We all take the view that if Congress does well in the

²³⁹ Cabinet 16 (34), 18 Apr. 1934, CAB (79).

²⁴⁰ Cabinet 17 (34), 25 Apr. 1934, CAB (79).

elections and if the moderates join with them in damning the report of the Joint Select Committee, the Parliamentary pressure against proceeding with the Bill will be so formidable that it may well in one way or another destroy the Bill altogether, or at least that part of it that deals with the Centre. I do not think that you have any idea of the strength of the feeling against the Bill in some quarters and the general want of enthusiasm for it. If it looks as if no one in India wants it, then certainly few people here will be inclined to stake the life and future of the Government upon a measure that is not only unpopular but is apparently not going to be worked in India.²⁴¹

Although Hoare had been vindicated by the Privilege Report, the fact remained that the proceedings had caused a two month delay in the proceedings of the JSC. This interruption particularly aggrieved Hoare as it resulted in the final report of the JSC being delayed until after the summer recess, providing opponents of the Bill further opportunity to derail the process. However, Hoare's fears went largely unrealised as the dissidents became (temporarily) demoralised after witnessing Churchill's rout in the Privilege debate. There was also the welcome news that supporters of indirect election had stated their satisfaction with the changes introduced to the Bill; with this issue resolved, the Chairman of the JSC was confident that the uncommitted committee members would support the government when the final report went before the Commons: 'We have broken the back of the Indian work, and the position is sound. Above all, it pleases me that Sam will go into action with Austen and Eustace Percy behind him in the Commons; and in the Lords, Derby and Zetland'.²⁴²

Nevertheless, despite these encouraging developments Hoare continued to be overwrought prior to the publication of the completed JSC Report. In correspondence

²⁴¹ Hoare to Willingdon, 3 May 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1053-7.

²⁴² Linlithgow to Baldwin, 21 July 1934, Baldwin MSS, 106/265.

with Sir George Stanley, he remained uncertain of the Bill's eventual form and was positively nervous that an unfavourable reaction in India could result in serious implications for its passage to the statute book.²⁴³ Furthermore, the India Secretary was becoming increasingly anxious over securing sufficient time in the parliamentary timetable to pass the legislation. With the publication of the JSC Report not expected until November 1934, and a general election anticipated sometime in 1935, there was an increasing danger that the India Bill could run out of parliamentary time; Hoare apprised Delhi that Neville Chamberlain was emphatic the government needed a period of reconciliation with its disaffected elements before 'going to the country'.²⁴⁴ Consequently, he realised it was imperative to hasten the Bill through its remaining parliamentary stages and avoid the patent delaying tactics employed by those opposed to Indian reform if the legislation was to survive.

A potential pitfall for Hoare prior to the publication of the JSC Report was the annual Conservative Party Conference, traditionally held in October. As a member of the JSC, Hoare would not be permitted to speak in the scheduled debate on the White Paper. This also applied to the other members of the JSC, although Hoare was optimistic that the meeting would pass off without incident as Churchill was known to have declined an invitation to attend the conference; Hoare believed the real dissident challenge would emerge in November during the Commons debate on the JSC Report. However, his optimism was found to be wholly misplaced, as Page Croft requested an opportunity for delegates to debate whether or not the government ignored party opinion on vital issues. Although the motion did not mention India, it

²⁴³ Hoare to Stanley, 6 Sep. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1116-20.

²⁴⁴ Hoare to Willingdon, 27 Sep. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1129-35.

was clear that the White Paper was Page Croft's intended target; a large number of delegates voted in support of the motion, with the government barely limping to victory, 543 to 520.²⁴⁵ This result proved acutely embarrassing for Ministers, and resulted in further anxiety for Hoare, who realised the closeness of the vote would undoubtedly reinvigorate Churchill and the IDL prior to the Commons debate on the JSC Report.

The JSC Report was finalised a week after the Conservative Conference ended. During the committee's final deliberations, the dissident Conservatives and the Labour representatives joined forces in voting against the Report, although they possessed insufficient numbers to challenge the majority view. With the draft due for publication in November, Hoare was greatly relieved that the JSC had, to all purposes, successfully completed its remit before the end of 1934.²⁴⁶ Others were less effusive. Though relieved that the Committee stage was nearly at an end, Headlam remained convinced that Hoare was 'leading the party into a mess in his tiresome policy of constitution-making'.²⁴⁷ In correspondence with Baldwin, Salisbury judged the final JSC Report to be a hollow victory for the government: 'I do not believe there was at the end a single member of the Committee who liked the White Paper – not even Sam I suspect'.²⁴⁸ The publication of the JSC Report also failed to end the continuing fissures with Delhi, with Willingdon accusing the government of buckling to reactionary pressure over the insertion of Austen Chamberlain's demands relating to the size of the representative bodies and indirect elections. Fearing a

²⁴⁵ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p.133.

²⁴⁶ Hoare to Stanley, 2 Nov. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1162-7.

²⁴⁷ Headlam diary, 13 Nov. 1934, p.313.

²⁴⁸ Salisbury to Baldwin, 20 Nov. 1934, Baldwin MSS, 106/351-2.

resentful Government of India could undermine the legislation, Hoare issued a sharp rebuttal to such charges:

Nothing is further from the case. ... The changes have been made in every respect because the members of the Committee were convinced of the actual merits of them. If people like Austen and Derby were convinced of the merits of these changes, it stands to reason that there would not be the least chance of getting any Bill through either House if the changes were not made. This is the whole story of the changes and I should be grateful if you could get them put into their proper perspective.²⁴⁹

However, despite refuting the Viceroy's claims, Hoare could not deny that the final JSC Report differed markedly from the original White Paper proposals first outlined in April 1933. That said, he was convinced that only a pragmatic approach could deliver Indian constitutional reform in the face of determined opposition: 'I am certain that we have taken the Conservative Party up to the utmost limit of their endurance and that there can be no question of going further'.²⁵⁰

As the Conservative Party were unable to debate the JSC Report due to its late publication, Baldwin arranged for a special meeting of the Central Council on 4 December 1934 to deflect potential charges that the finalised draft had been deliberately delayed. However, in order to avoid a repeat of October's close vote on the Page Croft motion, the Conservative leadership was determined to preclude complacency. The majority of influential JSC members who had supported Indian constitutional reform were enjoined to promote the government policy, with Austen Chamberlain particularly prominent in cajoling the uncommitted sections of the party

²⁴⁹ Hoare to Willingdon, 23 Nov. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1179-82.

²⁵⁰ Hoare to Brabourne, 28 Nov. 1934, Templewood MSS, VII/4.

to support the Report. In the wake of this stage-management the debate itself proved rather a timid affair; Amery moved a resolution in support of the government policy, while Salisbury merely proposed an amendment opposing the Report. Subsequently, the meeting reverted to supporters of both viewpoints pronouncing their obligatory statements, before Austen Chamberlain delivered a closing speech in favour of the government. The resulting ballot saw the government defeat the opponents of the White Paper, by 1,102 votes to 390.²⁵¹ With the delegates overwhelmingly voting with the government, the dissidents had arguably lost their greatest opportunity to derail the India Bill, and Hoare left the meeting with renewed confidence that there were no obstacles remaining to prevent the legislation reaching the statute book.

The First Reading of the Government of India Bill took place on 12 December 1934. With several members of the die-hard camp, such as Arnold Wilson and P.G. Agnew having defected to the government a week earlier, the government was hopeful that the opposition would be demoralised and offer little resistance.²⁵² However, this optimism proved to be misplaced, as 77 Conservatives joined with the Labour Party in voting against the Bill.²⁵³ Although this still gave the government a healthy majority, Hoare was noticeably downbeat in his post-mortem of events:

The result is not as good as I had expected. For the last week or two it had looked as if things were going much more strongly in our favour. The Whips, therefore, were expecting a better division. The result showed there are many Conservative Members, most of them sitting for safe Conservative seats, who take little part in the debates of the House and who can be moved by no arguments at all. If we

²⁵¹ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p.136.

²⁵² Hoare to Brabourne, 5 Dec. 1934, Templewood MSS, VII/4.

²⁵³ Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, p.173.

could have got the Conservative minority to something in the nature of fifty, it would have greatly helped us in cutting short the discussion of the Bill.²⁵⁴

Notwithstanding the number of Conservatives who voted against the Bill, Hoare judged the actual debate preceding the ballot to have been a success, with Amery, Austen Chamberlain and Eustace Percy all making significant contributions in support of the government. In particular, Simon proved instrumental in championing the Indian reforms whilst successfully repulsing Churchill's attacks; Lady Hoare was particularly effusive in praising Simon for his defence of her husband during one such onslaught.²⁵⁵ The debate in the Lords was similarly well-managed, although this did not prevent opponents of the Bill squeezing the government majority to an uncomfortable degree. The government had nevertheless won the day. Hoare was greatly relieved at the result, informing the Viceroy that although 'Churchill and his friends' had achieved a minor success in the Commons vote, they must have been aware that their only hope of defeating the reforms lay in the Lords, who had (albeit with a narrow majority) also supported the Bill. Hoare, though, continued to display apprehension over the extent of MPs attachment to the India Bill; to strengthen the government's position, Hoare brazenly entreated Willingdon as to whether it was possible to reduce the tariff by five per cent in order to appease Lancashire MPs, should the ongoing trade negotiations fail.²⁵⁶ However, despite this initial anxiety Hoare quickly concluded that the First Reading demonstrated the frailties of the Bill's opponents, and reinforced his belief that a short parliamentary timetable would be sufficient for the passage of the legislation.

²⁵⁴ Hoare to Willingdon, 13 Dec. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1197-1200.

²⁵⁵ Maud Hoare to Simon, Dec. 1934, Simon MSS, 80/144.

²⁵⁶ Hoare to Willingdon, 19 Dec. 1934, Templewood MSS (B), E240/4/1201-6.

At the start of 1935, Hoare was confident that the newly drafted Bill could be circulated to MPs for its' Second Reading by 22 January, and become law by the summer.²⁵⁷ However, despite this optimism two contentious issues were as yet unresolved: India's railways, and the preamble to the new Bill. The government was adamant that the Indian rail network should be included in the list of safeguarded portfolios, and was firmly against Willingdon's suggestion of a separate Railway Board, leading Hoare to admonish the Viceroy over his suggestion: 'There is not the least chance of the House of Commons accepting a Bill that does not safeguard the future of the railways'.²⁵⁸ The Viceroy reluctantly acceded to London's wishes. However, in terms of the other dilemma the Government of India was convinced that the preamble to the new Bill should contain some mention of the 1929 'Dominion Status' declaration, as it had essentially heralded the beginning of the present reforms. Hoare, though, was resistant to this idea, fearing it had the potential to inflame both British and Indian opinion, thus providing succour to the Bill's opponents.²⁵⁹ Subsequently, a compromise was reached whereby the original 1929 words were deemed acceptable, albeit in an amended format so as not to cause any offence in either country.²⁶⁰

A further worrying moment for the government was the news that Churchill's son, Randolph, was preparing to contest the Wavertree by-election with IDL backing at the end of January 1935. Hoare was confident that Randolph's efforts would result in both his and the IDL's humiliation as he saw little 'serious movement' of Conservative

²⁵⁷ Hoare to Willingdon, 3 Jan. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1207-12.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Hoare to Willingdon, 17 Jan. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1219-23.

²⁶⁰ Hoare to Willingdon, 7Feb. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1234-7.

support to the young Churchill.²⁶¹ (The dissident tactic of fighting by-elections had already been tried and largely abandoned during 1934 after only mixed success.) In the event, Randolph's intervention in the contest was unsuccessful, despite the belated support of his father. However, there was considerable anguish at Conservative Central Office, as the 10,000 votes polled by Randolph saw the official Conservative candidate come in behind Labour. Nonetheless, Hoare managed to put a positive spin on the loss of Wavertree during correspondence with Willingdon, by suggesting: 'The little brute Randolph had caused both his father and himself a good deal of harm in the party, as they had handed victory to the Labour candidate'.²⁶² The India Secretary's judgement turned out to be most perceptive, as unfortunately for Winston Churchill, and vice versa for the government, Randolph was undeterred by his failure at Wavertree; several weeks after his defeat at Wavertree Randolph was prominent in supporting another rebel candidate at the Norwood by-election, further injuring his father's reputation at a critical moment in the India Bill's passage through parliament.

In contrast to Randolph's delusions of grandeur, of far greater concern to Hoare was the news emerging from India, that the states of Patiala and Hyderabad were seeking a postponement of the Bill's upcoming committee stage in order to further examine the implications of federation. The government had long been fearful that dissident elements were attempting to influence the Princes into rejecting the federal scheme; the majority of these ventures had failed to bear fruit, as illustrated by the ill-fated

²⁶¹ Hoare to Willingdon, 31 Jan. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1234-7.

²⁶² Hoare to Willingdon, 7 Feb. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1234-7.

mission to India by Lymington and Courtauld in February 1934.²⁶³ Nonetheless, there remained much trepidation amongst Ministers that the IDL was continually engaging in further efforts to influence the Princes, as it was generally acknowledged that they held the key to the federal principle at the heart of the India Bill. Agitated by this development, Hoare made it clear to Willingdon (in order that he conveyed it to the Princes) that suspension of the committee was not an option: 'If we postpone the Committee stage of the Bill, it is my considered view that we should lose the Bill altogether'.²⁶⁴ According to the India Secretary, the Princes would have ample opportunities to raise their reservations during the ongoing parliamentary process.

The Second Reading commenced on 6 February, with the government achieving victory in the division five days later. By this stage, dissident opposition had become much less effective in challenging the well-marshalled government proponents of the Bill, and the vote passed off without incident. Nonetheless, Hoare was clearly vexed that the number of Conservatives voting against the Bill showed no sign of declining, amid concerns that it indicated signs of despondency on the government benches:

The Second Reading is very much as I expected. There are about eighty Conservatives who for one reason or another are irreconcilable. Many of them detest the Prime Minister and Simon, and many of them have personal grievances. Argument does not count with them at all. The result is that we must expect their opposition upon every occasion. What is more formidable than them is the general feeling of defeatism that has recently spread over the Government supporters. I hope and believe that it will not react seriously upon the India Bill.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Earl of Portsmouth, *A Knot of Roots* (1965), pp.162-184.

²⁶⁴ Hoare to Willingdon, 7 Feb. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1234-7.

²⁶⁵ Hoare to Willingdon, 13 Feb. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1238-41.

Another positive outcome for the government was the welcome news that the principal opponents of the Bill, including Churchill, had agreed to a timetable for the final stages of the Bill; the committee stage, whereby the whole House could examine the Bill in detail, was expected to last up to 30 days. Speaking to Crozier of the *Manchester Guardian*, Hoare nonetheless stressed his aversion to this consultative stage, as he had 'been over the ground so often during the last four years' that there was little he could usefully add.²⁶⁶ Similarly, Churchill was also becoming weary of the long debates over India, particularly as it was increasingly self-evident that opponents to the Bill were too few in number to affect the government's course.²⁶⁷

The committee stage of the Bill took place between 19 February and 15 May. As he expected, Hoare found the effort of re-examining all the clauses and sections of the India Bill immensely arduous: 'It is very hard work arguing constitutional questions of great complexity in an ignorant and rather turbulent House, and it is peculiarly difficult to avoid in the rough and tumble of debate saying things that will be misunderstood here or in India'.²⁶⁸ Hoare was also troubled by persistent reports alleging the Bill's opponents were increasingly active in fermenting trouble with the Princes. In one such instance, Churchill was believed to be responsible for propagating rumours which accused the government of bribing several princely states in order to keep them 'on board' with the federal aspects of the Bill. Though Hoare could himself discount this instance as an obvious intrigue on Churchill's part, the fact that he felt

²⁶⁶ Hoare interview, 14 Feb. 1935, *Off the Record*, pp.31-2.

²⁶⁷ Chartwell Bulletin No.6, 23 Feb. 1935, in M. Soames (ed.), *Speaking for Themselves: The Personal Letters of Winston and Clementine Churchill* (1988), pp.385-6.

²⁶⁸ Hoare to Willingdon, 22 Feb. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1242-6.

compelled to reassure the Princes that the charges was groundless, illustrates the government's constant fear of such rumours gaining credibility in India.²⁶⁹

Whatever the effectiveness of this dissident rumour-mill, Hoare had good reason for unease in respect to the Princes' disposition to federation; maintaining their commitment to federation became Hoare's major pre-occupation during the remainder of his tenure as India Secretary. During the Princes' Conference at the end of February 1935, news filtered through to London that a significant number of speeches and resolutions were highly critical of the federal aspect of the India Bill. Ministers were horrified at this apparent *volte-face* of some of the Indian states towards federation, leading Hoare to worriedly inform the Viceroy that scepticism amongst his cabinet colleagues was growing over the wisdom of proceeding with the Bill in the face of such opposition.²⁷⁰ Especially galling for Hoare was the realisation that Churchill and his allies appeared to have advanced knowledge of this latest development. Apprising Willingdon of the government's unease, Hoare bemoaned the cursory nature of the information reaching the cabinet regarding the Princes' actions, in stark contrast to Churchill, who seemed to have almost a 'direct line', to the conference proceedings.²⁷¹

Churchill's new-found ability to pre-empt the government over events in India caused much consternation in the India Office, and fuelled speculation in Westminster that disaffected officials in Delhi were indeed sympathetic to the Princes' reluctance to

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Hoare to Willingdon, 1 Mar. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1247-52.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

abdicate their power. Sensing the danger of such rumours taking hold in London, Hoare swiftly alerted Willingdon of the risks in allowing such conjecture to go unchecked:

The impression is widespread here that many of your advisors, not being keenly interested in All-India Federation, are imagining that if the Federation drops out we shall fall back upon reforms for British India. If this is the case, I hope you will disillusion them. If the Princes or any other section of Indian opinion makes us drop the Bill, there is not the least chance of our introducing another. Certainly I myself would have nothing to do with any such expedient. The dropping of the Bill might very well mean the fall of the Government, but it will certainly mean the end of Indian legislation for this Parliament and probably for many years to come.²⁷²

Hoare's dismay over the Princes increased in the wake of speculation that a memorandum, highlighting the reservations of Patiala, Bikaner and Bhopal, was circulating in India. As these rumours reached London, a growing despondency took hold among the supporters of Indian reform, with Hoare becoming increasingly fearful for the future of the Bill if the criticisms in this document were authenticated:

Winston and his friends are convinced that Federation is dead and many of our own supporters are seriously asking whether it is worth going on with the Bill. Winston is certain to bring up again the issue on Tuesday or Wednesday and if I cannot meet the House with a clear and definite statement of the position, there may well be a landslide against us.²⁷³

Although greatly perturbed at this sudden reversal in fortunes, the India Secretary was adamant that a straight denial of the rumours would be unlikely to quell the parliamentary unrest, asserting that only a full disclosure of the Princes'

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Hoare to Willingdon, 8 Mar. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1253-5.

memorandum would enable Ministers to counter the impression of government duplicity.

The Viceroy was similarly alarmed at the abrupt deterioration of the Bill's chances due to the rumours emanating from the Princes' Conference, although he was certain his officials were 'blameless' in the matter and were indeed 'working extremely hard to forward the legislation'.²⁷⁴ Moreover, he accused the government in London of being panicked by baseless rumours, with the supposed memorandum merely reiterating the Princes' original stance of agreeing to federation only when satisfied of its practicality.²⁷⁵ According to Willingdon it was common knowledge that Hyderabad and Patiala had some reservations, and it was only natural that these issues would be raised at the Princes' Conference. Furthermore, the Viceroy informed Hoare that the source of Churchill's information was an undercover *Morning Post* correspondent reporting out of the 'closed' conference.²⁷⁶ Why he was allowed to do so escaped the Viceroy's mention.

The government's decision to publish the Princes' memorandum brought the India Office some relief, as it lessened the impact of Churchill unveiling further damaging revelations. Nonetheless, Hoare admitted that the government was 'walking on a volcano' regarding the Princes, with recent events having greatly 'disquieted' his cabinet colleagues.²⁷⁷ Forwarding his reply, Willingdon gave the India Secretary more cause for optimism, informing him that the representatives of Patiala, Bikaner and

²⁷⁴ Willingdon to Hoare, 11 Mar. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/8/685-7.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Hoare to Willingdon, 15 Mar. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1261-3.

Baroda had all pledged their continued support of federation; consequently, Willingdon believed that all the Princes would ultimately join the scheme.²⁷⁸ Despite this encouraging news from India, Hoare continued to fear the onset of apathy amongst the more lukewarm supporters of the Bill. This anxiety was inflated by the increasingly disturbing news emanating from Europe, as Hoare confided to Willingdon: 'Many Conservatives who are doubtful about the Bill are wondering whether in the face of the German situation it is wise to go on with a programme that divides the party'.²⁷⁹ However, despite his obvious angst over these mounting problems, Hoare's determination in 'pushing' the Bill through its committee stage earned him much praise from his fellow Ministers. Corresponding with the Viceroy, Simon pronounced himself greatly impressed by the India Secretary: 'I should like to say how extremely well Sam Hoare has been doing. He has undoubtedly established a far bigger reputation as a parliamentarian than he ever had before'.²⁸⁰ Not surprisingly, officials at the India Office shared this assessment with Butler inflating the Foreign Secretary's judgement still further, claiming that Hoare's 'handling of the India question has shown him to be above the rest of the Cabinet'.²⁸¹

By late March 1935 the strain of steering the India Bill through parliament was beginning to tell on the India Secretary. Having endured many weeks of anxiety over the Princes, combined with the heavy workload associated with the committee stage, Hoare was close to physical exhaustion. Clearly requiring some respite, he informed

²⁷⁸ Willingdon to Hoare, 18 Mar. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/8/689-91.

²⁷⁹ Hoare to Willingdon, 22 Mar. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1266-9.

²⁸⁰ Simon to Willingdon, 5 Mar. 1935, Simon MSS, 82/6-10.

²⁸¹ Butler to Brabourne, 8 Mar. 1935, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/68.

the Viceroy on 12 April that he intended to spend a few days recuperating at his Norfolk residence:

I am off tomorrow to Norfolk where I will try to get fit for the next part of the round.

The whole affair has now become a kind of war of attrition in which physical endurance is replacing mental ability. ... I have been feeling very seedy all this week with the result that on Wednesday evening I came back with a high temperature. The temperature has gone down a little, but has not yet subsided entirely, and I am feeling a complete wreck.²⁸²

Appreciating the pressure Hoare had been under, Willingdon urged the Secretary of State to take all possible care of himself whilst affording him the assurance that 'things are all perfectly peaceful out here'.²⁸³ However, despite Hoare's assertion that he merely needed a few days rest, it quickly became apparent that he had underestimated his physical deterioration; two days into her husband's convalescence, Lady Hoare apprised Butler that his exhaustion was merely a symptom of further health problems:

I went in to see Maud last night before dinner. There is no doubt that Sam is rather queer. His temperature remains high and won't go down. She says she has seen three doctors, who all say that this is a phenomenon they have noticed this year in causes of exhaustion after flu, and I suppose that we must take it that this is so here.²⁸⁴

Lady Hoare also revealed to Butler that she thought her husband's judgement to be impaired when he was overtired, although the Under-Secretary reassured her that this had not been his experience. Significantly, the fact that the India Secretary was suffering from more than fatigue came as no surprise to Neville Chamberlain, as he

²⁸² Hoare to Willingdon, 12 Apr. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1280-3.

²⁸³ Willingdon to Hoare, 22 Apr. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/8/719.

²⁸⁴ Butler to Brabourne, 17 Apr. 1935, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/54.

believed his friend to have been concealing the true state of his health for some time.²⁸⁵ Chamberlain, however, was the exception, with most of the India Secretary's closest colleagues having little perception of the gravity of his health problems, although this could conceivably be contributed to the fact the press only reported the India Secretary to be experiencing exhaustion; Beaverbrook only discovered the extent of his friend's condition after reading a report in a foreign paper, alleging Hoare to be suffering from congestion of the lungs.²⁸⁶ Hoare's reply to the Press Lord afforded not a little credence to this diagnosis:

I am afraid that I have had a rather bad turn. I was greatly run down as a result of four or five years work and worry. The result was that I became an easy prey to germs of every kind. Fortunately the congestion that looked bad at one time has now dissipated and my temperature is normal. For nearly three weeks my temperature was very high and I could not have felt more ill than I did.²⁸⁷

The seriousness of Hoare's illness prevented him from returning to his ministerial role for much longer than the two weeks he had initially envisaged, leading Baldwin to reassure him that the Bill was proceeding as planned through the committee stage: 'You have a good team looking after the India Bill in the House of Commons, and you must keep your mind at ease'.²⁸⁸ Superficially, there may well have been a degree of surreptitious speculation that Hoare was unnecessarily prolonging his absence to avoid returning to the 'dreaded' committee stage, although there no substantive evidence to suggest malingering; the fact that Hoare's ill-health forced him to miss the King's Silver Jubilee celebrations on 6 May makes one sceptical towards any

²⁸⁵ Neville Chamberlain to Maud Hoare, 17 Apr. 1935, Anderson MSS.

²⁸⁶ Beaverbrook to Hoare, 26 Apr. 1935, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/307a.

²⁸⁷ Hoare to Beaverbrook, 29 Apr. 1935, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/307a.

²⁸⁸ MacDonald to Hoare, 30 Apr. 1935, Templewood MSS, VII/3.

such accusation. That said, the committee stage had been concluded by the time Hoare informed Willingdon of his impending return to official duties: 'I am glad to say that I am now practically recovered. I saw my doctor yesterday who tells me that provided I am reasonably careful, I can start normal work on Monday'.²⁸⁹ Somewhat surprisingly, being 'reasonably careful' did not preclude the India Secretary from engaging in a spot of skating, as Butler witnessed him on the ice on the very day he had apprised Willingdon of his imminent return.²⁹⁰ Significantly, Hoare's return at this moment gave him the opportunity to preside over both the publication of the Report (which had been completed during the committee stage), and the Third Reading of the India Bill. Writing to Brabourne, Hoare appeared particularly eager to proceed with the final stages of the Bill, exhibiting not a little sense of his own achievement:

If we really get a Bill of 450 Clauses and hundreds of pages of schedules through by Whitsuntide without a guillotine, without the closure once demanded and with every point fully discussed, it will be a unique event in the history of Parliamentary institutions.²⁹¹

Taken aback by Hoare's energy after such a sustained bout of illness, Brabourne appeared somewhat sceptical of this sudden recovery in the India Secretary's physical fortunes: 'You will really have to take a real rest as soon as the Bill is finally through'.²⁹² Undoubtedly there was an impression amongst contemporaries, not exclusive to the Governor of Bombay, that Hoare had rushed his return.

²⁸⁹ Hoare to Willingdon, 16 May 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1288-99.

²⁹⁰ Butler to Brabourne, 16 May 1935, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/43.

²⁹¹ Hoare to Brabourne, 16 May 1935, Templewood MSS, VII/4.

²⁹² Brabourne to Hoare, 20 May 1935, Templewood MSS, VII/4.

The increasing speculation that a cabinet reshuffle was only a matter of weeks away may afford some credence to the aforementioned assertion that the India Secretary had imprudently hastened his return from illness; with the India Bill having almost passed through its parliamentary stages, Hoare was rumoured to be one of a number of Ministers thought to be changing office. Nonetheless, he remained determined not to allow speculation to detract from his responsibility in steering the Bill through its Third Reading, and even stressed annoyance that conjecture over his future could overshadow the final stages of what was to all accounts an epic piece of legislation:

I cannot say anything definite about the reconstruction of the Government. The world is buzzing with rumours and it looks to me as if the change must take place during the next ten days or a fortnight. If they involve any reaction upon Indian affairs, I will send you a personal wire. In the meanwhile it is an awkward situation in which several Ministers do not know whether they are going on in their present Departments or, indeed, whether they are going on at all. The sooner it is over the better it will be for everyone.²⁹³

The Third Reading stage of the India Bill took place on the eve of the cabinet reconstruction (5 June), with the government again gaining a substantial majority. On gaining its Royal Assent at the start of August, the All-India Federation Bill indeed represented a unique feat in British parliamentary history. As forecast though, the originator of much of that achievement had by then departed the India Office for a larger stage.

²⁹³ Hoare to Willingdon, 31 May 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1307-9.

CHAPTER FOUR : HOARE MOVES TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Notwithstanding the speculation that Hoare was destined for a change of portfolio in the reconstruction of the National Government, the political situation in the spring of 1935 was hardly propitious to his aspirations for higher office. In late February 1935, Baldwin had arranged to exchange offices with MacDonald after adroitly harnessing Ministerial apprehension over Lloyd George's resurgence to allow him to renege on an earlier promise to retire simultaneously with his Labour counterpart.²⁹⁴ With Baldwin acknowledged as the Prime Minister in waiting, his 'heir apparent', Neville Chamberlain, remained resolutely entrenched at the Treasury, thereby blocking any movement at the head of government. Similarly, stewardship of both the remaining principal departments had seemingly been predetermined weeks before the actual reconstruction. Anthony Eden had long been forecast as the favourite, ahead of Lord Halifax, to replace the ineffectual Simon at the Foreign Office. Moreover, the enduring desire to maintain the appeal of a national unity government, and the not inconsequential factor of a forthcoming general election, meant that, far from being discarded, Simon was forecast to be awarded a position of comparable status, which

²⁹⁴ Smart, *The National Government*, p.108-13.

patently implied the Home Office.²⁹⁵ Therefore, the main ministries had ostensibly been allocated from the moment MacDonald decided to step down as Prime Minister.

In light of these limited opportunities, Hoare increasingly indicated his desire to oversee the implementation of the India Bill, and was accordingly attracted to the possibility of succeeding Willingdon when his tenure as Viceroy ended in April 1936.²⁹⁶ However, it is difficult to determine whether this desire to become Viceroy was genuine, for although Hoare afforded the aspiration much prominence in his memoirs, he must have been conscious of the patent drawbacks in seeking such a posting. Firstly, it is questionable whether he would have jeopardised his prospects of the Premiership by accepting the required peerage and relocating to Delhi for five years.²⁹⁷ Hoare's wife evinced this concern, and was known to be less than enthralled at the prospect of moving to India.²⁹⁸ Moreover, such an appointment would have been problematic because of the King's opposition to a serving India Secretary succeeding to the Viceroyalty, over concern it would set a precedent.²⁹⁹ Therefore, although Hoare appeared to covet a move to India in the weeks

²⁹⁵ Simon had pre-empted his removal from the Foreign Office by requesting a move to the Home Office: Middlemas & Barnes, *Baldwin*, p.821.

²⁹⁶ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.108; this aspiration to succeed Willingdon is given further credence by Neville Chamberlain alluding that Hoare was in line for a new position, in addition to a well deserved holiday (there would be some months between a reshuffle and the new posting in Delhi): Neville Chamberlain to Maud Hoare, 17 Apr. 1935, Anderson MSS.

²⁹⁷ Baldwin was 68 when he became Prime Minister for the third time in June 1935 and had stated his intention to retire shortly after the forthcoming General Election; Neville Chamberlain was only two years younger and belonged to a notoriously 'short-lived' family; in contrast Hoare was only 55 at the time of the government reconstruction.

²⁹⁸ Butler to Brabourne, 31 May 1935, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/39; Lady Hoare has often been depicted as extremely ambitious for her husband, and may well have been influenced by comments from Beaverbrook et al. that he 'will be Prime Minister one day': Beaverbrook to Maud Hoare, 6 Oct. 1934, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/307b.

²⁹⁹ Wigram Memorandum, 20 May 1935, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, p.331-2.

preceding the anticipated reconstruction, it is unclear whether this was a sincere wish to become the next Viceroy, or a political tactic designed to pressurise Baldwin into awarding him one of the more prestigious offices of state.

Although this suggestion of manoeuvre can only be conjecture, Hoare must have been disgruntled that his abiding desire for the Foreign Office was frustrated by the pre-eminence of Eden and Halifax. This was undoubtedly true, as he had hankered after the post for many years:³⁰⁰ before the 1929 general election, the Chief of the Air Staff had reputedly informed Sir Maurice Hankey that Hoare 'was dying to go to the Foreign Office'.³⁰¹ Two years later, during the formation of the National Government, he was again linked to the same position before accepting the India portfolio. Consequently, Hoare became preoccupied with Indian constitutional reform, though he would certainly have been cognisant of Simon's continued 'troubles' at the Foreign Office. Somewhat surprisingly, this latent aspiration was also evident to his close officials at the India Office, with Butler attesting to Hoare's ambitions for a move to the Foreign Office (after Neville Chamberlain had disassociated himself from a press campaign in late 1934, urging the Chancellor to replace Simon): 'Sam would like to go there, if it could be managed'.³⁰² Surprisingly, this predilection for the Foreign Office fails to warrant a mention in his recollections, with Hoare blithely stating 'he had not given a thought to the Foreign Office' prior to the government reconstruction.³⁰³ Butler, though, rather contradicts this assertion as he suggests

³⁰⁰ Hoare's experience gained in wartime Italy and Russia, in addition to his involvement in international affairs after 1918 both as a backbencher and Minister, arguably made him feel that the Foreign Office was the department most suited to his talents: Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, p.180.

³⁰¹ Jones diary, 9 May 1929, T. Jones, *Whitehall Diaries, vol.2, 1926-1930* (1969), p.184.

³⁰² Butler to Brabourne, 20 dec. 1934, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/89.

³⁰³ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.108.

that Hoare only began contemplating the Viceroyalty after it became apparent that Eden and Halifax were the main contenders for the Foreign Office.³⁰⁴ Even though this could be merely an oversight on Hoare's part, the omission arguably makes him appear somewhat disingenuous in his yearning to move to India prior to the reconstruction, and consequently arouses an element of suspicion as to his conduct during May 1935.

Whatever the truth behind this suspicion of intrigue, it could not have escaped Baldwin's notice that Hoare's departure would represent a significant blow to the government, as he had shown himself to be one of its most competent Ministers' since its formation in 1931. Neville Chamberlain almost certainly concurred with this judgement, as Hoare was his principal ally in cabinet. Moreover, with senior Conservatives also calling for Hoare's continuation in the cabinet, the news that Halifax had suddenly come out in favour of the India Secretary succeeding Simon provided further ammunition to the Westminster 'rumour-mill'.³⁰⁵ Nonetheless, despite this apparent manoeuvring behind the scenes, the majority of Conservative MPs still favoured Eden as Simon's successor; after speaking with Baldwin on 16 May, the Lord Privy Seal had no reason to doubt that this was still the case.³⁰⁶ That said, there was an undeniable avidity to the India Secretary that same day, as he informed close colleagues of his imminent return to work amid determination to complete the Bill before Whitsuntide (the anticipated date of Baldwin's succession) – hardly actions of a man staring into a possible political abyss.³⁰⁷ Subsequently, the

³⁰⁴ Butler to Brabourne, 3 May 1935, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/49.

³⁰⁵ Butler to Brabourne, 9 May 1935, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/48.

³⁰⁶ Earl of Avon, *The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators* (1962), p.216.

³⁰⁷ Hoare to Brabourne, 16 May 1935, Templewood MSS, VII/4.

India Secretary's return to official duties, three weeks before Baldwin was due to name his cabinet, led to an increasing perception in Westminster that Hoare and Eden were now involved in a race for the Foreign Office.³⁰⁸

The reminiscences of both men are remarkably similar in their accounts of how Hoare eventually won the 'battle' to become Foreign Secretary. Eden claims he was told by Sir Maurice Hankey on 5 June that MacDonald (still the Prime Minister) had confirmed he would succeed Simon.³⁰⁹ On discovering this was not the case, Eden maintained that Baldwin had indeed intended to offer him the Foreign Office, but was dissuaded at the last minute by Neville Chamberlain and the Editor of *The Times*, Geoffrey Dawson.³¹⁰ Correspondingly, Hoare stated that Baldwin asked him on 5 June whether he would prefer the Foreign Office or the Viceroyalty. Hoare chose the Viceroyalty.³¹¹ Baldwin promised to consider his response – which possibly gave rise to MacDonald's assumption that Eden would become Foreign Secretary. Hoare states that Baldwin saw him again on the following day and duly informed him, that after consultation with several of his close colleagues, he preferred him to go to the Foreign Office. Unknown to Hoare, a possible contributory factor was a last ditch letter to Neville Chamberlain from Maud Hoare, urging the Chancellor to use his influence to prevent her husband going to India:

The Viceroyalty will have to be filled by next winter at latest. If it is to be offered to him I doubt his refusal though it would result in a peerage and the end of active politics. From what Sam has told me of your talks to him at different times I believe you think this route as great a mistake as I do as I write on this assumption. But if I

³⁰⁸ Channon diary, 29 May 1935, R. R. James (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon* (1967), p.34.

³⁰⁹ Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p.217.

³¹⁰ Ibid. p.219.

³¹¹ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.109.

am wrong in this, will you please burn all this letter and think no more about it. If you agree however I know your advice and influence will carry far more weight with him than anyone's both on personal and public grounds. ... I believe so firmly that the future of the country is in both your hands ... Naturally I have not told Sam that I am writing to you.³¹²

Although it is impossible to determine the impact of Lady Hoare's letter on the decision to appoint her husband Foreign Secretary, it does shed light on his frame of mind immediately prior to the naming of the new cabinet – and demonstrates that he was immune to his wife's persuasions. The fact that Hoare had opted for the Viceroyalty on 5 June when presented with an opportunity to move to the Foreign Office also goes some way to undermine accusations that he was 'playing one off against the other', despite the fact that this had been Butler's view only a week previously.³¹³ It is conceivable that Baldwin's reticence in nominating Simon's successor during the preceding weeks led Hoare to conclude that India was probably his best option, consequently resigning himself to this outcome by the end of May. However, there is evidence to suggest that Baldwin had actually decided in favour of Hoare almost three weeks before offering him the post, as he had informed the King's Secretary that Eden would remain more suitably employed in Geneva, with the Foreign Secretary stationed in London.³¹⁴ Neville Chamberlain may well have been apprised of this assessment as he later confided to his sister that Eden would be disappointed in his bid for the Foreign Office.³¹⁵ Nevertheless, despite this minor indiscretion the Chancellor obviously remained silent regarding his leader's designs, and Hoare appeared oblivious of Baldwin's decision until the last.

³¹² Maud Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 6 June 1935, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/28/21.

³¹³ Butler to Brabourne, 31 May 1935, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/39; in the same letter Butler claimed that Hoare had always insisted he would accept the Foreign Office if it was offered to him.

³¹⁴ Wigram Memorandum, 20 May 1935, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, p.331-2.

³¹⁵ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 26 May 1935, NCDL, 4, p.137.

Although Hoare accepted Baldwin's offer of the Foreign Office, the poignant tone of his final missive to Willingdon attest to the possibility he may have preferred to retain his links with India (although conceivably Hoare was merely being respectful to the incumbent):

I was genuinely sorry to send you the telegram saying that I was leaving the India Office. No one ever sought a job less than I have sought the Foreign Office. I should have been happy to stay on here or to let my name be a candidate in the list for your successor. The powers that be, however, will otherwise and greatly as I am oppressed by the job, I could not refuse it, particularly in the way it was put to me. Although I have had a very hard time at the India Office and it has been unpleasant fighting with ones Conservative friends, I cannot exaggerate my regret at leaving office.³¹⁶

His appointment received mixed reactions when the new cabinet was announced on 7 June, with views on Eden somewhat dictating the judgement on Hoare's promotion to the Foreign Office. Amery was delighted, heralding the new Foreign Secretary as Baldwin's 'best appointment' as it kept out Eden;³¹⁷ contrastingly, the Chief of the General Staff disagreed, thinking Hoare 'ill-placed', with Eden being the much better equipped to succeed in the role.³¹⁸ Significantly, even those relatively close to Hoare were less than optimistic when considering how he would fare in his new post. Butler feared there would be much criticism of the new appointment amidst the possibility that the continuing antagonism surrounding the India Bill could follow its author to the Foreign Office; nonetheless, he remained confident Hoare would not be intimidated

³¹⁶ Hoare to Willingdon, 7 June 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1310-12.

³¹⁷ Amery diary, 8 June 1935, p.395-6.

³¹⁸ Pownall diary, 6 June 1935: B. Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall*, vol.1, 1933-1940 (1972), p.74.

by this prospect.³¹⁹ At the same time, Hoare's sister informed her sister-in-law she was convinced her brother would enjoy his new posting, although it would be naive of him to think dictators any more reasonable than the duplicitous Princes who had caused him so much trouble only months earlier.³²⁰ In contrast to these lukewarm comments, Beaverbrook was much more forthcoming in extolling his faith in the new Foreign Secretary:

You have been raised on high by capacity and character. I am convinced that you will be raised higher still, maybe to the highest place of all, by the same qualities.

Your stay at the Foreign Office will be memorable. Your problems are great. Your opportunities are greater.³²¹

Beaverbrook's words proved to be highly perceptive, although not in the manner the author intended. The first of these problems was inevitable from the moment that Hoare accepted the post: what to do about Eden? Baldwin's idea, as he had outlined to the King's Secretary on 20 May, was for the Foreign Secretary and Eden to work together, with the latter based primarily at the League of Nations in Geneva and reporting back to the Minister in London. However, with Eden's ego undoubtedly bruised by his failure to 'land' the Foreign Office, alongside his firmly-held view that Hoare was unsuited to his new role, this would doubtlessly be a difficult proposition in practice. Moreover, Eden had informed Baldwin during their discussion on 16 May that he was not prepared to continue serving under another Foreign Secretary, as he had done with Simon.³²² In spite of these obvious impediments to a close working relationship, the new Prime Minister apprised Eden of his preferred arrangement only

³¹⁹ Butler to Brabourne, 6 June 1935, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/37.

³²⁰ Annie to Maud Hoare, 8 June 1935, Templewood MSS, AND/7.

³²¹ Beaverbrook to Hoare, 10 June 1935, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/307b.

³²² Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p.216.

hours after discovering Hoare was to succeed Simon. Recalling the conversation in his memoirs, Eden stated that Baldwin brushed aside his objections to serving under Hoare under the pretext that: 'Conditions were so difficult now at the Foreign Office and work so heavy that he had decided two men were needed there. I would be in the cabinet and carry some special title to designate my work, such as Minister for League of Nations Affairs'.³²³ In the event, it became clear that Baldwin had given little thought to the technicalities involved in this arrangement, simply suggesting that Eden organise the arrangements with Hoare forthwith. Similarly, Baldwin was loathe to involve himself in any protracted discussion with Hoare on the matter, merely conveying a simple note to him on the day that he was given the Foreign Office, stating: 'I have seen the young man and he has promised to speak to you as he has done to me'.³²⁴

The principal problem inherent in the arrangement dictated by Baldwin was manifest: in a department with two ministers, where would the parameters of responsibility lie? On meeting with Hoare on 6 June, Eden emphasised his fear that due to the fact that international relations often necessitated brisk decision-making, the Foreign Secretary would be prone to take unilateral decisions, only informing him after the event; Eden deprecated the fact that he would be obliged to both defend and share responsibility for decisions in which he had no input, believing it could only have a detrimental effect on the relationship between himself and the Foreign Secretary.³²⁵ Hoare was mindful of Eden's disquiet and promised to impress on Baldwin the importance of a clear *modus operandi* to delineate their individual responsibilities.

³²³ Ibid. p.217.

³²⁴ Baldwin to Hoare, 6 June 1935, Templewood MSS, VIII/1.

³²⁵ Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p.218.

However, before this could be brought to the Prime Minister's attention, another complication emerged which further marred the Foreign Office arrangement. The announcement of the new cabinet on 7 June had seen Eden's new position described as Minister without Portfolio for League of Nations Affairs, which immediately alerted the Attorney General, Sir Thomas Inskip, into doubting its constitutional legality. Principally, Inskip's objection centred on the discrepancy in Eden's new title: could a Minister without Portfolio indeed have a portfolio (the League of Nations)? Hurriedly, this oversight was rectified by dispensing with 'without portfolio' from Eden's ministerial title. In the wake of this solution, Hoare and Eden also managed to agree to a demarcation of duties after a draft outlining their responsibilities was provided by one of the Foreign Secretary's former officials at the India Office.³²⁶ A further oversight in the arrangement was also swiftly resolved; legislation was required to formalise the position of Eden's new Under-Secretary, Lord Cranborne, as the Foreign Office now had two ministers in that position rather than the mandatory one. Although all these problems were of a relatively minor nature, they were certainly discomforting for Hoare as it made the new Foreign Office arrangement appear distinctly amateurish, in addition to squandering precious time. Nevertheless, addressing these unforeseen difficulties did compel Hoare and Eden to clarify their positions, and surprisingly the two men worked well together. Neville Chamberlain, for one, was suitably impressed with the result:

The F.O. arrangement would not work with everyone but Sam is very clever at getting his own way without giving offence and he has laid down the lines and got Eden to agree to them. He is quite determined (and of course very properly) that there shall be only one Foreign Secretary and one policy and though Eden is

³²⁶ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.136.

naturally disappointed he has I suppose been given to understand that subject to those two conditions he shall have a pretty free hand.³²⁷

Despite the fact that Hoare and Eden declared themselves satisfied with the demarcation of their responsibilities, there was still much disquiet in Westminster and the country at large over diarchy in the Foreign Office at a time of international unrest. This apprehension replicated misgivings regarding the previous regime at the department; Eden's role at the League of Nations whilst Lord Privy Seal had elicited alarmist headlines suggesting Britain had fatuously adopted "two Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs".³²⁸ Endeavouring to avert a similar scenario, Baldwin took to the airwaves to expound his belief that, far from weakening the Foreign Office, having a Minister both in London and Geneva would provide for greater representation of foreign affairs in government decision-making:

I have deliberately devised this new procedure in order to give special emphasis to the importance which His Majesty's Government attach to our membership of the League of Nations. ... Foreign policy is, of course, indivisible, and there must be unity in its direction. There is, however, more than enough work for two Cabinet Ministers, and without in any way undermining this essential unity of policy, the Cabinet will gain by having amongst its members a Minister who will be in the closest touch with the League.³²⁹

In spite of Baldwin's attempts to draw a line under any anxiety regarding the new Foreign Office structure, many MPs remained sceptical about diarchy. Austen Chamberlain, for one, was known to be dubious of the arrangement, particularly the ambiguity surrounding Foreign Office responsibility for answering parliamentary

³²⁷ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 10 June 1935, NCDL, 4, p.138-9.

³²⁸ Simon to MacDonald, 10 Jan. 1934, Simon MSS, 78/10-11.

³²⁹ Radio broadcast by Baldwin, 8 June 1935, *The Listener Magazine*, 19 June 1935.

questions – would a League of Nations question be addressed to Eden or Hoare?

Appreciating the difficulties that such an eminent Conservative and former Foreign Secretary could create for the fledgling arrangement, Hoare wrote to Chamberlain in order to pre-empt him from raising his concerns in the House of Commons:

As you know better than anyone, it is in practice impossible to distinguish between League of Nations questions dealing with general foreign affairs. Secondly there is no League of Nations Department as in the case of the Department of Overseas Trade. It is a section of the Foreign Office and on no account ought we to admit the existence of a separate organisation. If we once make this admission there is bound to be divided responsibility at the Foreign Office. I only went to the Foreign Office upon the assumption that there was to be no divided responsibility and Anthony has himself made clear in the House that in his view there is no divided responsibility.³³⁰

Hoare concluded by suggesting that, where possible, both he and Eden would attempt to be present in the Commons on alternate days in order to satisfy Members' questions. Replying a few days later, Austen Chamberlain welcomed Hoare's assurances and professing he had no intention of pressing the matter further, despite the fact he still held reservations about being denied the opportunity to direct questions to individual Ministers: 'Eden is a Cabinet Minister, holding a post created for him which implies definite functions and definite responsibility. It seems to me very difficult to maintain that any Member of the House of Commons has not a right in such circumstances to put a question to him'.³³¹ Furthermore, Chamberlain contended, would not alternating the two Ministers in the House merely result in

³³⁰ Hoare to Austen Chamberlain, 22 July 1935, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC4/1/52.

³³¹ Austen Chamberlain to Hoare, 26 July 1935, Templewood MSS, VIII/3.

queries being withheld until either Eden or the Foreign Secretary was in attendance, thereby still directing questions specifically to either one Minister or the other?³³²

The brouhaha over diarchy was an unwelcome distraction for Hoare, as he urgently needed to confront the daunting international issues that had overwhelmed his predecessor. From almost the moment the National Government was formed in the late summer of 1931, Britain had been faced with a number of threats to international peace and her own security; primarily the emergence of an increasingly aggressive Japan in the Far East and a nationalistic and revisionist Germany in Europe. Moreover, the steady reduction in Britain's fighting capacity since the end of the Great War had continually frustrated military planners in their attempts to devise strategies capable of dealing with the possibility of simultaneous threats emanating from different parts of the world. The budgetary cuts instigated in the wake of the 1931 financial crisis served only to exacerbate this dilemma. In addition to limited resources, Britain's policy-makers had been constrained in their response to international problems by a widespread conviction, both among the political classes and the population at large, that the nation's foreign policy should be tied to the League of Nations and its principle of collective security. This attachment to the League also served to reinforce the general resistance to any form of rearmament, which the government would ignore at its peril.

³³² An issue not raised in regard to the responsibilities inherent in diarchy was Hoare's known reluctance to delegate when important points of policy were at stake; in the India debates he would often take over from a colleague when a crucial aspect arose. Even from his sickbed, Hoare would provide Butler with a detailed list of instructions for him to follow during his absence (Eden would obviously be less than enamoured if a similar approach was adopted): Butler to Brabourne, 2 Mar. 1934, Brabourne MSS, F97/20C/221.

Simon had discovered that these handicaps made it almost impossible to formulate a coherent foreign policy in the face of Britain's many challenges. Britain had found the League wanting as early as September 1931, when a Chinese plea for assistance against Japanese aggression in Manchuria was answered only by the dispatch of the Lytton Commission to investigate culpability; eventually, after a year, Japan was formally charged with aggression and limited sanctions were imposed (which the Japanese ignored, promptly abandoning membership of the League in March 1933). Therefore lacking faith in the League, and deterred from rekindling the former Anglo-Japanese alliance for fear of courting unpopularity in the USA, Britain's military chiefs came to the conclusion that Tokyo would only be deterred from further adventurism by force; as a result, plans were laid to divert a significant proportion of Britain's military resources to the Far East. However, with Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in March 1933, this strategy of focussing attention on Japan began to appear decidedly flawed. Hitler had gained power on a predominately revisionist platform which at once began to put the stability of Europe at risk, especially as France, the principal bulwark to German revanchism, was in the midst of a series of internal political and economic crises. Nonetheless, the French Government recognised the dangers posed by a revitalised Germany, and subsequently sought to negotiate a formal alliance with Britain in order to deter Hitler. Even though many prominent British politicians, including Hoare, were appreciative of the fact that the German dictator intended to 'repudiate every part of the Versailles Treaty',³³³ a formal alliance with France was deemed too reminiscent of 1914; a large proportion of the British population was also ostensibly sympathetic towards Germany, regarding her re-emergence as a counterweight to French domination on the continent. Faced with

³³³ Hoare to Willingdon, 25 Jan. 1934, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/958-65.

this reluctance to consent to a formal undertaking, a 'gentleman's agreement' was approved in 1934, committing both powers to present a united front to any German aggression; Italy joined this compact in the wake of the failed Anschluss of that year (this agreement became known as the Stresa Front after Britain, France and Italy met in the Italian town of that name in April 1935). However, the terms of this understanding were too indefinite to provide much unity of purpose: France viewed any abrogation of the Versailles Treaty as an aggressive move by Germany, whereas Britain was of the opinion that only territorial aggrandisement presented a *casus belli*. Accordingly, the British and French divergence in view in countering the emerging 'German problem' became increasingly stark in the face of Hitler's increasingly blatant provocations.

In view of the military's belief that Britain was unable to successfully fight a war against both Japan and Germany in the foreseeable future, Simon had urged his Foreign Office officials (including Eden) to formulate a policy of engagement with Germany. Simon believed that if Britain could assist in resolving some of Germany's more legitimate grievances, Hitler would forgo much of his hostile rhetoric and might even re-establish Germany into the European 'family' of nations. On the basis of this policy, Britain could thereby concentrate on confronting Japanese designs in the Far East. France was appalled at this turn of events, interpreting Britain's policy as merely pandering to Hitler; in response, Paris proceeded to revert to alliance diplomacy in order to safeguard her security, signing treaties with both Italy and Russia in early 1935. Nonetheless, Simon pressed on with his attempts to reach an understanding with Germany, eventually arranging to meet Hitler on 9 March 1935 in order to discuss the European situation; the German dictator later postponed this

meeting in Berlin, claiming a cold. Unfortunately for Simon, Hitler then proceeded to undermine the British approach by admitting the existence of the Luftwaffe on 11 March, and reintroduced conscription five days after that; Hitler had already withdrawn Germany from both the League of Nations and the international Disarmament Conference in October 1933. These unilateral acts in breach of Versailles incensed the French, who demanded an emergency meeting between Britain, France and Italy in order to formulate a response. Notwithstanding this setback, Ministers felt they had expended too much effort to abandon their scheme entirely, and Simon's hurriedly rescheduled trip to Berlin was undertaken on 25-26 March, crucially without informing their French and Italian counterparts. In addition to alienating Britain's allies, the meeting also resulted in friction within the British camp, with Eden increasingly nonplussed at the Foreign Secretary's apparent willingness to accommodate German expansion eastwards in return for peace in the West.³³⁴ However, despite Simon's optimism the meeting with Hitler achieved little and was deemed inconclusive; following the failure of this summit Simon found himself largely abandoned by the government, and was condemned from all sides of the House for risking Allied unity only weeks before the meeting in Stresa.³³⁵ Subsequently, with Simon's parliamentary authority severely diminished, canvassing to find a Conservative replacement for Simon began in earnest with official support, despite the fact Ministers remained loathe to dispense with his policy - merely with the Foreign Secretary.

³³⁴ Eden diary, 26 Mar. 1935, Avon MSS, AP/1/15.

³³⁵ Simon's friend, Gilbert Murray, believed the criticism stemmed mainly from the fact that the Foreign Secretary had 'practically no press and very little organised party behind him': Murray to Simon, 17 May 1935, Simon MSS, 82/84-5.

The policies underpinning much of the previous four years were to form the bedrock of Hoare's tenure at the Foreign Office, and he was repeatedly constrained by the lack of alternatives. Significantly, one of Simon's final acts as Foreign Secretary was to oversee the commencement of naval talks between Britain and Germany, further frustrating Hoare's ability to shape his own policy. To Simon's liberal mind, German rearmament was a reality, and as no-one was prepared to prevent it with the use of force, he considered it preferable to limit it through some kind of legal framework. He was therefore understandably gratified when Hitler made a tentative response to British inquiries over naval limitations on 21 March. The British Admiralty, who were especially keen to engage in talks with their German counterparts in order to avoid any possible repeat of the pre-1914 naval arms race (and because many of the Royal Navy's capital ships needed replacing), sent a delegation to accompany Simon on his trip to Berlin. Despite the aforementioned lack of progress in reaching a general settlement, Simon urged the continuation of the naval talks in London, which led to the beginning of tentative negotiations several weeks later. On 4 June Hitler unexpectedly dispatched his personal envoy, Ribbentropp, and a team of experts to London to negotiate a naval treaty; on the first day of the talks Ribbentropp insisted he had orders from Berlin to advocate restricting the German Navy to a non-negotiable limit of 35 per cent of the Royal Navy's gross tonnage. Despite being taken aback by this method of 'non-negotiating', Simon was not prepared to risk the possibility of the talks stalling over matters of procedure, particularly as the Admiralty was eager to accept the 35 per cent limit.³³⁶ Moreover, it is conceivable that being

³³⁶ The Admiralty's positive attitude towards a naval limitation treaty with Germany was arguably driven by its apprehension over Japanese intentions in the Far East during the early 1930s, and the fear that a European naval arms race may well distract attention from what it considered the foremost threat to British interests. Subsequently, the Navy viewed an agreement based on a 35 per cent ratio an effective stratagem in a long-range strategy of using arms limitation to maintain the Royal Navy's pre-eminence, particularly as it calculated that Germany would exceed that level by 1942 if their naval construction continued unabated: Scammell, 'The

aware of his imminent replacement, Simon was reluctant to leave office with yet another failure added to the already lengthy list accrued during his time at the Foreign Office.

Given the context outlined above, Hoare was faced with what amounted to a *fait accompli* regarding the naval agreement when he took over. On the previous day Simon had announced Britain's acceptance of the German proposal; two days later Ribbentrop left London satisfied that with the principle agreed, the negotiations would be concluded successfully. The only remaining stumbling block that could undermine the proposed scheme would be the reaction of Britain's co-signatories to the 1930 London Treaty (the successor to the earlier Washington Treaty of 1922, which enforced a ratio system on the leading naval powers in order to check the possibility of future arms races); consequently, communiqués were dispatched on 7 June in order to ascertain their responses, again before Hoare was properly invested in his new department. Over the subsequent forty-eight hours replies filtered back to the Foreign Office: the United States and Japan raised no particular objections, while Italy was not against the scheme although she would prefer all questions of armaments to be discussed in their entirety. Above all though, it was the French response which was most eagerly awaited; France being the most likely signatory of the aforementioned treaty to object strongly to any unilateral deal with Germany. Unfortunately for Hoare, on the very day the telegrams were dispatched, France was undergoing a change in government (with Pierre Laval installed as the new Premier), and in the resulting upheaval no reply to the British enquiry reached London. Two

Royal Navy and the Strategic Origins of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935', *Journal of Strategic Studies*; Maiolo, 'The Admiralty and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 18 June 1935', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*.

decades later, Hoare explained his consequent decision to proceed without word from Paris:

Faced in these circumstances with the choice of making an agreement that seemed to us to benefit the Allies, and particularly the French, who were guaranteed a thirty per cent superiority over the German Fleet, or of losing another chance of restricting German rearmament, I urged the Cabinet on June 11 to authorise the signature of the Agreement.³³⁷

Receiving no reply from the French, the Cabinet 'readily' accepted Hoare's counsel and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement was officially signed on 18 June. Whether Hoare was convinced of the agreement's merit, or was simply driven by loyalty to his predecessor is unclear.³³⁸ Nevertheless, these actions do somewhat contradict his previous judgement, when he dismissed the possibility of reaching a naval treaty with Hitler in a missive to Willingdon, stating that, 'Germany never has kept a treaty and never will keep a treaty'.³³⁹

A storm of protest from both sides of the Channel descended on the British government for its perfidy in dealing unilaterally with Hitler, causing the cabinet to close ranks in defence of the treaty. During cabinet discussions on 19 June, Ministers concurred that the agreement was beneficial to Britain and that it would have been foolish to miss an opportunity to bind Germany into a legal compact on

³³⁷ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.142.

³³⁸ In September 1935 *Time Magazine* reported that the usually well-informed London Correspondent Augur [real name Vladimir Poliakov] insisted while in Geneva Sir Samuel Hoare advised Premier Laval that "the British Government was ready to admit the naval pact, or rather the method of its conclusion, was regrettable and would prefer that it had not happened": *Time Magazine*, 23 Sep. 1935, vol.26, No.13.

³³⁹ Hoare to Willingdon, 22 Mar. 1935, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/4/1266-72.

armaments.³⁴⁰ However, in order to placate France it was decided Eden should visit Paris to reassure the French that Britain was still committed to maintaining the status quo in Europe, and to explain the advantages of the agreement to Laval. To further bolster the government's message, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Eyres-Monsell, spoke on the BBC to explain the Royal Navy's rationale in supporting the agreement: 'The Admiralty consider that had this offer been refused, this country would have incurred a very grave responsibility'.³⁴¹ Despite the unease over the naval treaty, Neville Chamberlain was in no doubt that the agreement represented sound politics, informing his sister: 'I am satisfied that we were right in clinching the agreement with the Germans, which gives us the control of their Navy and indeed looks so good as to make one suspicious. I am not surprised the French were annoyed, but there was no time to be lost and I believe Eden will have been able to show them that the Treaty is good not only for us but for them'.³⁴²

No matter what Hoare privately thought of the treaty, once it had been signed he was obliged to defend it. The government subsequently promised Parliament an opportunity to debate the naval agreement on an unspecified date in July when the timetable would allow; despite this concession, Hoare still found himself continually peppered with questions about the naval treaty whenever he appeared in the House. On 24 June, he was pressed to deny a charge that the agreement granted Germany naval superiority in the Baltic, thus leaving adjacent countries at the mercy of Hitler;

³⁴⁰ Cabinet 33 (35), 19 June 1935, CAB 23/82; Recent research has concluded that the cabinet generally viewed the agreement as a continuation of Britain's interwar policy of attempting to limit naval rearmament through international agreement, rather than merely a bi-lateral treaty between two countries: T. Hoerber, 'Psychology and Reasoning in the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, 1935-1939', *The Historical Journal*, Vol.52, No.1 (2009), pp.153-174.

³⁴¹ Radio broadcast by Sir Eyres-Monsell, 19 June 1935, *The Listener*, 26 June 1935.

³⁴² Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 22 June 1935, NCDL, 4, p.141-2.

in reply, Hoare dismissed the charge, stating: 'I do not at all admit to the assumption of the Hon. Member that these small states will be left at the mercy of Germany. I regard the agreement as good, not only for our-selves and Germany, but for all the naval powers'.³⁴³ Moreover, Hoare regularly faced accusations in the House that the treaty violated Versailles and endangered Allied solidarity. On the actual day of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement debate, Hoare was steeled for a boisterous reception, having resolved in advance to avoid adopting an apologetic tone.³⁴⁴ In the expectedly stormy debate, Hoare asserted that the government had been assured by her naval experts that the agreement was sound, and resolutely refuted all opposition to the treaty:

The Naval Agreement is in no sense a selfish agreement. On no account could we have made an agreement that was not manifestly in our view to the advantage of the other naval Powers. On no account could we have made an agreement that we did not think, so far from hindering general agreement, would actually further it. The question of naval disarmament has always been treated distinctly from the question of land and air disarmament! ... Of one thing I am sure. Had His Majesty's Government refused to pursue an agreement profitable alike to peace and to the taxpayer, not only in this but in other countries, our critics at home would have been the first to throw at us not bouquets but the stones of justifiable criticism. To our friendly critics abroad I would say, in defence of our realist attitude, that, where any of our foreign friends have in the past seen fit to conclude independent arrangements for their own advantage and security and without detriment to anyone or consultation with anyone, we have not only not criticised but have applauded.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ Hoare statement on 24 June 1935, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.303, col.782.

³⁴⁴ Cabinet 36 (35), 10 July 1935, CAB 23/82.

³⁴⁵ Hoare's statement, 11 July 1935, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 304, cols. 511-3.

Although surprised at the strength of feeling over the treaty, the government safely won the day by 247 votes to 44. In reality though, the attentions of Hoare and his fellow Ministers had already been distracted for some weeks by unsettling developments in East Africa.

From September 1934, the government had grown increasingly concerned with regard to Italian intentions in East Africa, following a clash of arms at the 'watering-hole' of Wal Wal on the Abyssinian side of the border with Italian Somaliland. Italy was known to have long-harboured expansionist aims in the region, and there had been a history of military clashes between local tribesmen and Italian forces in the late nineteenth century, culminating in the 1896 defeat of Italy at Adowa. Relations had improved since then; Rome championed Abyssinia's entry into the League of Nations and an arbitration treaty was signed in 1928 between the two countries. However, during the early 1930s, Italy's pugnacity towards Abyssinia showed signs of hardening once more, leading to trepidation in the London that the skirmish at Wal Wal represented a pretext for territorial aggrandisement. This fear was realised in December 1934, when Italy rejected Abyssinia's attempt to refer the incident to the 1928 Treaty, and subsequently began a build-up of their armed forces in Italian Somaliland. Fearing an imminent Italian invasion, Abyssinia appealed to the League on 17 March 1935.

This Abyssinian reversion to the League of Nations raised a multitude of problems for British foreign policy. Britain, France and Italy were in general agreement concerning the need to oppose any territorial expansion of Hitler's Germany; Mussolini had

already displayed a readiness to stand up to the German dictator when he transferred troops to the Brenner Pass on the Italo-Austrian border in 1934. This stance towards Germany was reconfirmed during the Stresa talks on 11-14 April 1935, yet neither Britain nor France took the opportunity to warn Mussolini of the consequences for their mutual solidarity should Italian adventurism in East Africa persist. This posed a fundamental problem for Britain as her foreign policy was inextricably tied to the League; the British government would thereby be obliged to support collective action against Italy should Mussolini decide to proceed with an attack on Abyssinia. Compounding this dilemma, it was not certain whether France would support the League against Italy, as Paris perceived any break with Mussolini to be detrimental to France; the French would be required to man virtually her entire eastern frontier if Italy joined the German camp.³⁴⁶ Taking this context into account, the question of Abyssinia had the clear potential to estrange Britain and France at the very moment when unity was of paramount importance to confront Germany. The situation facing Britain was therefore stark at the Stresa meeting; faced with the choice of either abandoning Italy or the League over the continuation of the Stresa Front, MacDonald was convinced that Italy must be persuaded to reach a settlement with the Abyssinians: 'If this is not done we either become disgraced or we part with Italy which France is not likely to do'.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ During the Franco-Italian negotiations in January 1935, which resulted in the treaty of the same month, it is suspected that the French Foreign Minister, Pierre Laval, gave Mussolini assurances that France would not oppose Italy's stance towards Abyssinia: W. C. Askew, 'The Secret Agreement between France and Italy on Ethiopia, January 1935', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 25, No. 1 (Mar. 1953), pp. 47-8; G.B. Strang, 'Imperial Dreams: The Mussolini-Laval Accords of January 1935', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 44, No. 3 (Sep. 2001), pp.799-809.

³⁴⁷ MacDonald Memo, Apr./May 1935, Baldwin MSS, 123/188-90.

Hoare was apprised of the government's plight over Abyssinia within his first days of moving to the Foreign Office, and was briefed with regard to a number of possible solutions. The most extreme view, championed by the British Ambassador in Rome, Sir Eric Drummond, was that Italy should be allowed to assume control over the whole of Abyssinia in order to further its development. This was swiftly dismissed as impracticable, for Britain was bound by the League Covenant to defend Abyssinia's sovereignty. However, with Italy seemingly determined to pursue an expansionist policy, Eden recognised a need to 'save Mussolini's face', if he could be induced to climb down.³⁴⁸ In an attempt to achieve a solution, Foreign Office officials formulated a plan whereby a small part of British Somaliland, to include the port of Zeila, would be ceded to Abyssinia in return for the transference of the Ogaden province to Italy. During the cabinet meeting of 19 June, it was agreed that after visiting Paris to pacify the French, Eden should proceed to Rome in order to gauge Mussolini's response to this 'Zeila Plan'. Significantly, the cabinet remained wholly insistent that any deal involving British territory should be 'part of a complete settlement which would rule out any prospect of war'.³⁴⁹ Eden subsequently voiced his reservations over the Zeila Plan,³⁵⁰ although his attempt to distance himself from the scheme is contradicted by Maurice Peterson's (the Foreign Office's expert on Abyssinia) assertion that the Minister for League of Nations Affairs had 'jumped' at the idea as a way out of the impasse.³⁵¹ In an attempt to gain Mussolini's good will prior to Eden's arrival in Rome, Hoare wrote to the Italian dictator introducing himself and reminding him of their shared past in 1918: 'As your Excellency may perhaps recall, I had the honour of serving for two years in Italy during the War. In the course of that time I had many

³⁴⁸ Eden to Drummond, 3 June 1935, Avon MSS, 14/1/436A.

³⁴⁹ Cabinet 33 (35), 19 June 1935, CAB 23/82.

³⁵⁰ Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p.220-1.

³⁵¹ Lockhart diary, 27 June 1935, p.323-4.

opportunities of admiring the manner in which Italy and her people discharged the heavy task which they were called upon to assume'.³⁵² Unfortunately, Hoare's efforts to solicit the goodwill of Mussolini were to be vain, as details of Eden's secret mission to Rome inexplicably became public knowledge.

The Zeila Plan was arguably doomed to fail from the moment it was leaked to the press, as news of the scheme provoked unrest in Westminster over the suggestion that British territory could be ceded as reward for aggression. In the absence of secrecy Mussolini rejected the British plan, objecting to Abyssinian access to the sea and the amount of territory to be gained by Italy.³⁵³ Disillusioned by the failure of the talks, Hoare concluded that Britain should primarily focus its efforts on the deterrence factor of League intervention in the Abyssinian dispute. Moreover, he felt it would be prudent if the government formally announced Britain's intention to stand by the League, as such a statement would pressure the French into making public their intentions in the event of an Italian attack on Abyssinia.³⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly, Paris resisted London's attempts to dictate French policy, particularly in view of recent British actions over the naval treaty and Eden's failure to disclose the Zeila Plan as he passed through Paris.³⁵⁵ Nonetheless, despite these obvious strains between London and Paris, Hoare was confident the two countries would maintain a united front on Abyssinia during a scheduled meeting of the Stresa powers in Paris during August; as a precaution the cabinet granted Eden authority to reassure the French

³⁵² Hoare to Mussolini, 20 June 1935, Templewood MSS, VIII/1.

³⁵³ Eden (from Rome Embassy) to Hoare, 24 June 1935: DBFP, 2, 14, p.329-33.

³⁵⁴ Cabinet 39 (35), 17 July 1935, CAB 23/82; on 23 July 1935 Baldwin reiterated that 'the foreign policy of this government is founded upon the League of Nations': Parker, 'Great Britain, France and the Ethiopian Crisis 1935-1936'.

³⁵⁵ Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p.231-2.

that Britain was committed to the status quo in Europe. However, despite his optimism that a reaffirmation of Anglo-French unity could break the deadlock over Abyssinia, Hoare remained adamant that any proposals emanating from the discussions must not produce a settlement which could be deemed unfair to Addis Ababa.³⁵⁶

Whilst Hoare remained hopeful of a resolution over Abyssinia during the Paris talks, he was also mindful to achieve, should a peaceful agreement not be obtained from Italy, a degree of unanimity between London and Paris prior to the League meeting due in September. Although the actual timing of the talks was not ideal, due to Parliament being in recess for the summer, Hoare informed the Editor of *The Times* that he was prepared to travel to Paris if officials felt his presence was needed.³⁵⁷ In contrast, Eden was decidedly less than enthralled at meeting his Stresa partners:

I am simply dreading these conversations more than anything I have ever undertaken –vague instructions from home and a “thieves” kitchen in Paris, with Italians, Frenchmen and Greeks all trying with various degrees of energy and turpitude to fix up some unholy business. I have scarcely any hope of any good results.³⁵⁸

Eden's premonitions proved correct, and it was swiftly evident that little was going to be achieved at the Paris meeting.³⁵⁹ With the League due to meet on 11 September (when Abyssinia and sanctions would undoubtedly be raised), Hoare urged the

³⁵⁶ Cabinet 40 (35), 24 July 1935, CAB 23/82.

³⁵⁷ Dawson to Barrington-Ward, 8 Aug. 1935, Dawson MSS, 78/115-7.

³⁵⁸ Eden to Ormsby-Gore, 12 Aug. 1935, 1935, Avon MSS, 14/1/493A.

³⁵⁹ During a number of meetings British and French officials drew up proposals which they believed could be recommended to both Abyssinia and Italy in order to resolve the dispute; these involved Britain, France and Italy assisting the economic and administrative development of Abyssinia without violating her independence, and included the possible adjustment of territory if Rome and Addis Ababa agreed. Mussolini rejected this scheme on 18 August 1935: Hardie, *The Abyssinian Crisis*, p.132.

Minister for League of Nations Affairs to request an urgent cabinet meeting in order to determine Britain's policy prior to the Geneva conference. Writing to Neville Chamberlain, Hoare reiterated the need for Ministerial agreement:

I believe that we have done everything possible to keep in step with the French and to do nothing will that provoke the Italians. None the less at the time of writing it looks to me as if the Italians will be entirely unreasonable and as a result there will be a first-class crisis in the League at the beginning of September. It is urgently necessary for the Cabinet to consider what in the circumstances our attitude should be on two assumptions (1) that the French are completely with us (2) that the French have backed out. It is equally urgent for the Cabinet to consider what preparations should be made to meet a possible mad dog act by the Italians. ...Our line, I am sure is to keep in step with the French and, whether now or at Geneva to act with them.³⁶⁰

Given the likelihood that Britain would be involved in League sanctions against Italy if Mussolini continued with his aggressive course against Abyssinia, Hoare sought cross-parliamentary opinion prior to the hastily convened cabinet meeting.³⁶¹ Of those consulted, all were in agreement that Britain's policy towards League sanctions should retain symmetry with that of France. However, this support for Britain's stance was not universal; during talks with the Dominion High Commissioners on 21 August, Hoare was dismayed at the lukewarm response when he spoke of the possible introduction of League sanctions against Italy.³⁶²

³⁶⁰ Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 18 Aug. 1935, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/28/24.

³⁶¹ On 21 Aug. 1935 Hoare spoke to Herbert Samuel, George Lansbury, Lloyd George and Churchill. Transcripts of these conversations – No.477, 480, 481 & 483 respectively in, DBFP, 2, 14, p.516-20.

³⁶² A confidential note, No. 482, reported these deliberations, 21 Aug. 1935, DBFP, 2, 14, p.521-5.

A cabinet was convened on 22 August at Hoare's request. During its deliberations, the cabinet were generally agreed that a war with Italy would be calamitous as it would compel Mussolini to ally himself with Hitler. It was also decided that in any future discussions on sanctions, Britain should stress her intention to abide by the League.³⁶³ In an unrecorded discussion during the meeting, Hoare suggested lifting the arms embargo on both Italy and Abyssinia (enabling the Abyssinians to purchase modern weapons), only to find himself opposed by Neville Chamberlain and the rest of the cabinet over fears it would put Britain out of step with the French as Paris opposed the relaxation of the ban.³⁶⁴ Ministers concluded their deliberations by unanimously supporting the Foreign Secretary's in his determination to maintain a unified front with the French over sanctions, a point highlighted by Hoare in his account of proceedings to King's Secretary:

I may say that we have no intention whatever of going further than the French Government. Collective action means the full cooperation of the French Government and anything short of this full cooperation would destroy collective action, the only basis upon which we are prepared to act.³⁶⁵

Hoare's doggedness in ensuring British proximity to the French position won praise from all corners of the political establishment, with the Governor of Madras, no mean observer of events in Europe, singing his praises to Eden: 'Thank God Sam is at the F.O. instead of that flabby Liberal Simon. I imagine that the only chance of preventing war is a strong and firm lead by England and Sam is a man who knows his own mind, and with strength enough to carry through his policy'.³⁶⁶ Eden was inclined to agree,

³⁶³ Cabinet 42 (35), 22 Aug. 1935, CAB 23/82.

³⁶⁴ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 25 Aug. 1935, NCDL, 4, p148-9.

³⁶⁵ Hoare to Wigram, 25 Aug. 1935, Templewood MSS, VIII/4.

³⁶⁶ Erskine to Eden, 28 Aug. 1935, Avon MSS, 14/1/440.

admitting to the Chancellor that 'he was working admirably with Sam' and that 'the difference at the F.O. is incredible'.³⁶⁷

To emphasise the gravity of the situation, Hoare felt that he, rather than Eden, should deliver Britain's keynote speech to the League General Assembly on 11 September. Hoare was convinced that he should make a 'revivalist appeal to the Assembly' as he felt such a message would not only dispel the pessimist argument that the League was 'practically dead', but also forewarn Mussolini that the world was unwilling to accept any aggression against Abyssinia.³⁶⁸ Subsequently, during the last week of August, Hoare and his officials drafted a speech highlighting Britain's stance in the current crisis and her allegiance to the League mantra of collective security. After travelling to Chequers with Neville Chamberlain, Hoare presented the finished script to Baldwin on 7 September for his approval. Baldwin apparently glanced through the speech making little comment, bar 'something like this would have to be said sometime'.³⁶⁹ Prime Ministerial approval duly secured, Hoare made arrangements to fly to Geneva - no easy task as he had been suffering from arthritis for some weeks, severely affecting his mobility. (Witnessing Hoare's discomfort at Chequers, Neville Chamberlain noted that it looked like gout.) In the event, the Foreign Secretary had to travel to Switzerland in a specially adapted RAF plane which enabled him to remain on his back throughout the flight.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 1 Sep. 1935, NCDL, 4, p.149-50.

³⁶⁸ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.166.

³⁶⁹ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 7 Sep. 1935, NCDL, 4, p.150.

³⁷⁰ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.167.

Hoare arrived in Geneva on 9 September, immediately apprising Eden and Cranborne of the contents of his intended speech; both men stressed their surprise at its strength as they felt it surpassed what had previously been decided.³⁷¹ In the remaining days before his League statement was to be delivered, Hoare held several talks with the French Premier, Pierre Laval, whereby it was agreed that France would continue to employ her influence to restrain Mussolini, although both military action and closing the Suez Canal were ruled out.³⁷² Strengthened by these negotiations, Hoare addressed the General Assembly on 12 September. A key passage in his speech, delivered slowly and deliberately to a packed auditorium, is worth noting here:

If the burden is to be borne, it must be borne collectively. If risks for peace are to be run, they must be run by all. The security of the many cannot be insured solely by the efforts of the few, however powerful they may be. On behalf of the British Government I can say that they will be second to none in their intention to fulfil within the measure of their capacity the obligations which the Covenant lays upon them.

At one point, Hoare electrified the Assembly, slapping the lectern as he repeated, 'Britain stands for steady collective resistance to all unprovoked aggression. Steady collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression'.³⁷³ Laval's speech followed that of the British Foreign Secretary, after which the two statesmen demonstrated the new entente by walking arm in arm through the Assembly to great applause.

³⁷¹ Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p.260.

³⁷² Middlemas & Barnes, *Baldwin*, p.856.

³⁷³ *Time Magazine*, 23 Sep. 1935, vol.26, No.13.

Hoare's speech received plaudits from around the world, but it was the congratulations from Neville Chamberlain which were his most treasured: 'I value your praise more than all the others put together'.³⁷⁴ Despite the success of Hoare's speech, negotiations within the Committee of Five to ascertain the League response to possible Italian aggression were faring less well, with Laval succeeding in his attempts to water down the severity of the sanction regime.³⁷⁵ Eden informed Hoare that he was increasingly doubtful of French support in the event of an unprovoked attack on British forces; 'I am afraid that my confidence in Laval would be slight. Maybe French public opinion would force him to stand by us, but it is not in his nature to take up a firm position'.³⁷⁶ Despite Eden's gloomy prognosis, Hoare remained convinced that France was firmly on the side of collective action regarding sanctions, feeling that even the moderate variant, as favoured by Laval, would be effective in shortening any war.³⁷⁷ However, Hoare did admit to apprehension over the apparent absence of a firm French commitment to support Britain in the enforcement of sanctions. In an attempt to remedy this situation, he urged the cabinet to authorise an official communiqué to Paris outlining their joint policy, along with a request for French assurance of support in the event of a conflict; significantly, Hoare reiterated his belief an embargo would only be effective with French support, and that on no account should Britain face Italy single-handed. However, despite Hoare's insistence on collective security many MPs were becoming increasingly concerned that Britain was being forced into a war over its adherence to League principles. In one instance, Amery sought out Hoare to apprise him of his continued misgivings over the government's attachment to the League and collective security. To his surprise, he

³⁷⁴ Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 17 Sep. 1935, Templewood MSS, VIII/1.

³⁷⁵ The Committee of Five was a League body-comprising of Britain, France, Poland, Spain and Turkey-which had been established after Abyssinia had referred its dispute with Italy to Geneva.

³⁷⁶ Eden to Hoare, 18 Sep. 1935, Avon MSS, 14/1/450C.

³⁷⁷ Cabinet 43 (35), 24 Sep. 1935, CAB 23/82.

found Hoare sympathetic to his concerns, with the Foreign Minister insisting: ' it was too late to change policy when he joined the F.O. and that Britain had to try and make the Covenant work, and that we may be able to get out of the situation if other countries failed to support our policy or if Mussolini backtracked'. Alarmed by Hoare's apparent resignation, Amery viewed him as 'dangerously fatalistic about the whole issue'.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁸ Amery diary, 24 Sep. 1935, p.398.

CHAPTER FIVE – THE HOARE – LAVAL PLAN AND RESIGNATION

The Italian invasion of Abyssinia on 3 October 1935 confirmed Hoare's misgivings. In his Geneva speech three weeks earlier, he had placed great emphasis on the League's ability to collectively impose sanctions on any nation charged with committing an act of aggression against one of its members. With Mussolini now having shattered that peace, it was up to the League - and in particular its two principal members, Britain and France - to uphold these values and bring Italy to heel. However, despite the rhetoric at the League meeting in September, nothing tangible had been agreed prior to the Italian onslaught. Talk of a potential League embargo among the Committee of Five had revealed little enthusiasm to adopt the draconian measures requisite to deter Mussolini, and the British government had followed the French lead in ruling out any prospect of military sanctions.³⁷⁹ Moreover, Laval remained as enigmatic as ever regarding France's commitment to any League action against Italy.

³⁷⁹ Cabinet 44 (35), 2 Oct. 1935, 23/82.

Nevertheless, in the days immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, the League appeared to vindicate Hoare's September commitment to collective action. A little over a week after Italy was designated the aggressive party on 7 October, a League committee was constituted and charged with formulating a list of moderate sanctions to be imposed on the Italians.³⁸⁰ Additionally, the League recommended a removal of the ban on arms sales to Abyssinia, though this counsel took no account of how the Abyssinians would be able to afford modern armaments, or indeed import them into a land-locked country. Even though admittedly these measures were generally accepted as unlikely to thwart Mussolini's immediate military progress, it was hoped that such action would forewarn Italy of more severe sanctions to come, including an embargo on oil. Preceding this adjudication of the Committee of Eighteen, the British government confirmed its support for the imposition of League sanctions, hinting that it would contemplate tougher measures, including a ban on the export of coal, if Italy did not reverse her present policy.³⁸¹ Moreover, in order to bolster belief amongst his cabinet colleagues as to the effectiveness of an embargo (amid fears that non-League countries would simply ignore it), Hoare was able to advise Ministers that Roosevelt had indicated a willingness to assist with harsher sanctions should they be deemed necessary.

Notwithstanding the fact that Hoare and the government had successfully argued for the introduction of sanctions, there was growing concern amongst Britain's military

³⁸⁰ This League body (known as the Committee of Eighteen) concluded on 19 October that member states should, as an initial step, impose a prohibition on loans to Italy; spurn Italian imports; and maintain an embargo on the export of arms and materials that could be used to support Italy's war effort, including horses, rubber, tin and some ores: G. B. Strang, 'The Worst of all Worlds: Oil Sanctions and Italy's Invasion of Abyssinia, 1935-1936', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2008), pp.210-235.

³⁸¹ Cabinet 45 (35), 9 Oct. 1935, CAB 23/82.

chiefs as to how this League action would be policed.³⁸² The Admiralty in particular was unhappy with the prospect of single-handedly having to monitor Mediterranean shipping, as there had been no affirmation of French support; Eden had been attempting to gain French assistance for the Royal Navy in relation to the use of her naval bases, but found Laval continually elusive on the matter. Furthermore, the Admiralty feared that any extension of sanctions (particularly regarding oil) would precipitate an Italian response against those countries enforcing it; a peril which uniquely threatened British ships as they were chiefly responsible for policing the League policy. Consequently, without the guaranteed availability of French bases, amid concerns over a possible 'mad dog' attack by the Italians, the Admiralty stationed their forces at either end of the Mediterranean, in order to be out of range of enemy aircraft. In effect, this obviated the Navy's ability to search vessels entering Italian waters; the most obvious base, Malta, was deemed too susceptible to air attack.³⁸³ Added to this dilemma, the First Sea Lord, Ernle Chatfield, was indignant that Britain should even contemplate a possible conflict with Italy, whose friendship had been accepted as a formality by the Admiralty. Underlying this umbrage was the aforementioned strategy of confronting Japan, requiring free passage through the Mediterranean as an essential element to its success. Chatfield was accordingly concerned that a conflict with Italy would jeopardise the Admiralty's plans.³⁸⁴ With the League apparently unable to agree a common policy during the summer months of 1935, Chatfield had grown increasingly more sanguine towards the situation,

³⁸² In the days that followed Hoare's Geneva speech the cabinet ordered that the Mediterranean Fleet be significantly reinforced, with a large contingent of ships reaching Gibraltar by 17 September 1935, although Drummond assured Mussolini three days later that the build-up 'was not intended to imply any aggressive intention': Marder, 'The Royal Navy and the Ethiopian Crisis of 1935-36', *American Historical Review*..

³⁸³ The cabinet had advocated this on 22 August, although the Admiralty had already secretly commenced redeploying the Mediterranean Fleet from Malta to Alexandria prior to this decision: Quartararo, 'Imperial Defence in the Mediterranean on the Eve of the Ethiopian Crisis (July-October 1935)', *Historical Journal*.

³⁸⁴ Lord Chatfield, *The Navy and Defence, vol. 2: It Might Happen Again* (1947), p.89.

stating that he 'hoped the Geneva Pacifists will fail to get unanimity and the League will break up'.³⁸⁵ However, in the aftermath of Hoare's Geneva speech, with its renewed faith in the League, this was to prove a forlorn hope. Despairingly, he wrote to Admiral Dreyer:

It is a disaster that our statesmen have got us into this quarrel with Italy who ought to be our best friend in the future as she has been in the past because her position in the Mediterranean is a dominant one. ... This miserable business of collective security has run away with all our traditional interests and policies and we now have to be prepared as far as I can see to fight any nation in the world at any moment.³⁸⁶

Despite this consternation over the government's League policy, the Admiralty was finally successful in attaining the desired assistance from France; on 26 October, Laval confirmed that the Royal Navy could use French ports, and promised to coordinate efforts with the British (although France proceeded to mobilise extremely slowly). Nonetheless, it remained evident that the Navy was far from happy with its allotted task.

Although it was possible that Hoare did not fully appreciate the extent of Chatfield's angst, he would undoubtedly have been able to detect the restlessness amongst many of his cabinet colleagues over Britain's support of League policy; there was speculation that the Chancellor, Hailsham, Simon and Runciman were all opposed to the implementation of sanctions prior to the cabinet meeting on 9 October.³⁸⁷

Churchill was also decidedly unhappy at the adoption of an embargo and its possible

³⁸⁵ Chatfield to Admiral William Fisher, 25 Aug. 1935, Chatfield MSS, CHT/11/2/1-4.

³⁸⁶ Chatfield to Dreyer, 16 Sep. 1935, Chatfield MSS, CHT/4/4/72-3.

³⁸⁷ Brooks diary, 4 Oct. 1935, N. J. Crowson (ed.), *Fleet Street, Press Barons and Politics: The Journals of Collin Brooks, 1932-1940* (1998), p.128-9.

consequences: 'It would be a terrible deal to smash up with Italy, and it will cost us dear'.³⁸⁸ Britain's support for sanctions was also criticised by significant sections of the French press, who orchestrated a hostile campaign against the British government; a fact worsened by the reluctance of the Laval government to reprimand editors for misrepresenting the facts. Vansittart told his opposite number, Corbin, on 16 October that the British were growing tired of the puerile headlines and claimed there was 'now more Anglophobia in France than at any time since Fashoda'.³⁸⁹ This should arguably have been no surprise to British officials, as they had long suspected that outside influences were responsible for much of the vitriol, with the Ambassador in Paris, Sir George Clerk, conceding: 'the Italians have made lavish payments to the venal elements of the French press and the journalists of the Right and Centre have quite shamelessly allowed Mussolini to call the tune'.³⁹⁰

In many respects, of far greater concern to Hoare was the insinuation that the Minister for the League of Nations had commandeered Britain's policy towards Italy, and that his reputed dislike for Mussolini was making a confrontation more, rather than less likely.³⁹¹ This supposition that Eden was revelling in the situation became increasingly prevalent in Westminster, with even the King joining the ranks of those questioning his motives:

³⁸⁸ Churchill to Austen Chamberlain, 1 Oct. 1935, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC41/2/46.

³⁸⁹ Vansittart, quoted in Parker, 'Great Britain, France and the Ethiopian Crisis 1935-1936', *English Historical Review*.

³⁹⁰ Clerk to Austen Chamberlain, 6 Oct. 1935, Austen Chamberlain MSS, AC41/1/60.

³⁹¹ Eden had become increasingly belligerent in Geneva since the Italian invasion, advocating more direct sanctions (coal, steel and oil) on Italy, despite the more cautionary attitude of the British and French governments in this matter: Baer, 'Sanctions and Security: The League of Nations and the Italian-Ethiopian War, 1935-1936'.

His Majesty recognises how splendidly Eden has done in bringing Laval and the other Nations into line regarding economic sanctions. But a position now has arisen in which Eden appears to be taking the lead to too great an extent, and the League from reading the papers, would appear to be a “one man show”, and Eden to be justifying Mussolini’s contention that the quarrel is really one between Great Britain and Italy and not between the latter country and the League. His Majesty feels that there is a danger lest, encouraged by the unscrupulous attacks upon us in the Foreign Press, Mussolini may be driven to commit some rash and foolish act which might constitute a *casus belli*, the last thing anyone wants. The King fully realises with what a delicate situation you are faced, and, needless to say, does not want in any way to add to your difficulties, but feels that you should know what is in His Majesty’s mind.³⁹²

Eden rejected the criticism, claiming he had liked Mussolini on the occasions they had met.³⁹³ Moreover, the Foreign Secretary remained unperturbed by such conjecture (as it was based largely in the foreign press) and was content to defend Eden against charges of goading Mussolini, whilst denying that the Minister for League of Nations Affairs had overplayed his hand in Geneva. Hoare’s perspective over the matter therefore tends to suggest he was in accordance with his fellow Minister over the question of tougher sanctions. Nevertheless, this cosy image did not satisfy Beaverbrook: ‘I quite agree that it is your duty to do everything you can for that misguided gentleman. And a Minister should defend his subordinate – if he is your subordinate. If the League of Nations Minister is not subordinate to the Foreign Secretary, that is foolish. And I am for you’.³⁹⁴

³⁹² Wigram to Hoare, 13 Oct. 1935, Templewood MSS, VIII/4.

³⁹³ Eden to Drummond, 25 Oct. 1935, Avon MSS, 14/1/439A.

³⁹⁴ Beaverbrook to Hoare, 24 Oct. 1935, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/307b.

The King and Beaverbrook were not alone in raising concerns about Eden. A few days after the Press Lord had raised this matter with Hoare, rumours emerged of a minor mutiny in the Foreign Office over Eden's persistent berating of Italy in Geneva. Although no official comment emerged, Collin Brooks of the *Daily Mail* noted in his diary: 'It is said, on sound authority, that Foreign Office officials, led by Vansittart, have protested to the Prime Minister that the dual control at the Foreign Office is unworkable. This means Eden, after the election, will probably be moved from his present post and will take the War Office or the Colonies'.³⁹⁵ Baldwin's response to this suggestion is unknown, as is Hoare's, but Eden would undoubtedly have been disheartened by this apparent lack of support from Foreign Office officials. There is a distinct possibility that he wished to leave his post but was persuaded to stay his hand until after the general election; a view afforded some credence by Cranborne:

I wonder what your plans are – Are you going to move or not? I was all in favour of it, both from your point of view and because I felt the circumstances have identified you with a very definite a view at Geneva that when the time for conciliation came you must find that the position vis-a-vis the Italians might be a difficult one. But my experience in the election has rather altered my opinion. I am afraid that if you leave the Foreign Office at the present moment it would be said that Baldwin had been guilty of a breach of faith with the Electorate. You stand for so much with them that it would be impossible to convince them that the Govt. hadn't all through been meaning to detach itself from the League, and had only kept you in your present job for electoral purposes, until the fight was over. I believe therefore that you ought to stay on for a bit if you can bear it.³⁹⁶

Eden concurred with his Under-Secretary, although he stressed, 'I have not changed my opinion, nor I think has Sam, that this is not a good permanent arrangement, but

³⁹⁵ Brooks diary, 30 Oct. 1935, p.135.

³⁹⁶ Cranborne to Eden, 20 Nov. 1935, Avon MSS, 14/1/429.

for the time being we must endure'.³⁹⁷ Cranborne's reply illustrates just how close Eden had been to resigning his position: 'What a relief you are going on at the F.O.! It is really good of you, for I know the flat feeling of turning back once one has made up one's mind to a change – it would never have been understood'.³⁹⁸ Further validation of this chain of events is found from Foreign Office official Rex Leeper, who apprised Bruce Lockhart of Eden's planned resignation.³⁹⁹ Nonetheless, with few people conscious of this discord at the Foreign Office, it proved relatively straightforward for the government to conceal the incident from public knowledge; perhaps surprisingly, this episode failed to gain a mention in the recollections of either Hoare or Eden, possibly suggesting the two were closer on the question of sanctions than is traditionally suspected.

When Parliament reconvened after the summer recess, the government promised a full debate on the international situation, scheduling it for the three days of 22-24 October. With continued talk of an extension of sanctions before the end of the year, with the resultant possibility of war with Italy, Hoare welcomed the opportunity to brief Parliament of the current situation. On the first day of the debate, he summarised the events that occurred during the summer and also, perhaps with Eden in mind, made it clear that Britain would welcome any further attempt at a settlement with Italy:

There is still a breathing space before this economic pressure can be applied. Can it be used for another attempt at such a settlement? Italy is still a member of the

³⁹⁷ Eden to Cranborne, 21 Nov. 1935, Avon MSS, 14/1/429A; this would seem to contradict Eden's view of two months earlier.

³⁹⁸ Cranborne to Eden, 23 Nov. 1935, Avon MSS, 14/1/430.

³⁹⁹ Lockhart diary, 24 Dec. 1935, p.336.

League. I welcome that fact. Cannot this eleventh hour be so used as to make it unnecessary for us to proceed further along the unattractive road of economic action against a fellow member, an old friend, and a former ally?⁴⁰⁰

Although he received much praise from contemporaries for his handling of the crisis thus far, Hoare was apprehensive that the House would read too much into his initial pronouncements of cordiality towards Italy, subsequently making a conscious effort on the second day to remind his audience that any settlement would have to be reached under the auspices of the League:

Critics of the Government may feel that there is a loophole for going behind the back of the League of Nations. Nothing of the kind is intended. Such a settlement, and a settlement in the solution of which I am sure the House would desire that we should today give every attention that we can, must be one fair alike to the three parties, Italy, Abyssinia and – I will not say above all in this tri-partite arrangement – to the League of Nations itself. If any settlement can be arrived at which might considerably shorten the time of war and might take away from the world the fear of a possible war spreading, it will be worth any endeavour, provided that these three principles can be maintained.⁴⁰¹

Ending his speech, Hoare made it imperative that the government would never allow Britain to act alone: 'We have no intention of acting by ourselves or of going further than we can get the whole League to go. ... We have never had war in our mind. I deprecate the use of the word'. Through a clear repudiation of any suggestion that Britain was prepared to act outside the League, Hoare may well have intended both to quell cabinet opposition to further sanctions, and influence Eden's rhetoric in Geneva. However, Hoare's words were arguably lost to many of the MPs, thanks to Baldwin's announcement later that day of a snap general election on 14 November.

⁴⁰⁰ Hoare statement, 22 Oct. 1935, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.305, col.31-2.

⁴⁰¹ Hoare statement, 23 Oct. 1935, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.305, col.150-1.

Hoare's emphasis on hopes for a settlement was undoubtedly based on news from Paris, that Mussolini might be willing to end hostilities if suitable terms could be agreed. The Italian dictator had in fact made such proposals to the French barely two weeks after his initial invasion, suggesting that Italy gain preponderance over several regions of Abyssinian territory whilst the League administer much of the interior; Mussolini additionally required that the Abyssinians disarm. Although this plan proved unacceptable to either the League or Addis Ababa, the fact that Mussolini was prepared to countenance an agreement was a welcome sign. Nonetheless, Hoare was not blind to the possibility that Mussolini merely sought to delay the implementation of sanctions; addressing this concern at the beginning of November he succeeded in broaching a definite date with the Committee of Eighteen for the commencement of sanctions (18 November). The Committee also agreed to propose the extension of sanctions (to include oil, coal, iron and steel) two weeks after the initial, more limited embargo had been introduced. This determination to press ahead with sanctions, if not omitted from appraisals of Hoare's role during the Abyssinian crisis, is widely suggested to be an electioneering ploy (with the election due in less than a fortnight). This, though, is unjust to Hoare as he remained committed to augmenting the sanction regime, including the controversial embargo of Italy's oil supplies. In an interview with Hankey (who was opposed to sanctions) on 25 November, Hoare was adamant that the embargo of Italy's oil supplies should go ahead, as the government had agreed to it in principle. When challenged on this, Hoare retorted that Britain would be letting down the League if it reneged on its

commitment, adding pointedly that 'public opinion would not stand it'.⁴⁰² Although Hankey continued to stress Britain's unpreparedness and French unreliability, the Foreign Secretary left the meeting unshaken in his beliefs. Consequently, it would appear that Hoare remained supportive of more punitive sanctions only weeks before their proposed introduction, despite the continued ambiguity of the French in the matter.

The general election passed with little drama, and the government retained a large overall majority despite losing 90 seats. Hoare was handsomely returned in Chelsea, although he was spared a more onerous struggle, had the eccentric Lady Houston persuaded the aforementioned Collin Brooks of the *Daily Mail* to run against him.⁴⁰³ As events transpired, Hoare played little part in the national campaign due to his continuous efforts in attempting to gain French support for the start of League sanctions on 18 November. However, the Foreign Secretary was finding French obfuscation in their attitude to the League policy increasingly exasperating. During an interview with the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, Hoare spoke of his dissatisfaction with the situation:

There was nothing to be done at the moment but wait and see how things went at the war and how the sanctions worked out. The position would be much clearer for us if the French were not so difficult: relations were on a better footing now, but still things were not all that they could be desired.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² Hankey diary, 25 Nov. 1935, p.186-9.

⁴⁰³ Brooks diary, 3 Nov. 1935, p.136; The rationale behind Lady Houston's vendetta against Hoare was generated by his leading the Foreign Office in its support of the League of Nations and its policy of sanctions against Italy, to which she was stridently opposed.

⁴⁰⁴ Crozier interview with Hoare, 21 Nov. 1935, *Off the Record*, p.56-9.

Hoare also voiced his irritation that, even at this late stage French support could not be guaranteed due to ongoing debate in France between those in favour of sanctions and those against. Notwithstanding this anxiety about the French, Hoare gave indications that attempts to settle the crisis were continuing. When questioned by Crozier as to whether he believed a settlement was likely, he responded that Mussolini's present proposals were unacceptable, but nonetheless maintained hope that a League Plan based on proposals formulated in August would prove a sound basis for resolving the crisis, particularly as the Emperor of Abyssinia had tentatively accepted this approach. That said, Hoare did not commit to any timescale for this plan.

By the beginning of December, the strains of the previous few months were taking their toll on Hoare, and he suffered a renewed bout of ill health. He was advised to take a complete rest in order to recover, consequently it was decided that he and his wife should go to Switzerland for two or three weeks. Two days before Hoare's departure, however, he was informed that Laval wished to visit London for further talks on reaching a settlement; such discussions were deemed urgent in view of the upcoming League decision on the proposed embargo of Italy's oil supplies.⁴⁰⁵

Informing Laval of the difficulties regarding his health, Hoare agreed to travel to the Swiss resort of Zuzwil via Paris in order to confer with the French Premier. However, news of the meeting quickly became public knowledge, giving rise to speculation that a pivotal moment had been reached in the Anglo-French attempt to find a settlement. Fearing that any French sponsored agreement would be reached at the expense of Abyssinia, Hugh Dalton appealed to the Foreign Secretary to warn Laval, 'that this

⁴⁰⁵ The League was due to discuss the oil sanction on December 12.

country is not favourable to, is not even interested in, any terms of settlement of this war which will allow the Italian dictator to profit by means of his aggression'.⁴⁰⁶ In reply, Hoare was eager to dispense with any suggestion that the talks were solely at the behest of Britain and France, and duly informed the House that the negotiations were endorsed by the League, and that any resultant proposals would have to be acceptable to Abyssinia, Italy and the League. Following his Commons statement, Hoare reputedly conferred with Baldwin and, according to Eden emerged somewhat depressed: Eden assumed it was due to Baldwin's usual disinterest in foreign affairs, although conceivably the Prime Minister may have relayed something more ominous to Hoare.⁴⁰⁷ Whatever was said between Baldwin and Hoare on 5 December, the Foreign Secretary left for France assuring Eden that 'I shall not commit you to anything'. Moreover, there was little indication that a major development was afoot when Neville Chamberlain penned a short missive to the Foreign Secretary's wife on the eve of their trip to Paris:

I must send you a line to wish you a real good holiday. You must be needing it as well as Sam for I am sure you have had some anxious weeks. ... More than ever now Sam is essential to his country. For what he has done in this short time for us all we can't be too thank-full. I can't tell you what a difference it makes to me to feel that foreign affairs are in his hands. I shall miss him while he is away but will gladly lose him for a time if he comes back recovered.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5 Dec. 1935, vol. 307, col.343.

⁴⁰⁷ Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p.298; pressure to resolve the crisis also came during the cabinet meeting on 2 December, when Hankey and Chatfield warned of Britain's unpreparedness for a war, urging the delay of a decision on the imposition of an oil embargo until peace talks had actually ended in failure: L.R. Pratt, *East of Malta, West of Suez* (1975), p.27.

⁴⁰⁸ Neville Chamberlain to Maud Hoare, 6 Dec. 1935, Anderson MSS.

When Hoare arrived in Paris on Saturday 7 December, he was greeted by Peterson, Clerk and Vansittart; Hoare later claimed that Vansittart was in the French capital partly on leave and partly to combat anti-British claims in the French press (though this seems an unlikely task for one of such high rank).⁴⁰⁹ The three of them informed Hoare of the present state of the negotiations, before proceeding to the Quai d'Orsay (French Foreign Ministry) to convene with Laval and his advisors. Directly after the formal introductions, Laval wasted no time in warning the British contingent that the impending oil embargo could drive Mussolini into committing a 'desperate act' and that they were therefore obliged to attempt a final effort at settling the dispute; the French Premier was also insistent that France had no intention of becoming involved in a war. On hearing Laval's views, Hoare grew even more convinced that France would renege on its commitment to support Britain if she were attacked by Italy. However, Hoare's pessimism appeared unwarranted as, having put the question of French assistance directly to Laval, he was assured that France stood alongside Britain in the matter; in a further sign of French candour, Laval proposed staff talks to coordinate the two country's efforts.

In the wake of establishing this accord, the two statesmen then proceeded to deliberate over a draft plan formulated by Peterson and his French counterpart, St. Quentin, during the preceding weeks.⁴¹⁰ Outlining their scheme, the framers

⁴⁰⁹ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.178; Hoare's need to justify the presence of Vansittart in Paris is somewhat confusing as the Anglo-French talks were hardly a secret, with the British Press having published stories of its possible outcome since the beginning of December: D. Waley, *British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War 1935-6* (1975), p.46-8.

⁴¹⁰ Peterson had been in Paris since the last week in October working alongside his French counterpart, St. Quentin, in formulating proposals for a settlement. On 28 October the two men produced a plan which ceded a considerable amount of Abyssinian territory to Italy for economic development, with Addis Ababa being awarded the port of Assab as compensation. Despite Hoare's initial scepticism, Peterson vigorously defended the scheme, although due to the controversial aspect of rewarding Italian aggression it was decided that it

indicated that it was still awaiting completion as there would need to be some adjustment in the details in order to take account of recent Italian advances. Studying the revised boundaries, Hoare acceded to the additional territory remaining in Italian hands so long as Abyssinia was compensated with access to the sea and a viable port. However, due to the lateness of the hour (the meeting having commenced in the late afternoon), and the fact that the details of prospective ports were unavailable, the talks broke up for the night. Resuming this discussion the following day, the British legation suggested that since Italy had gained more territory than the plan had originally intended, the port of Assab and its surrounding area in Italian Somaliland should be ceded to Abyssinia. Unfortunately, this suggestion failed to take in the view of the Emperor of Abyssinia, who patently favoured the port of Zeila in British Somaliland. Faced with the possibility of alienating Addis Ababa over this choice of designated port, the British relented and agreed on either Assab or Zeila. With accordance on this point achieved, the two sides proceeded to examine the requisite land transfers and border rectifications. Finally, the areas envisaged for Italian economic development were considered, with Hoare insistent that the territory given to Italy should be placed under League supervision. With both sides stating their satisfaction with the details, copies of the proposal settlement were produced and duly initialled. Arguably unsettled by arbitrary nature of the settlement, Hoare dismissed Laval's suggestion that the finalised proposals be conveyed to Mussolini for prior approval (once the British and French governments had granted their assent to the plan), and only then be proffered to the Abyssinians; Hoare's resolve in this

should not be disclosed to the League until after the British general election. On 18 November Hoare instructed Peterson to enter into further talks with the French, with the goal of reducing the Italian gains from previous proposals. Therefore, many of the principal elements of a settlement had been agreed beforehand with only the specifics to be decided when Hoare agreed to go to Paris: Robertson, 'The Hoare-Laval Plan', *Journal of Contemporary History*.

matter softened after Laval suggested that this partiality may increase the Italian dictator's readiness to accept the plan.

After the talks broke up on the Sunday evening, Hoare dispatched a message to Eden (who was deputising whilst he was in Switzerland) informing him that Peterson was presently returning to England with a memorandum containing proposals for a settlement: 'I hope you will approve of the proposals in it. I am sure that they are the best that we can get. Indeed, I think that they are better than we might have expected in the circumstances'.⁴¹¹ The Foreign Secretary also forwarded a note with the proposals addressed to Baldwin, emphasising the need for urgency when considering the outlined plan:

I am enclosing a very important memorandum about the negotiations. Van and I regard it as most necessary, if we are to avoid very great risks, action should be taken at once upon the lines that I recommend. I think that you will see that from our point of view they are as safe as they can be in view of the difficulties of the situation. I greatly hope that you will have a Cabinet at once to confirm what I propose. If there is any difficulty about the proposals, I very much hope that Anthony will talk to Van about them on the telephone. We are indeed convinced that it is impossible to do better in the present circumstances, and we are in fact relieved at having brought the French so far and so solidly with us on a programme which so obviously falls short of the desires of both Laval and the Italians.⁴¹²

After Hoare left Laval on the evening of 8 December, he was confronted at the British Embassy by several press correspondents, briefed that something was afoot.

⁴¹¹ Hoare to Eden, 8 Dec. 1935, Avon MSS, 14/1/450J.

⁴¹² Hoare to Baldwin, 8 Dec. 1935, Avon MSS, AP20/4/12B.

Not wishing to offend, he obliged with a short interview whereby the proposals were outlined in very general terms, together with the important clarification that any settlement was no more than in the proposal stage. Furthermore, Hoare insisted that the plan would only be referred to the interested parties (Abyssinia, Italy and the League) after both the British and French governments had considered the proposals. The plan being in its infancy, Hoare requested that the assembled journalists desist in commenting on what had been said. Concluding this impromptu press conference, and content that the journalists would desist in making comment in the next day's papers, Hoare made his excuses and prepared to travel on to Switzerland. Subverting this assumed position of safety, a discontented official at the French Foreign Office is suspected of passing a complete copy of the initialled plan to two leading opposition newspapers in Paris, the *Euvre* and the *Echo de Paris*. These anti-government publications gleefully published details of the proposals in their Monday morning editions, which was considerably in advance of either the British or French cabinets having had the opportunity to study the details of the plan.

When the Paris proposals were first brought before a hastily convened cabinet on the morning of 9 December there was little indication of the controversy which was about to engulf the government. In the Foreign Secretary's absence, it fell to Eden to brief his cabinet colleagues on the meeting in Paris and its resultant proposals. Prior to outlining the details, Eden specified some subtle amendments to what had been agreed in Paris. Predominantly, Eden wanted the plan to be sent to Rome and Addis Ababa simultaneously, as the plan transferred more territory to Italy than envisaged in earlier negotiations. Furthermore, Eden proffered the view that there must be no cancellation of the League meeting on oil sanctions, although any decision should

naturally be deferred until the proposals had been examined by all affected parties; the cabinet concurred with both of these requests. The Minister for League of Nations Affairs then summarised the Paris plan, warning his colleagues in advance that 'some features of the proposals were likely to prove very distasteful to some State Members of the League of Nations'.⁴¹³ Although there was no indication of dissent, it must have been apparent to those present that the large Italian gains outlined were hardly equitable to Abyssinia, and therefore made a mockery of Hoare's initial standpoint in Paris on 7 December, that 'the arrangement must be a judicious mixture of an exchange of territory and the conferring of economic concessions'.⁴¹⁴ Nonetheless, Eden reminded his cabinet colleagues that French cooperation had still not been secured in the event of an Italian attack on British interests, inferring this may have influenced the Foreign Secretary's acceptance of the proposals. The situation was discussed at length and criticism (from unnamed Ministers) was raised over the fact that Italy appeared to be profiting from its resort to force. The question of why the proposals were being sent via Britain and France and not directly from the League of Nations was answered to the effect that Mussolini was more likely to consider the proposals seriously if they emanated from the two allied governments. Concluding their deliberations, the cabinet agreed to support the 'policy of the Secretary of State as set forth in the memorandum' and would meet again the following day in order to discuss the proposals further, prior to Eden departing for Geneva.

⁴¹³ Cabinet 52 (35), 9 Dec 1935, CAB 23/82.

⁴¹⁴ Verbatim report (presented to the cabinet) of Hoare's initial meeting at the Quai d'Orsay, 7 Dec. 1935, DBFP, 2, 15, p.432-6.

In the House of Commons on 10 December, Baldwin refused to be drawn on reports that the Anglo-French scheme was being reported in the foreign press, with Attlee enquiring when the Paris proposals would come before the House. However, despite assertions that he was unaware of this development, Baldwin's failure to deny the claims merely emboldened the Opposition to intensify the debate. A further difficulty emerged during the cabinet meeting that day, when Eden informed front-bench colleagues that the French were demonstrating signs of indifference to British scruples over equitability, insisting that only an outline of the plan should be sent to Addis Ababa – if France was forced to backtrack on this, Paris expected the British to withhold their support of the oil sanction should Abyssinia refuse and Italy accept the proposals. To placate Paris, the cabinet agreed that Britain would support a temporary suspension in their backing for further sanctions if Abyssinia refused the plan, although this would be subject to ongoing review. As Ministers continued their deliberations, it was pressed home that both Hoare and the French government considered these the best terms Abyssinia was likely to receive, adding that France would in all likelihood renounce the current sanctions if London rejected the plan. However, despite this support for the absent Foreign Secretary, the cabinet was becoming increasingly alarmed at news of mounting press and opposition criticism of the proposals; Ministers thereby concluded that it would be prudent to release a statement explaining that the proposals being considered by the Britain and France were merely suggestions for a settlement. Furthermore, in order to pre-empt the expected opposition demand for a debate on the Paris proposals, the Prime Minister announced that parliament would have the opportunity to discuss the proposals on 17 December or thereabouts.⁴¹⁵ However, during the evening of 10 December the

⁴¹⁵ Cabinet 53 (35), 10 Dec. 1935, CAB 23/82.

Opposition instigated a debate on Abyssinia, and used the proposal details in that morning's *Times* to castigate the government over the Paris proposals, with Lees-Smith stating: 'If these terms are 50 per cent correct, it is impossible for this country to make itself responsible for them without utterly discrediting itself in the eyes of the world'.⁴¹⁶ Defending the government, Eden retorted:

We have never said that either party must accept the proposals, we are not seeking to impose terms on anybody – we have no authority to do it – but we are trying to find out, by communication with the parties, whether we can find a basis upon which peace negotiations should be possible, and I make no apology for that.⁴¹⁷

The debate descended into acrimony, and the House rang to opposition charges of government duplicity in its endorsement of the proposals, with Baldwin's attempt to suggest all was not as it seemed by asserting 'his lips are not yet unsealed', affording little comfort to Ministers in the face of the Opposition onslaught.⁴¹⁸

Reaction to news of the proposals and the clumsy manner in which Baldwin had responded to parliamentary questions, elicited anger from a number of prominent MPs. Bernays wrote of his disbelief:

The fact appears to be that Hoare has capitulated to the French. The French refused to go further with sanctions and Hoare, instead of exposing their cowardice to the world, has given way to them. If that has really happened there will be a most almighty row in the House. Somehow I cannot believe that Hoare has done

⁴¹⁶ *The Times*, 10 Dec. 1935.

⁴¹⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, 10 Dec. 1935, vol. 307, cols.818-25.

⁴¹⁸ Middlemas & Barnes, *Baldwin*, p.887.

that. He seemed so strong and sane; any job that he has had he has always been more than equal to it.⁴¹⁹

Harold Nicolson was equally despondent, later recounting that he was 'seething because of the Abyssinian proposals', adding that Baldwin's remark implying a 'leakage in Paris' suggested the press reports were in fact true. Still fuming, he continued, 'If this was so there would be great indignation at the fact that we should be giving Italy more for breaking the Covenant than we offered for keeping it'.⁴²⁰ Lord Cecil was also disquieted over the rumoured scheme: 'If the papers are right I am afraid the universal conclusion will be that as between the League and Mussolini, Mussolini has won. That is the essential thing'.⁴²¹ Notwithstanding these criticisms, a number of MPs continued to support the government, with Earl Winterton stating his disagreement with both Cecil and Nicolson by insisting that, although the plan admittedly appeared to offer Italy a 'good deal', it was no more than a proposal to the affected parties and could be accepted or rejected in equal measure.⁴²²

Whilst travelling to Switzerland, Hoare was incommunicado until he arrived in the resort of Zuoz on 10 December; that same morning *The Times* had published details of the Paris meeting. At first, Hoare seemed unaware that anything was untoward; Maud wrote to Neville Chamberlain stressing that her husband was very tired, but was content with the how events had progressed both in Paris and, after hearing reports, in the cabinet meeting of the previous day.⁴²³ Nevertheless, Hoare soon

⁴¹⁹ Bernays diary, 10 Dec. 1935, p.224.

⁴²⁰ Nicolson diary, 10 Dec. 1935, N. Nicolson (ed.), *Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters 1930-1939* (1966), p.230.

⁴²¹ Cecil to Eden, 10 Dec. 1935, Avom MSS, 14/1/417A.

⁴²² Winterton diary, 10 Dec. 1935, Earl Winterton, *Orders of the Day* (1953), p.209.

⁴²³ Maud Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 10 Dec. 1935, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/28/22.

expressed distinct concern at the news emanating from London, and immediately telegraphed Baldwin regarding his intention to return home. Confident this would not be necessary in light of the cabinet's approval of the proposals, Baldwin reassured the Foreign Secretary that there was no need for an urgent return. However, this view was contradicted by officials at the Foreign Office who informed the Secretary of State that the Prime Minister's confidence was misplaced; Hoare decided to return forthwith.⁴²⁴ However, misfortune was to derail this intention for an immediate return, as prior to his journey Hoare suffered an unfortunate accident on the skating rink in which he blacked out and awoke to discover that his nose had been seriously broken in two places. Consequently, in order to prevent infection, his doctor refused Hoare permission to travel for several days, thus denying him a timely opportunity to influence events in Britain.

The government's steadfast attitude to the proposals appeared to waver during the next cabinet meeting on 11 December. Eden in particular appeared to have completely reversed his position, advising fellow Ministers that he wished to avoid championing the plan in Geneva, believing it to be a fruitless exercise as the majority of delegates had undoubtedly made up their minds to oppose the scheme. Despite this apparent *volte face* by Eden, it remained unclear how many of his cabinet colleagues shared his perspective; many Ministers remained ambivalent, possibly fearing the consequences for Abyssinia if the proposals were ditched; it was noted by Ministers that even if the oil sanction was implemented, it would take time for the embargo to become effective. Moreover, Britain's military chiefs were fundamentally opposed to any undertaking involving military action without French cooperation (a

⁴²⁴ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.183.

likely scenario in the event of London abandoning the proposals). Exacerbating the cabinet's dilemma over whether or not to support the proposals, the Dominions Secretary J.H. Thomas backed Eden's reservations by informing Ministers that several High Commissioners had expressed doubts over the large area to undergo Italian economic development, claiming their apprehension was reflected in British public opinion. With sentiments therefore split, the cabinet concluded that Eden should use his discretion at the League and focus on generalities; they also advised that he emphasise the economic opportunities for Abyssinia inherent in the proposals. Moreover, Eden was instructed to keep the option of a future oil sanction open.⁴²⁵

After the cabinet concluded its session, it was evident that the government's uncertainty over the proposals was causing much disquiet amongst its supporters. Nicolson recorded in his diary that he, together with De La Warr and Kenneth Lindsay, went to see the Colonial Secretary, J.H. Thomas, to discuss rumours that a settlement was in the offing. Nicolson recorded Thomas's verdict on the matter: 'The cabinet are equally indignant and Anthony Eden has been told to tell the League that we shall not press them to accept it, i.e. we shall ask them to reject it'.⁴²⁶ However, not all the cabinet were in agreement with Thomas's damning verdict on the proposals, with the President of the Board of Trade stressing the need not to panic:

I support Sam in the belief that he took the only possible course with the French.

Moreover I am relieved to know that oil sanctions are to be held up for the present.

When our full case is made public it will be attacked hotly in some quarters,

⁴²⁵ Cabinet 54 (35), 11 Dec. 1935, CAB 23/82.

⁴²⁶ Nicolson diary, 11 Dec. 1935, p.232.

although it will be perceived in others with a sense of relief. It is undoubtedly right under the present circumstances.⁴²⁷

Throughout this furore over the proposals in London, Hoare was confined to his bed in Switzerland. Following reports of cabinet disunity he became extremely concerned over the future of the proposals, and in all likelihood began to fear the worst. This trepidation was duly vindicated when news came from his PPS on 12 December:

I fear that there is no doubt that sentiment is less rather than more favourable. When the first newspaper accounts reached us, criticism was mainly on the grounds that Italy is being given too much. This feeling remains, but now there is added to it misgivings as to the tactical position in which we may find ourselves if Italy accepts and Abyssinia refuses. Of course, one can only generalise when it comes to a question of the opinions of 600 members. But I have talked to scores of them in the past forty-eight hours, having tried to pick them out so as to get a fair cross-section of opinion. I needn't bother you with the views of Socialists, or of people like Mander; nor with those of the Liberal Nationals who seem profoundly disturbed. The trouble lies with our own Party and with few exceptions a state of acute discomfort seems to prevail amongst them.⁴²⁸

Patrick continued that the feeling amongst MPs was worse than anything he could remember at the time of the India Bill, and he felt sure that the parliamentary Conservative Party would 'heave a sigh of profound relief if we could stage a "get-out" from the immediate position, without undue loss of face'. In light of this news, and telephone calls from Eden and Vansittart, Hoare became desperate to return to London, yet doctors forbade him to travel for at least a further two days. In view of these instructions, Hoare informed Vansittart that he would be able to leave Zuoz on

⁴²⁷ Runciman to Baldwin, 11 Dec. 1935, Avon MSS, Ap20/4/15.

⁴²⁸ Patrick to Hoare, 12 Dec. 1935, Templewood MSS, VIII/1.

Sunday 15 December. Furthermore, fearful that government supporters might opt to vote with the Opposition in the current furore, Hoare instructed his Permanent Secretary to press Baldwin into making the debate, scheduled for Thursday 19 December, a vote of confidence.⁴²⁹

Opposition to the proposals subsequently increased, particularly following *The Times* leader on 15 December, entitled 'A Corridor for Camels', over claims that any port awarded to Abyssinia would be prohibited from being serviced by a railway. Public opinion was also reported to be incensed over the terms, with the resultant correspondence leading to the widespread complaint amongst MPs that their postbags were bulging with letters protesting against the proposals.⁴³⁰ Sarcasm and wit were also subtly undermining the proposals, with the Foreign Secretary now the butt of numerous jokes. The Conservative Bob Boothby especially seemed to revel in jokes about the 'hoar frost in Switzerland' and the King's favourite 'it's stupid to send coal to Newcastle and Hoares to Paris'.⁴³¹ Even the Foreign Secretary's closest ally was becoming susceptible to the general despondency surrounding the proposals, fearing the 'game was up for Hoare':

We have had a pretty difficult and anxious time over the Hoare-Laval proposals. ...

When Sam left for Paris on the 7th we had no idea that he would be invited to

consider detailed peace proposals. I believed, and so far as I know my colleagues

⁴²⁹ Vansittart to Baldwin, 13 Dec. 1935, Avon MSS, Ap20/4/17.

⁴³⁰ Although the public uproar and subsequent 'deluge' of letters deriding the Paris proposals has become an essential element in the traditional explanation as to why the government felt it had to abandon the scheme, the actual number of letters received by MPs is a subject of much contention. Page Croft carried out his own survey in 1936 and found that out of 40 MPs (presumably Conservatives), many had received none, most one or two, and one had received a dozen. As the League of Nations Union had organised a letter writing campaign following the disclosure of the Paris plan it would be highly likely that a fair proportion originated in this way. Daniel Waley arrived at a similar conclusion on the impact of public opinion: Waley, *British Public Opinion*, p.44-70.

⁴³¹ Lockhart diary, 15 Dec. 1935, p.334.

believed also, that he was going to stop off at Paris for a few hours on his way to Switzerland to get the discussions with the French into such a condition that we could say to the League[,] Don't prejudice the chances of a favourable issue by thrusting in a particularly provocative extra sanction at this moment. Instead of that a set of proposals was agreed to and enough was allowed by the French to leak out to the press to make it impossible for us to amend the proposals or even to defer accepting them without throwing over our own Foreign Secretary. The invaluable maxim that nothing is ever as good or as bad as it sounds at first may now be invoked on our behalf, and we need it, for nothing could be worse than our position. Our whole prestige in foreign affairs at home and abroad has tumbled to pieces like a house of cards. If we had to fight the election over again we should probably be beaten and certainly would not have more than a bare majority. Sam's reputation is damaged – perhaps irretrievably. I am told that our supporters in the House, while very sorry for him as a sick man, say he can never recover his position among foreign nations and therefore had better go and so help the Govt. back to its feet.⁴³²

Austen Chamberlain was similarly despairing over the situation, suggesting that 'Sam Hoare had blundered badly'. Suggesting that the cabinet were not expecting any proposals to result from Hoare's Paris trip, Chamberlain thought the Foreign Secretary's error of judgement was down to the fact that 'he was absolutely worn out' and didn't realise the consequences of his actions.⁴³³

Hoare arrived back in London on 16 December and was immediately ordered to rest in isolation by his doctor, thereby precluding him from exerting direct influence on the cabinet's wavering support for the proposals. When Ministers met again on the

⁴³² Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 15 Dec. 1935, NCDL, 4, p.166.

⁴³³ Austen to Ida Chamberlain, 15 Dec. 1935, ACDL, p.494-5.

following day, it was clear that the majority had become deeply sceptical about the Paris proposals, yet remained reluctant to discard them from loyalty to their still-absent colleague. Consequently, the cabinet continued to discuss the proposals, with the proposed Abyssinian port the focus of their deliberations. Eden was one of the principal speakers, pointing out that the decision not to permit a railway was in the original plan drawn up in Paris, but for some reason was omitted when the document was translated. As to the port itself, he suggested there was some disquiet amongst Foreign Office officials due to the fact that the Emperor of Abyssinia had stated a preference for the British port of Zeila rather than the alternative of Assab in Italian Somaliland. On hearing Eden's exposition, it was apparent to Ministers that Italy was not ceding anything in respect of the extra territory granted to the Italians in the proposals; they would neither lose the land corridor to Assab nor the port itself. One unnamed Minister suggested that the government should take the opportunity to drop the entire plan due to the misunderstanding over the railway and port issues; this viewpoint had the support of several Under-Secretaries (Oliver Stanley, William Ormsby-Gore and Walter Elliot). Meanwhile, in a new departure from merely ditching the plan, Duff Cooper noted ominously 'that there is a strong and growing feeling in the Cabinet that Sam should be asked to resign'.⁴³⁴ Nonetheless, Ministers were not prepared to formally call for the renunciation of the proposals until the Prime Minister had spoken to Hoare, thus delaying any decision until the cabinet reconvened the following day.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁴ Duff Cooper quoted in Macleod, *Neville Chamberlain*, p.188-9.

⁴³⁵ Cabinet 55 (35), 17 Dec. 1935, CAB 23/82.

Later on 17 December Baldwin, Eden and Neville Chamberlain visited Hoare at his London home and found the Foreign Secretary determined to defend the Paris proposals in the Commons debate two days later.⁴³⁶ Hoare outlined the statement he intended to make in the House to his three visitors, and highlighted its principal element: that it was a League plan and consequently it was up to the League to either accept or refuse it, although both Britain and France believed it contained the minimum concessions to halt Mussolini, short of the two countries waging war against him. Having heard his statement, Baldwin and Chamberlain left, with the bed-stricken Hoare confident of their continued support, having been assured by Baldwin that 'We all stand together'.⁴³⁷ However, Hoare's relief was to be short-lived as an outpouring of anger against the Paris proposals during the Conservative Backbench Foreign Affairs Committee meeting late that evening, with Austen Chamberlain accusing Ministers of betraying the League of Nations, persuaded the majority of Ministers to come out against the proposals; according to Amery, the cabinet took fright.⁴³⁸

During the cabinet talks on the morning of 18 December the mood of Ministers had manifestly changed. Baldwin presented a brief rendition of Hoare's speech and urged all present to speak their minds, whereby it soon became evident that many were concerned for the reputation of the government if the statement was delivered unadulterated to the House. The afore-mentioned junior members were now joined by Kingsley Wood, Cunliffe-Lister, Lord Zetland and even Runciman, in castigating

⁴³⁶ Eden was only fleetingly present at this meeting as he was due to leave for Geneva that evening: Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, p.252.

⁴³⁷ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.185.

⁴³⁸ L.S. Amery, *My Political Life*, vol.3: *The Unforgiving Years 1929-1940* (1955), p.184.

the Foreign Secretary. Although it was believed that the government would obtain a majority, fears were raised that this lead could be substantially reduced by defections and abstentions.⁴³⁹ Cunliffe-Lister voiced the opinion that the crisis could be defused if Hoare resigned and delivered his statement as a private Member.⁴⁴⁰ Halifax concurred with this suggestion, adding his weight to the call for Hoare to resign prior to making his representation in the Commons.⁴⁴¹ Consequently, this significant opposition against a Ministerial statement in support of the proposals made Hoare's position increasingly untenable should he persist with his stated position. With this in mind, Neville Chamberlain returned to Hoare's London home after the cabinet meeting, and implored the Foreign Secretary to reconsider his stance, stressing that he did not believe his statement went 'far enough', and that Hoare should admit the plan's failings along with his mistake in accepting it.⁴⁴² Faced with the unappealing prospect of either recanting his standpoint or losing office, Hoare asserted that as he remained of the view that an acceptance of these proposals represented Britain's best option to avoid a permanent break with Italy, he had no other choice than to resign; nonetheless, he was determined to make his statement to the House.⁴⁴³ Baldwin visited Hoare a few hours later, but also failed to convince the Foreign Secretary to reconsider; consequently, Hoare tendered his resignation to the King on 18 December.⁴⁴⁴ News of the Foreign Secretary's resignation swiftly spread amongst MPs, with Bruce Lockhart reporting the scene at the House of Commons:

⁴³⁹ The Conservative MP Edward Spears had already tabled an amendment with Cazalet, Boothby, Nicolson and others in support of Attlee's motion against the Paris proposals: M. Egremont, *Under Two Flags: The Life of Major General Sir Edward Spears* (1997), p.133-4.

⁴⁴⁰ Middlemas & Barnes, *Baldwin*, p.892-3.

⁴⁴¹ Cabinet 56 (35), 18 Dec. 1935, CAB 23/82.

⁴⁴² Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.185.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Hoare to Wigram, 18 Dec. 1935, Templewood MSS, VIII/1.

Bob Boothby very jubilant. Government had climbed down. Baldwin had recanted and scrapped Sam Hoare. Bob loudly insistent that rank and file had won the triumph, the Junior Cabinet Ministers having ratted only at last minute.... Simon also there – a huge smile on his face.⁴⁴⁵

In the debate on the following day, Hoare delivered his statement as an ordinary Member to a packed House of Commons. Explaining the background to the proposals and why he believed them to be the only option short of war, Hoare continued to champion the proposals, ending his statement with an air of introspection:

I ask myself, looking back, whether I have a guilty conscience or whether my conscience is clear. I say with all humility to the House that my conscience is clear. So far as the judgement of others is concerned, I am painfully aware that a great body of opinion is intensely critical of the course I adopted. Knowing my own deficiencies, having no illusions about my own abilities, I should naturally have wished to accept the view of this great body of men and women from one end of the country to the other, but, looking at the situation as I see it, looking back at the position in which I was placed a fortnight ago, I say to the House that I cannot honestly recant. I sincerely believe that the course that I took was the only course that was possible in the circumstances.⁴⁴⁶

The House was genuinely sympathetic. Amery later expressed his conviction that: 'Hoare would have carried the House by the incontrovertible force of his argument if he had been allowed to deliver his speech as Foreign Secretary'.⁴⁴⁷ Even Nicolson,

⁴⁴⁵ Lockhart diary, 18 Dec. 1935, p.335.

⁴⁴⁶ Hoare statement, 19 Dec. 1935, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 307, col.2016.

⁴⁴⁷ Amery, *My Political Life*, p.185.

hardly an admirer of the former Foreign Secretary, commented: 'I do not like him but my whole sympathy went out to him'.⁴⁴⁸

Although the government easily gained their majority in the division that followed, questions remained - yet largely remained unanswered. The editor of *The Times*, no mean critic of the Foreign Secretary, was incisive on the matter; although he concurred that Hoare should go, he was certain that the cabinet were far from innocent in the matter: 'I doubt whether it is fair to say that Sam committed the Cabinet without their approval, or indeed that he went very willingly to Paris'.⁴⁴⁹ Notwithstanding the conceivability that Hoare was fatigued when in Paris, as is so often claimed, it was entirely out of character for him unilaterally to attempt an adulteration of government policy; even in the Privilege Case he was only charged with attempting to smooth the progress of government policy. Up to the end of November, Hoare was supportive of the government line in continuing with tougher sanctions, although keen to delay any embargo until the ongoing Paris discussions had been completed; he had defended this two-track policy regularly in the Commons, advocating it again only two days before leaving for Paris.⁴⁵⁰ It is indeed probable that Hoare's disappointment after seeing Baldwin following the Commons debate on 5 December was a result of the instruction that war with Italy must be averted, implying the need for a settlement at any cost in his scheduled talks with Laval (as it was generally held an oil sanction would mean war). In any case, the Foreign Secretary had little input in the scheme, which was largely formulated in the weeks before his arrival, and as it was only a proposal it did not automatically

⁴⁴⁸ Nicolson diary, 19 Dec. 1935, p.232-3.

⁴⁴⁹ Dawson to Derby, 19 Dec.1935, Dawson MSS, 78/155-6.

⁴⁵⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5 Dec. 1935, vol. 307, col.342-3.

commit the government to concrete action. However, both Britain and France realised that the proposals represented a final opportunity to avert a break with Italy, and as Laval confirmed while awaiting his fate in 1945, 'neither Italy nor Ethiopia would have been able to oppose a compromise imposed by our two countries'.⁴⁵¹ It would arguably be disingenuous of the British government to have avoided similar conclusions prior to the Paris talks. In addition, the fact that the cabinet accepted the proposals on 9 December prior to the ensuing furore affords little weight to the argument that it contravened their wishes; Baldwin's assurance to Hoare on 10 December also implies that he was not expecting any difficulty over the plan. Eden was also initially supportive, although he, like other Ministers, was to be swayed by the reaction in Parliament. It was thereby highly improbable that Hoare had taken on the role of a maverick Foreign Secretary in his discussions with Laval.

Notwithstanding the complexities of interpretation, the Paris proposals had ended Hoare's Ministerial role, though there remained the suspicion that this absence would be but temporary. Only two days after the 19 December debate, rumours of a swift return to office were beginning to surface, with Beaverbrook appearing to demonstrate either a canny foresight or access to inside information (perhaps emanating from Hoare himself!): Lockhart noted in his diary that 'Max says he will be back in Government as First Lord of Admiralty by February'.⁴⁵² That said, Hoare's reign as Foreign Secretary had culminated in disaster less than six months into the role – and was to leave an indelible stain on his ministerial career. In summing up

⁴⁵¹ P. Laval, *The Unpublished Diary of Pierre Laval* (1948), p.31.

⁴⁵² Lockhart diary, 22 Dec. 1935, p.336; Beaverbrook apparently saw Hoare on both 21 and 22 December, when the former minister showed him a letter from Baldwin promising to bring him back into the government: A.J.P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (1972), p.360.

Hoare's downfall, Headlam's epitaph was habitually acerbic and succinct: 'He meant to be Foreign Minister; he has been Foreign Minister – and now he has made a mess of the job'.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵³ Headlam diary, 19 Dec. 1935: S. Ball (ed.), *The Headlam Diaries 1935-1951* (1999), p.80.

CHAPTER SIX – AT THE ADMIRALTY: A MOST ENJOYABLE YEAR

In the wake of his personal exposition of the Paris proposals to Parliament on 19 December 1935, Hoare hastily returned to the Swiss resort of Zuoz in order to recuperate after the trauma of his resignation. The relative isolation of the Swiss Alps provided an ideal retreat in which to escape public uproar over the peace plan, whilst affording Hoare the opportunity to regain his health and seek solace in his beloved skating. Moreover, in view of Baldwin's unconvincing performance in the debate that had followed Hoare's statement, it was politically imperative for the former Foreign Secretary that he be distanced from any possible intrigue against the Prime Minister, lest it wrecked his chances of a swift return to office. This desire to avoid any hint of controversy can be seen in Hoare's disinclination to meet with Beaverbrook (who was also, by chance, spending the Christmas period in Switzerland) through fear of misinterpretation in London. Appreciative of the possible implications of any such contact, Beaverbrook concurred with his friend: 'I agree with you entirely. It would be a mistake for you to come near me at the present time. And I am quite convinced that I should not go to see you'.⁴⁵⁴ In contrast to his determination to defer any formal

⁴⁵⁴ Beaverbrook to Hoare, 27 Dec. 1935, Templewood MSS, VIII/6; This trepidation over appearing disloyal did not appear to preclude Hoare from corresponding with another of Baldwin's political adversaries, replying to a sympathetic letter from Churchill that they should convene at a future date to discuss the continuing dangers

contact with the errant Press Lord, Hoare was keen to maintain cordial relations with the senior members of the government. Writing ostensibly to wish the Chancellor of the Exchequer a prosperous New Year, Hoare stressed that 'Nothing that has happened in the last fortnight will make the least difference either to my friendships – of which I value yours much the most – or to my personal attitude towards politics'. That said, Hoare exhibited little contrition over the discredited proposals:

It is too soon at present to see things in their right perspective, and I prefer to suspend my final judgement - and I hope others will do the same. Of one thing, however, I am certain. If I had come back at once from Paris and myself explained the whole situation, there would have been no crisis.

Emphasising the support for his stance further, Hoare concluded by trumpeting the 2000 letters he had allegedly received in the week since his resignation.⁴⁵⁵ Although he was merely guilty of impolitic assertions, Hoare's viewpoint was hardly sensitive to the government's desire to downplay the Paris peace plan. Unsurprisingly, on learning of the former Foreign Secretary's inclination to return to England at the beginning of February 1936, Baldwin urged him against undue haste.⁴⁵⁶

Although Baldwin's attempt to dissuade Hoare from his original intention to return home must have caused him concern, it was the absence of any substantive communication from Neville Chamberlain in the weeks after his resignation which proved especially unsettling. An innate fear that even his closest political friend may have turned against him over the Abyssinian debacle prompted Hoare to question

posed to the European situation through the failure to resolve the Abyssinian conflict: Hoare to Churchill, 2 Jan. 1936, M. Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S Churchill, vol.V, Companion Part 3 Documents: The Coming of War 1935-1939* (1982), p.2-3.

⁴⁵⁵ Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 27 Dec. 1935, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/29/32.

⁴⁵⁶ Baldwin to Hoare, 2 Jan. 1936, Templewood MSS, VIII/6.

his political future. However, this angst proved temporary and his resolve was bolstered by Beaverbrook, who sought to quell his friend's doubts: 'Your judgement is sound. You have the best political judgement of any man in public life today'.⁴⁵⁷ Beaverbrook's intervention emboldened Hoare to contact Chamberlain, impressing on the Chancellor the restlessness generated by uncertainty as to where his future lay:

Be an angel and write me a line some time as to how things are going. So far as I am concerned I am already rested. ... If the political tide continues to leave me on the shore, I shall write a book. I have been approached by various publishers and I am attracted by the idea. My difficulty is that until I know whether or when I am coming back into politics it is impossible to enter into any contract. I also feel some uncertainty as to what I had better do in the House of Commons. I certainly do not wish to be a captious critic of the Government. As soon as I get back, it looks to me as if I shall be pressed from many quarters to take up this or that question. Already individual members and groups have started upon me. I have constantly been rung up from London, and several MPs have tried to come and see me here. To all I have returned the same answer that I can make no plans until I return. Return I must for my own private affairs in the middle of February. It will then be difficult for me to avoid committing myself in one direction or another. The one thing I cannot do is nothing. If S.B. and you wish to have me back, I should be ready to come. If, however, you don't, I shall have to map out for myself a new line of life in politics, literature, or business.⁴⁵⁸

The mildly threatening tone was unmistakable, and begged the question: could the government afford to discount Hoare's early return to the cabinet? As a backbench critic, the former Foreign Secretary could prove particularly effective, having been privy to the government's innermost discussions over Britain's lack of preparedness

⁴⁵⁷ Beaverbrook to Hoare, 15 Jan. 1936, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/307b.

⁴⁵⁸ Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 18 Jan. 1936, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/29/27.

for war. Further emphasising his potential to embarrass the government at a time of increasing Anglo-German tension, Hoare mentioned to Chamberlain that he was considering Hitler's offer of a seat at the 1936 Winter Olympics (in February), though according to his memoirs he dismissed the dictator's invitation out of hand.⁴⁵⁹ Moreover, Hoare could doubtlessly cause the government much discomfort if he published an account of the events prior to his resignation; a tangible possibility given that Hodder and Stoughton had approached Hoare over a book deal in the first weeks of January 1936.⁴⁶⁰

On 3 February, Hoare wrote to Baldwin informing him of his imminent return to London, and inquiring if he could visit the Prime Minister to outline his future plans.⁴⁶¹ However, coinciding with Hoare's return, *The Times* printed a critical leader under the title 'An Echo from the Past', drawing attention to his monthly constituency newsletter, circulated earlier that week.⁴⁶² In this communication, Hoare had outlined his reasons for accepting the Paris proposals and, echoing his correspondence with Neville Chamberlain, stressed that given the chance to explain the terms properly to both cabinet and country, there would have been no crisis at all.⁴⁶³ On hearing of the article while travelling back to London - and aghast at the potential damage of such comments to his re-entry into the government - Hoare hurriedly penned a note to Baldwin disclaiming any responsibility for the release of the newsletter and stating

⁴⁵⁹ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.199.

⁴⁶⁰ Annie to Maud Hoare, 29 Jan. 1936, Templewood MSS, AND; Hoare had prepared for this eventuality by asking the Foreign Office for various documents, once before he left for Switzerland between 19-20 Dec. 1935, and again on 12 Jan. 1936. On 4 Feb. 1936 a Foreign Office official contacted Hoare's private secretary and informed him that most of the requested documents were ready for his collection, with the exception of his memoranda submitted to the Cabinet, which was held by the Cabinet Office: Hoyer-Millar to Ovens, 4 Feb. 1936, Templewood MSS, VIII/6.

⁴⁶¹ Hoare to Baldwin, 3 Feb. 1936, Baldwin MSS, 171/299-300.

⁴⁶² *The Times*, 8 Feb. 1936.

⁴⁶³ Chelsea Conservative & Unionist Association newsletter for Jan. 1936, Templewood MSS, VIII/6.

his intention to counter *The Times* comments in a formal letter.⁴⁶⁴ Hoare also wrote to Neville Chamberlain, disassociating himself from press charges that he was intent on re-opening the issues surrounding his resignation.

I am much annoyed over the publication of a letter that I wrote to the members of my Conservative Association immediately after the House of Commons Debate in Dec., and lest you should think that I am trying to make trouble I write to say (1) This was one of the monthly letters that I write them. (2) It was written in December and but for the King's death would normally have been circulated early in January. (3) It was inevitable for me to discuss my resignation as I had received several hundred letters on this subject from my constituents. In order, however, to avoid trouble, the association that circulated the letter (not I) gave special directions that it was not to go to the Press, not even the local Press.⁴⁶⁵

The next day Hoare's formal letter appeared in *The Times*. Displaying a nimble use of prose, Hoare stressed that while he could not agree with some of its content he did approve of the sentiment behind the article: 'There is nothing so irritating as reiterated apologia nor so profitless as the stoking of controversies that have lost their glow. So far as myself am concerned the events of December are past and I am only interested in the future'.⁴⁶⁶ Emphasising his support for collective security, Hoare informed the paper's readership that any differences to emerge in its application (thereby hinting at the Abyssinian affair) were likely to disappear should Britain's re-armament be undertaken in a swift and vigorous manner. In seeking to

⁴⁶⁴ Hoare to Baldwin, 8 Feb. 1936, Baldwin MSS, 171/301-2.

⁴⁶⁵ Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 8 Feb. 1936, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/29/28.

⁴⁶⁶ *The Times*, 9 Feb. 1936.

answer his critics by championing re-armament, Hoare adroitly subverted the controversy over his untimely newsletter.⁴⁶⁷

Although *The Times*' attempt to derail Hoare's rehabilitation had been prevented by his deft handling of the issue, Butler nonetheless believed his former chief should avoid controversy, 'sit back' and await the likely course of events vindicating his previous stance whilst Foreign Secretary. Writing to Brabourne, Butler expressed his hopes for Hoare's return:

Sam will have the patience to await a good National "comeback" in due season and meanwhile stuff his ears full of wax against the Sirens of which Eddie Winterton, Leo Amery and Max Beaverbrook are the most golden-haired. Sam has not the distraction of dogs and children. His old country house is sold and the new one yet built; Dr Butler would therefore recommend a long sea voyage to S. Africa where he could play tennis in the warm and get back quickly when he wanted.⁴⁶⁸

However, Hoare was not prepared simply to await events and continued to press for a swift readmission to the government, which engendered awkward moments with those who believed an immediate return was premature - not least among them, his friend Neville Chamberlain:

Sam dined with me on Monday, and as I had rather expected, he proved to be in a difficult mood. We had hoped that he would take a few months more rest, perhaps abroad, both because it hardly seemed possible that he should have recovered his physical strength & mental balance just yet, and because we thought the House & the country would give him a warmer welcome if a little longer time were to elapse

⁴⁶⁷ Although Hoare is not traditionally associated with the push for re-armament prior to 1936, he had been fearful of the dangers posed to Britain by both Japan and Germany for a considerable time, and advocated a policy of strength towards these twin threats: Hoare to Baldwin, 8 Sep. 1933, Baldwin MSS, 106/129-33.

⁴⁶⁸ Butler to Brabourne, 12 Feb. 1936, Brabourne MSS, F97/21/155-7.

before he returned to active politics. But Sam did not see it that way. He wants to come back now, says he is quite rested and hinted very plainly that “with his temperament” he would almost certainly be drawn into conflict with the Government before long, if he were not attached to it.⁴⁶⁹

Chamberlain thought an ideal solution would be for Hoare to undertake an inquiry into the co-ordination of defence, and if as expected the conclusion pointed to the establishment of a Defence Minister, his friend could assume the new role.⁴⁷⁰ The attraction of this proposal for Chamberlain was that it would not only keep Hoare away from frontline politics, but would also bestow on him a position for which many believed he was highly suited. However, Baldwin dithered after consulting Hankey about Chamberlain’s scheme, and the proposal was never realised.

A week after his meeting with Neville Chamberlain, Hoare was invited to Downing Street for talks over his future. Hoare later recounted this conversation with Baldwin to the Chancellor, revealing that the Prime Minister had offered him the choice of either Defence or the Admiralty (it seemed that the Prime Minister had evidently taken some heed of Chamberlain’s suggestion after all).⁴⁷¹ The Defence portfolio was as yet unspecified, but Baldwin made it clear that this was his preferred choice for Hoare. In response, Hoare was receptive to the idea and it was decided that an announcement would be made after the forthcoming defence debate in the Commons. According to Hoare, Neville Chamberlain championed his participation in this debate, as it would announce the former Foreign Secretary’s return to active

⁴⁶⁹ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 16 Feb. 1936, NCDL, 4, p.176.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 23 Feb. 1936, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/29/29; in the same correspondence Hoare stated Baldwin’s assurance that he wanted him back in the cabinet before autumn – the defence portfolio was not yet formalised and Monsell was known to be reluctant to leave the Admiralty before the summer recess.

politics.⁴⁷² Hoare needed little encouragement, and when the debate began on 9 March (afforded even greater prominence following Germany's remilitarisation of the Rhineland two days earlier), he delivered an effective overview of Britain's military deficiencies, particularly in regards to the navy, and affording his support for the creation of a Minister of Co-ordination of Defence. The question of collective security was also scrutinised, with Hoare stating his belief that there was a need to avoid unrealistic dogma in order to concentrate on utilising it as an effective tool for the maintenance of peace.⁴⁷³ This panoramic account of Britain's defence requirements was generally well-received on the government benches, yet as he sought to conclude his critique Hoare committed a cardinal error of appearing too sycophantic towards the Prime Minister:

I wish the Prime Minister every success in his task. It is not a question of hoping for the best and preparing for the worst; it is a case of working for the best and preparing for the worst. If the Prime Minister will use his great influence upon these broad lines, if he will impress upon the country the great urgency of the problems that face us, he will find a great body of support in the country, and among his followers there will be none more willing to give him support than a very old friend and former colleague who has just had the privilege of addressing the House this afternoon.⁴⁷⁴

Hoare's motives behind such deference to his party leader were all too obvious, and the subsequent contribution by Labour's Arthur Henderson (son of the former leader) made this even more so: 'I am sure the House will congratulate the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Chelsea on his rehabilitation, and no doubt he will be moving from his present seat below the gangway to another quarter of the House in

⁴⁷² Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.200.

⁴⁷³ *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 309, cols. 1866-71.

⁴⁷⁴ *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 309, col. 1873.

the very near future, and no doubt he will have earned his reward'.⁴⁷⁵ Whether Hoare's speech was the deciding factor in Baldwin's decision to award Sir Thomas Inskip the Co-ordination role is unclear.⁴⁷⁶ Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that his closing remarks had damaged his political reputation among friends and foes alike. Relating the events to Brabourne, Butler believed Hoare's 'inability to sit back and wait has seriously prejudiced his future' and that he was 'not sure at all how well and balanced' the former Foreign Secretary was.⁴⁷⁷ Neville Chamberlain was equally blunt:

S.B. had made up his mind to appoint Sam until Sam's speech in the House which began well but ended with such an exhibition of bad taste as to shock the House & shake my beliefs in the wisdom of trusting him in such a vital position. It seemed as though his illness had upset his judgement and I therefore advised S.B. to play for safety and take Tom.⁴⁷⁸

Two decades later Hoare claimed that Baldwin's 'change of mind was a relief rather than a disappointment' as he judged Inskip's role as 'ill-defined'.⁴⁷⁹ In truth, Hoare had little opportunity for regret as Baldwin offered him the Admiralty on the same day that the new Minister for Co-ordination of Defence was announced. In correspondence to the former Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister presumed Hoare would succeed Lord Monsell between Easter and Whitsun, adding the reassurance: 'I can promise you a warm welcome when the time comes from all your

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Baldwin had written to Neville Chamberlain on 6 March informing him that Eden was unhappy with the prospect of Hoare's imminent return to the cabinet, in Macleod, *Neville Chamberlain*, p.193; Baldwin's friend Thomas Jones noted that Baldwin chose Inskip rather than Hoare because he was free of all 'foreign associations': Jones diary, 4 Apr. 1936, p.186.

⁴⁷⁷ Butler to Brabourne, 11 Mar. 1936, Brabourne MSS, F97/21/152-4.

⁴⁷⁸ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 14 Mar. 1936, NCDL, 4, p.179-80.

⁴⁷⁹ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.201.

colleagues'.⁴⁸⁰ Hoare gratefully accepted the offer: 'I should not be candid if I did not say that I am very anxious to return to the Government and to work once again with you and my old friends. I have felt very lonely these last months'.⁴⁸¹ Clearly relieved, Hoare dispatched similar missives to Neville Chamberlain: 'I shall welcome the chance of leaving a lonely furrow and returning to the circle of my friends in the first rank of whom I place you'.⁴⁸² However, Hoare must have been aware that despite Baldwin's assurance of the cabinet welcoming his return, murmurings amongst backbenchers that he was returning too quickly could possibly undermine this support. Seeking to counter any suggestion that sufficient time had not been allowed to elapse, Hoare wrote to the Chancellor citing a freshly delivered letter from Austen Chamberlain maintaining that 'the whole House and he would welcome my [Hoare's] return as soon as possible'.⁴⁸³ However, despite this assertion, many government supporters still believed Hoare's return to be premature.⁴⁸⁴

On 9 April 1936, Baldwin wrote to Hoare, confirming his succession to Monsell at Whitsuntide, even though the First Lord had wished to continue until the autumn: 'Whitsuntide will satisfy everyone (both among colleagues and outside) as to your period of exile. There will be no criticism. The Chief Whip was anxious it should be then. It is worth a lot to get this settled with general goodwill'.⁴⁸⁵ Duly accepting his

⁴⁸⁰ Baldwin to Hoare, 13 Mar. 1936, Templewood MSS, VIII/6.

⁴⁸¹ Hoare to Baldwin, 13 Mar. 1936, Baldwin MSS, 171/306.

⁴⁸² Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 13 Mar. 1936, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/29/30.

⁴⁸³ Hoare to Neville Chamberlain, 19 Mar. 1936, Neville Chamberlain MSS, MC7/11/29/31.

⁴⁸⁴ Hoare's concerns that his return to office could still be thwarted are illustrated by continuing correspondence with the Foreign Office requesting additional material from his time there, thus indicating his intention to turn to writing if spurned by the government. His secretary, Miss Ovens, contacted the Foreign Office in late March 1936 (23 & 25) and on 7 April requesting specific documents. A Foreign Office official dispatched the bulk of these to Hoare on 18 April, alongside the curious request for a signed photograph of the former Foreign Secretary to hang in the Private Secretary's room: Templewood MSS, VIII/6.

⁴⁸⁵ Baldwin to Hoare, 9 Apr. 1936, Templewood MSS, VIII/6.

appointment to the Admiralty, Hoare was nonetheless disgruntled at the extension of his ostracism from government:

I am rather disappointed at your decision not to make the change until Whitsuntide. Do you remember the words you used when we first talked over the future at Downing Street was [*sic*] 'very shortly after Easter', and in your latter letter of March 13th 'between Easter and Whitsuntide'. However I do not wish to add to your difficulties and I will profess in quietness. May I however rely on you to make the change when the House adjourns so that I should have the recess for settling in. I am writing to Bobby and asking him to talk over the details on the assumption that I shall take over at the beginning of the Whitsun recess.⁴⁸⁶

Although Hoare's chagrin at the delay was perhaps understandable, it was impolitic to bring such sentiments to the Prime Minister's attention in this way. A contributory factor underlying this outburst may have been the recently-made arrangements to sell the lease on his London home in Cadogan Gardens, with Hoare intent on taking residence at Admiralty House immediately on assuming office.⁴⁸⁷ Having sold the family home - Sidestrand Hall in Northrepps, Norfolk - earlier that year, with a replacement yet to be built, the Hoares faced potential homelessness should the Admiralty appointment be delayed further.

Hoare officially became First Lord of the Admiralty on 5 June 1936. Notwithstanding a tangible degree of disquiet at the appointment, in general the response was positive.⁴⁸⁸ However, Hoare's return to the cabinet prompted many observers to

⁴⁸⁶ Hoare to Baldwin, 10 Apr. 1936, Baldwin MSS, 171/307.

⁴⁸⁷ Annie to Maud Hoare, 7 Jun. 1936, Templewood MSS, AND; the sale of the lease for Cadogan Gardens was announced on 10 September: *The Times*, 10 Sep. 1936.

⁴⁸⁸ Lord Reith of the BBC was not impressed noting that he 'had no use for politicians these days': Reith diary, 6 June 1936, p.211; Amery believed Hoare should have waited until his policy at the Foreign Office was more

question the government's resolve in maintaining its support for sanctions against Italy, as the policies championed by the former Foreign Secretary painted him to be the antithesis of such a policy. Neville Chamberlain viewed press assertions that Hoare's reappointment to the cabinet indicated a change in policy towards Italy as verging on 'scandalous'.⁴⁸⁹ Nonetheless, despite the Chancellor's claims to the contrary, the government (or at least a significant part of it) was disillusioned with the sanction policy, particularly as it was Britain's navy which primarily maintained the restrictions against Italy. The view that sanctions were serving no purpose, and had merely pushed Italy into the arms of Germany, was gaining ground, with the Chancellor for one keen to reverse this process. Hoare's reinstatement to the cabinet thereby emboldened Chamberlain to deliver his 'midsummer of madness' speech to a small gathering of the 1900 Club (though it was clearly intended for a much-wider audience), which castigated the policy of sanctions against Italy and called for its suspension. Unsurprisingly, Chamberlain confessed to his sister: 'The only person I actually consulted was Sam who strongly approved. I did not consult Eden'.⁴⁹⁰ Faced with the fact that the League strategy was opposed by Chamberlain and others inside the cabinet, the government acted decisively to end its quarantine of Italy, with Eden recommending the end of the sanctions policy on 17 June 1936. Hoare's return to the government had thus made an immediate impact.

The Spanish Civil War, which began only a month after the government had decided to end sanctions against Italy, was a concern throughout Hoare's tenure at the

fully vindicated before rejoining the government: Amery diary, 6 June 1936, p.419; the press was largely supportive of Hoare's appointment: Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, p.269-70.

⁴⁸⁹ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 6 June 1936, NCDL, 4, p.194.

⁴⁹⁰ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 14 June 1936, NCDL, 4, p.194.

Admiralty, and generated numerous disagreements in cabinet with his chief antagonist, Eden. After enduring the strains of policing the Mediterranean for over six months, the Royal Navy was reluctant to become involved in any further disputes with the warring factions in Spain. The international community was initially perceived to be neutral in the conflict, although almost immediately Germany was accused of aiding the Nationalists by supplying the air-lift which transferred troops from North Africa to mainland Spain in July 1936, thus avoiding the Republican ships patrolling the Mediterranean. Italian and Soviet intervention soon followed, in support of the Nationalist and Republican sides respectively. Britain and France continued to abide by the non-intervention policy, yet the Royal Navy in particular was placed in a difficult position through its role of maintaining free passage for shipping into the Mediterranean; there were several reports of attacks on British naval vessels undertaking this duty by unidentified (yet suspected to be German) planes.⁴⁹¹ The additional news that 'rogue' (presumed to be Italian) submarines were operating under the Nationalist flag represented a further danger to Royal Navy ships on patrol off the coast of Spain. Faced with overwhelming evidence that both Germany and Italy were supplying men and material in support of the Nationalists (with the USSR doing the same for the Republicans), Eden urged the cabinet to sanction Royal Navy patrols at the entrances to Spanish ports in order to prevent such illegal shipping from making port.⁴⁹² However, despite having the support of the Prime Minister, Eden received little endorsement from his cabinet colleagues, with Hoare in particular stridently opposed to the scheme. Hoare stressed his unhappiness at the lack of consultation, and proceeded to outline the technical and geographic problems inherent in any such blockade; on hearing these reservations the whole cabinet

⁴⁹¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 320, col. 1155.

⁴⁹² Meeting of the cabinet on 8 January 1937, in Roskill, *Naval Policy*, p. 376-7.

moved against the scheme, leaving the First Lord triumphant.⁴⁹³ In April 1937, Eden and Hoare were again at loggerheads over Spain, with the former proposing that the Royal Navy should escort shipping into Basque ports supposedly blockaded by Nationalist ships and mines. The Admiralty voiced reservations in light of the dangers posed to British ships should they attempt to force the blockade; it was later proven that the threat to shipping entering northern Spanish ports, particularly Bilbao, were greatly exaggerated by the Nationalists. According to Eden's PPS, the Foreign Secretary was convinced that Hoare and the Admiralty had not been frank regarding the approaches to the ports and had inflated the threat posed by mines.⁴⁹⁴ It would be no overstatement to suggest that Hoare and Eden remained less than effusive colleagues in cabinet meetings at this time. Although Hoare was successful in persuading his fellow Ministers that Britain should resist taking a more active role in the Spanish Civil War, he was largely absent from cabinet discussion during his time at the Admiralty, unless it corresponded with his departmental duties. Whilst Admiralty business, parliamentary recesses and illness may have limited his frequency in attending cabinet meetings during this period, it is equally conceivable that Hoare was circumspect of appearing too peremptory on his return to the government.

When Hoare assumed his role as First Lord, the Royal Navy was in the initial stages of undergoing an extensive programme of expansion and modernisation following the recommendations of the Defence Requirements Committee in March 1935. Naval rearmament had previously been restricted by the 1930 London Naval Treaty

⁴⁹³ J. Edwards, *The British Government & the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (1979), p.111.

⁴⁹⁴ Harvey diary, 21 Apr. 1937, J. Harvey (ed.), *The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey 1937-1940* (1970), p.40-1.

(successor to the Washington Treaty of 1922), which tied all the major powers to a strict tonnage system with the main signatories, Britain, the United States and Japan, restricted to a ratio of 5:5:3 respectively. Although London was a willing partner in this attempt at naval limitation, the Admiralty perceived that the Treaty did not adequately recognise Britain's unique responsibilities extending across the world, whereas both the United States and Japan had significantly less expansive roles for their navies. In the first half of the 1930s this situation was deemed acceptable as, without a major threat in Europe, Britain could deploy the majority of her navy in the Far East as the Japanese were judged the most likely adversary. It was also imperative for successive British governments to keep faith with the limitation formula as this would avoid any possibility of being forced into a naval arms race during a period of economic recession. However, the emergence of threats from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy rendered Britain's prior calculations against Japan obsolete, as a significant proportion of the Royal Navy would now be needed in home waters to counter these twin dangers. The principal reason underlying the Admiralty's keenness to sign the Anglo-German Naval Agreement had been the desire to regulate any expansion of Germany's navy.⁴⁹⁵ In addition to the challenges posed by these new threats, the Admiralty was also deeply conscious that the inherent principle of limitation of naval forces by agreed quotas (or tonnage) required any modernisation to be undertaken alongside the scrapping of a similar-sized vessel to maintain the terms of the Treaty; the notion of scrapping sea-worthy vessels would never prove popular in times of financial retrenchment, and thereby resulted in much of the Royal Navy consisting of ships of Great War vintage. Fortunately for Britain's new policy of rearmament, Japan had left the negotiations

⁴⁹⁵ According to Thomas Jones, Baldwin had informed him that the First Lord, Eyres Monsell, should take primary credit for the signature of the Naval treaty: Jones to Lady Grigg, Jones diary, 4 Apr. 1936, p.186.

for a successor to the 1930 Treaty, and as the British and American delegates were of much the same mind regarding the drawbacks of naval limitation, a far more workable agreement was signed on 25 March 1936, which incorporated less stringent quotas, permitting the two countries to both expand and modernise their navies.

The Admiralty had pre-empted the outcome of the 1936 London Treaty by preparing an ambitious programme for the expansion and modernisation of the Royal Navy, known as the New Naval Standard, in order to deal with simultaneous threats in different theatres of conflict. Monsell had gained Treasury support for a large increase to expenditure in the Naval Estimates; this, perhaps, explained his reluctance to vacate office before the autumn. This expansion was to include the building of additional battleships, four new aircraft carriers, cruisers and numerous other classes of ship; these additional vessels were scheduled to be laid-down between May 1936 and March 1937 (the traditional date of the annual Naval Estimates) and completed by 1940.⁴⁹⁶ However, although Monsell had overseen much of the preparation involved in this expansion plan, it fell to the new First Lord for its implementation.⁴⁹⁷ With this responsibility for restoring the fortunes of the Royal Navy, Hoare was hailed as holding the 'most crucial job in the Empire'.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶ S. Roskill, *Naval Policy*, p.322.

⁴⁹⁷ On becoming First Lord, Hoare managed to persuade the cabinet to sanction the inclusion of further additions to the 1936-39 programme of naval rearmament, leading to the addition of naval construction previously earmarked for 1940-2 (including cruisers, destroyers and submarines): J. A. Maiolo, *The Royal Navy and Nazi Germany* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.134.

⁴⁹⁸ *Time Magazine*, 29 June 1936, vol.27, No.26.

During his time at the Admiralty, Hoare was compelled to confront three over-arching issues; the reconstruction of the Fleet, the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) controversy and the major parliamentary duty of every First Lord, the setting out of the Naval Estimates. However, as with his tenure at the Air Ministry, Hoare was fortunate to have by his side an extremely effective and popular First Sea Lord, Ernle Chatfield. Although not quite the equivalent of Trenchard in stature, Chatfield provided Hoare with vital support, and the two men formed a close working relationship which patently aided the smooth-running of the department. In relation to the expansion and modernisation of the Fleet, Hoare's principal responsibility was to expound the Navy's viewpoint in both parliament and the country at large. Consequently, Hoare was frequently arguing the case for rearmament around the country (including its benefits for areas hard-hit by the economic slump), understandably with particular emphasis on the Navy.⁴⁹⁹ Alongside his public appearances championing the Navy's case, Hoare was also keen to learn about the service itself, and he and his wife took great delight in visiting naval bases and inspecting His Majesty's ships; Maud Hoare felt greatly honoured when asked to launch the new aircraft carrier, *Ark Royal*, in April 1937.⁵⁰⁰ Moreover, visiting the various bases both at home and abroad afforded the First Lord and his wife ample opportunity to use the Admiralty yacht, *Enchantress*, surely a most welcome addition to the fruits of office. During the summer recess of 1936, Hoare and his wife made full use of *Enchantress*, undertaking a tour of the Navy's bases in the Mediterranean. Although the trip was undoubtedly a pleasant experience in terms of relaxation and meeting and dining with various dignitaries, there were also practical aspects to the trip, with Hoare

⁴⁹⁹ Hoare spoke of the need for rearmament to many audiences; Southampton on 13 July 1936; annual NUCUA Conference in Margate on 1 Oct. 1936; Foreign Press Association in London on 17 Nov. 1936; Westminster Constitutional Association on 19 Nov. 1936; Birmingham Conservative Club on 11 Feb. 1937: all reported in *The Times* (on the following day).

⁵⁰⁰ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.213.

informing a potentially sceptical Baldwin that the experience had allowed him to acquire 'a background that I should not have got in Whitehall in many months'.⁵⁰¹

Nevertheless, several weeks of Mediterranean sun undeniably provided a noticeable tonic to Hoare, with Amery for one noting the First Lord's effulgence on his return:

'Sam is looking very well and full of confidence. He has entirely absorbed the Admiralty atmosphere and forgotten that unfortunate phase of his early months at the Foreign Office'.⁵⁰²

Prior to the aforementioned trip, Hoare utilised his considerable parliamentary skills to bolster support for the Navy's rearmament programme in the House of Commons. Significantly, he achieved a notable success only a few weeks after regaining office after successfully advocating the granting of additional funds to expedite the Navy's modernisation. Wishing to ensure this success did not go unnoticed Hoare contacted Beaverbrook:

It has been something of an achievement to get a second acceleration of the programme within a few weeks of the last Supplementary Estimate. Could you send a line to your people and tell them to make something of it. It is the outward and visible sign of a very vigorous policy that will show itself with greater volume as the months pass.⁵⁰³

The question of the Navy's preference for 14inch guns was a further challenge facing the First Lord, after it was brought to parliament's attention that an unofficial report alleged that the Japanese were laying down battleships with a complement of 18inch

⁵⁰¹ Hoare to Baldwin, 9 Sep. 1936, Baldwin MSS, 171/308-9.

⁵⁰² Amery diary, 15 Oct. 1936, p.428.

⁵⁰³ Hoare to Beaverbrook, 6 July 1936, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/307b.

guns; Hoare dismissed the claims as merely conjecture.⁵⁰⁴ Reports that Germany, Russia and the United States were also all planning to build ships that were armed with larger guns than their British equivalents were equally of great alarm to MPs, and made the issue one of national importance as such developments would disadvantage British warships. However, Rear Admiral Reginald Henderson, who as Controller was charged with overseeing ship design, argued that any increase in the size of guns for Britain's new ships would necessitate a much larger displacement, which would in turn upset all the Admiralty's estimates of the costs involved.⁵⁰⁵ With any further changes likely to delay the laying down of the initial tranche of new ships (due in 1937), Hoare and Chatfield decided to persist with the 14inch guns.

On 18 November 1936, Hoare informed the cabinet that the Admiralty wished to retain five cruisers which had been earmarked for decommissioning in accordance with the 1930 London Naval Treaty and were to be broken up by the end of the year.⁵⁰⁶ However, never one to miss an opportunity for grandstanding, Hoare asked Churchill to raise the issue during Oral Answers in the House of Commons, which he duly did on 17 December. After informing the House that Article 21 of the 1930 Treaty allowed for countries to overrule the scrapping of vessels if the other main signatories agreed (the USA had no objection and it was presumed Japan would agree), Hoare continued:

I am glad, therefore, to be able to inform the House that we expect, in the course of the next few days, to convey to the Govt's. of the US and Japan an official

⁵⁰⁴ *Parliamentary Debates*, 29 July 1936, vol.315, cols. 1508-9.

⁵⁰⁵ Roskill, *Naval Policy*, p.328-9.

⁵⁰⁶ Cabinet 66 (36), 18 Nov. 1936, CAB23/86.

intimation of our intention to have recourse to Article 21 of the London Naval Treaty to retain these cruisers.

At this Churchill interjected: 'May I ask my right hon. Friend whether he will accept general congratulations upon his considerable achievement?'⁵⁰⁷ However, it was obvious to Hoare's cabinet colleagues that the First Lord had stage-managed the whole episode in order to present himself in a good light. Mentioning the matter two days later in conversation with the Prime Minister, Eden accused Hoare of being 'a born intriguer' who desperately wanted to be PM. Baldwin, who Eden noted was noticeably angry regarding the incident, replied: 'Well he must be mad. He hasn't the least chance of it & wouldn't get 50 votes in the Party. I am tempted to write to him & shall certainly speak to him'.⁵⁰⁸

It is unclear whether Hoare's miscalculation over the cruiser question did earn him a reprimand from the Prime Minister, as Baldwin had greatly appreciated the First Lord's assistance in attempts to persuade the King to end his affair with the married, though estranged, American divorcee Mrs Simpson. Hoare had been close to the new monarch for many years due to his Norfolk connections (being a regular at Sandringham shooting parties); in addition, due to Edward's close affinity with the Navy, the two were increasingly in contact with one another through official duties.⁵⁰⁹ The relationship between the King and Mrs Simpson was known to many senior politicians and members of his Court, although a news blackout had prevented it becoming known to the British public. However, as foreign newspapers felt no

⁵⁰⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, 17 Dec. 1936, vol. 318, cols. 2632-4.

⁵⁰⁸ Eden diary, 21 Dec. 1936, Avon MSS, AP20/1/16.

⁵⁰⁹ During the crisis over the Paris Proposals the then Prince of Wales was sympathetic to Hoare's plight, and was in attendance when the Foreign Secretary made his resignation speech to the House, stating in his memoirs that his friend had been made a scapegoat: HRH The Duke of Windsor, *A Kings Story* (1951), p.259.

compunction to follow the restraint of the British press, and given the fact that both Mrs Simpson and her husband had opened divorce proceedings against one another, the situation was extremely hazardous; Baldwin was convinced that a twice divorced Mrs Simpson as Queen would be unacceptable to opinion both at home and in the Dominions. It was therefore imperative for the government to persuade the King to end his relationship with Mrs Simpson, or to insist on his abdication. In the event, despite his efforts, Hoare could affect little impact on the King's resolution to marry Mrs Simpson, and likewise Edward made no impression on the First Lord's steadfastness in following the government's line on the matter. According to Hoare, the King 'had made up his mind and that having made it up, he was at peace with himself, and anxious to begin the new chapter of his life as quickly as possible'.⁵¹⁰ With neither side willing to budge over the issue of marriage to Mrs Simpson there was only one solution – the King would have to abdicate. On 10 December 1936 Edward VIII relinquished the throne in favour of his younger brother. Writing to Beaverbrook on the same day, Hoare stated: 'It was clear to me yesterday that the denouement was inevitable. I tried my best to the end to make renunciation possible, but the King would not move an inch. To what depths folly descends'.⁵¹¹ Although Hoare's role in the affair was at an end, he was involved in one final act of farce during Baldwin's statement to the Commons announcing the King's abdication. Prior to the Prime Minister's statement, Hoare had advanced to the dispatch box to answer a naval question and in doing so placed his Admiralty notes on top of the Prime Minister's carefully arranged papers. After making his answer Hoare swiftly

⁵¹⁰ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.221.

⁵¹¹ Hoare to Beaverbrook, 10 Dec. 1936, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/307b.

took hold of his files to return to his seat, causing all the notes beneath to scatter on the floor.⁵¹²

As First Lord, Hoare was involved once again with the inter-departmental dispute between the RAF and the Navy over control of the FAA. During the 1920s when Minister for Air, Hoare had successfully argued that the RAF should hold jurisdiction over all air units, including those attached to the Navy. His argument was based on the fact that any dissolution of RAF strength would seriously weaken the service at a time of consolidation and thereby endanger Britain's air defences. After Baldwin ruled in Hoare's favour in July 1926 a truce had held for a number of years, although the Navy's resentment was undimmed. Despite this settlement, the continual shortage of trained pilots joining the FAA was a constant concern for the Admiralty, and the refusal of the RAF to train naval ratings for the role in order to relieve this problem led to the reopening of the issue at the end of 1935. (Baldwin had previously refused to reopen the question in July 1935) The question of pilots had been exacerbated by the Admiralty's insistence on equipping more ships with 'catapult aircraft' to provide air protection, in addition to the large number of additional aircrews required for the planned new aircraft carriers. After obstruction to any re-opening of the FAA question by the Air Minister, Cunliffe-Lister, at the beginning of 1936, Monsell approached Inskip on 21 April 1936 and requested that he carry out an enquiry into the whole question.⁵¹³ The Admiralty stance had powerful parliamentary backing, with Churchill pledging his support: 'I propose to press this matter continually in the House of Commons, and I hope to interest Sir Austen

⁵¹² Nicolson diary, 10 Dec. 1936, p.285.

⁵¹³ Roskill, *Naval Policy*, p.394.

Chamberlain and other friends of mine in it', adding that he hoped 'the Admiralty will not be contented with a weak compromise which does not leave them with the effective control of the Fleet Air Arm'.⁵¹⁴ However, although Inskip was happy to undertake an inquiry into the shortage of trained naval pilots, he sought to avoid opening up the broader question of FAA control, possibly mindful of Baldwin's recent refusal to do just that: (The reluctance to widen the inquiry led to a persistent Admiralty campaign to reverse this decision).

Inskip's initial inquiry into the pilot question began in July 1936, after Hoare had returned to office. No doubt recognising the potential for a recurrence of the bitter 1920s campaign over the FAA, Hoare was largely content to allow Inskip to arbitrate between the two departments.⁵¹⁵ Moreover, Hoare was not fully convinced of the Admiralty case, informing Chatfield that while he supported the Navy's arguments for control of all sea-born aircraft, he 'could not agree to the separation of coastal air command and land-based aircraft from the Air Ministry'.⁵¹⁶ His disinterested approach to the dispute was in evidence when asked about the FAA issue during a Commons defence debate on November 10:

I was embroiled in that question for seven years of my life in the early days of aviation. I suppose that no one in this House realises better than I do the complexities of the problems connected with it. On the one hand, there is the passionate belief of the Air Force in the unity of the air and in the distinctive

⁵¹⁴ Churchill to Chatfield, 10 May 1936, Chatfield MSS, CHT/4/3/232-9.

⁵¹⁵ Stephen Roskill suggests that Hoare's appointment witnessed a cooling off of the FAA issue, stating that his familiarity with the RAF's viewpoint was somewhat detrimental to the uncompromising stance which was championed by Chatfield and the other Sea Lords: Roskill, *Naval Policy*, p.395; in his memoirs Hoare stated that his less confrontational approach to the problem was due to his belief that a more congenial atmosphere was needed to resolve the problem: Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.206.

⁵¹⁶ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.206.

character of the Air Arm; on the other hand, there is the equally strong conviction of the Navy that, however important it may be that there should be a Fleet Air Arm in the field of air strategy, in the field of naval tactics the control of sea-borne aircraft is as essential to the efficiency of the Fleet as the control of naval guns or naval torpedoes. How sir, can these two divergent views be reconciled? So far the attempt has been made to find the least objectionable point of contact between the two services. Somehow or other, there must be a point of contact between the Navy and the Air Force.⁵¹⁷

However, even though Hoare did not adopt the intransigent view of the Sea Lords over the question of the FAA, he was successful in promoting the navy's case, in both the official surroundings of the Inskip Inquiry and the country at large, where he called for an end to the rivalry between the Navy and Air Force over air power during his tours and speeches championing rearmament.⁵¹⁸ Even though his approach may not always have been appreciated, Hoare's imperturbable manner was achieving results, with Inskip agreeing to widen his Inquiry to investigate the whole FAA question following his initial conclusions in November 1936; the Air Ministry objected, but at the start of January 1937 Baldwin decided in favour of a full examination of the matter after Hoare had persuaded the Prime Minister that this would be preferable to the risk of being forced to undergo the process at a later date.⁵¹⁹ Although this new Inquiry would undoubtedly be lengthy (and indeed was concluded after Hoare had departed the Admiralty) the Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Roger Keyes, was jubilant that the FAA question was to be re-examined:

As far as the Navy that floats on the Sea and dives under it are concerned, I think that you have done splendidly, and I am sure Hoare is of infinitely greater value to the Navy than Eyres-Monsell. I can never forgive the latter for letting the Navy

⁵¹⁷ Hoare statement, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.317, cols. 821-2.

⁵¹⁸ *The Times*, 13 July 1936.

⁵¹⁹ Roskill, *Naval Policy*, p.400.

down so badly over the Air question. I suppose he was afraid to tackle Baldwin, at any rate judging by the latter's remarks to me last summer, Monsell had completely failed to bring home to him, how bitterly the whole Navy resents the Air Ministry's control over one of the Navy's essential arms. I think Baldwin realises it now.⁵²⁰

Inskip's recommendations regarding the FAA question were finalised at the end of July 1937 and broadly corresponded to Hoare's opinion that the Navy should exercise control over sea-borne aircraft while the RAF retained command of coastal units; nonetheless the dispute quietly rumbled on almost until the outbreak of war in 1939 with the Navy finally incorporating all aspects of naval aviation.⁵²¹

Further to these challenges, the problem of sabotage in the Navy's dockyards was an additional and unwelcome distraction for Hoare when the issue was raised by the Opposition in the Commons on 2 December 1936; Hoare denied it was a significant difficulty although he could not provide numbers of prosecutions at such short notice.⁵²² After further enquiries Hoare informed the cabinet that five 'undesirable employees' had been brought before a Departmental Committee:

The Committee after reviewing these cases had recommended the dismissal of five dockyard workers. As regards four men from Devonport, the Committee were of the opinion that it was certain beyond any reasonable doubt (though it is impossible, largely owing to the inability to disclose secret sources of information, to produce proof to satisfy a Court of Law) that all four men had been actively engaged in dangerous subversive propaganda, and not merely in the doctrinaire preaching of Communism as a political creed. There was also very strong

⁵²⁰ Keyes to Chatfield, 3 Jan. 1937, Chatfield MSS, CHT/4/117-21.

⁵²¹ Even though Hoare left the Admiralty in May 1937 he was viewed as an important figure in the FAA debate. At the time of Inskip's Report in July 1937, a concerned Trenchard contacted Hoare urging him to use his cabinet influence to water down its conclusions: Trenchard to Hoare, 24 July 1937, Templewood MSS, X/2.

⁵²² *Parliamentary Debates*, 2 Dec. 1936, vol. 318, col. 1237.

suspicion, though not amounting to certainty, that they were intimately connected with acts of sabotage. He himself had carefully examined the circumstances of all these cases in which the Committee recommended dismissal, and had come to the conclusion that these men should be discharged.⁵²³

At the beginning of the parliamentary session in 1937, the Labour leader, Clement Attlee, challenged Hoare over the legality of the dismissals, stating their rights had been infringed on several counts - under which regulations had the men been dismissed; lack of knowledge of charges; lack of right to reply. Hoare's ensuing defence of the right to secrecy in such cases failed to satisfy the Opposition and Attlee gave notice of his intention to raise this issue in the House at the earliest opportunity. In the knowledge that he had personally authorised the men's dismissal, Hoare was in a difficult position, with Butler noting that the First Lord 'was really depressed by the dockyards debate'.⁵²⁴ When the matter was raised in the House, the government comfortably won the vote by 330 to 145, although Hoare subsequently made arrangements to involve Trade Union leaders in future cases to prevent any repeat of the Opposition charges.⁵²⁵

Aside from addressing the pressing concerns of the time, arguably the principal parliamentary role of the First Lord of the Admiralty is the annual setting out of the Naval Estimates. This task, essential for the funding of the Navy in any coming year, had taken on even greater prominence with the decision to expand and modernise the Fleet following the DRC Report of March 1935. However, as the date of the Estimates debate approached Hoare was taken ill, although he nonetheless assured

⁵²³ Cabinet 75 (36), 16 Dec. 1936, CAB23/86.

⁵²⁴ Butler to Brabourne, 30 Jan. 1937, Brabourne MSS, F97/21/89-90.

⁵²⁵ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.209.

Baldwin that despite being confined to bed with a temperature, he would be attending the debate: 'I fully intend to be in the House on Thursday and to introduce the Estimates'.⁵²⁶ In his address to the House on 11 March outlining a substantial increase in the coming year's Estimates, he proudly stated:

The House is being asked to approve expenditure of more than £100,000,000 in a period of peace and a new construction programme of 80 new ships. Following upon the votes last year for the construction programme of 1936, it means that at the end of the year we shall have under construction no fewer than 148 new ships of war.⁵²⁷

Hoare then proceeded to provide details of the Estimates, emphasising the new capacity which would enable the expansion to go ahead, praising the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, and reminding fellow MPs that the old cruisers would help make up for the shortfall in the minimum requirement for that class of ship; there would be 53 new cruisers when the new vessels were counted, and the older variants would fill the gaps in the accepted minimum requirement of 60.⁵²⁸ The House was generally in approval, with Churchill stating: 'I believe pretty nearly everybody in the House will feel very content with the great Naval Estimates presented. I think the right hon. Gentleman is much to be congratulated'.⁵²⁹ Lloyd George was also gladdened, noting: 'He gives me the impression of a man who had been driving a Ford car for a long time and has now got the latest type of Rolls Royce'.⁵³⁰ However, the Labour MP Lieutenant Commander Fletcher was less than impressed and made use of Hoare's recent blunder to drive home his views:

⁵²⁶ Hoare to Baldwin, 8 Mar. 1937, Baldwin MSS, 173/133-4.

⁵²⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, 11 March 1937, vol. 321, col. 1367.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, col.1368-80.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, col.1398.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, col.1407.

The right hon. Gentleman made a long speech in a very Jane Austen-ish manner, but told us very little. Defence, of course, rests upon foreign policy. I think it is rather undesirable to have at the head of a great Defence Ministry a Minister who was cast out of the Foreign Office because the whole nation felt shame and disgust about the Hoare-Laval proposals, which violated all our obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations, which the present Foreign Secretary tells us is the foundation of all British naval policy.

Ending his harangue, Fletcher adopted an Amery style finale while questioning Hoare's conviction that the naval agreement was good for Britain, asking the First Lord a rhetorical question: would he trust the dictator's signature at the present time? 'If he does', continued Fletcher, 'I can only say "Sancta Simplicitas", or in English, "Simple Simon met a pie-man going to the fair"'.⁵³¹ Though this criticism was well-aimed and would undoubtedly have caused some amusement at Hoare's expense, overall the Estimates went down well in the House. Furthermore, it was unlikely that such opposition asides would unduly perturb Hoare, as with Baldwin expected to stand down in the coming weeks, he was undoubtedly contemplating a future role away from the Admiralty.

⁵³¹ Ibid., cols. 1471-5.

CHAPTER SEVEN – IN THE BIG TIME AGAIN: CHAMBERLAIN TAKES OVER

Baldwin ended the uncertainty over his future in early January 1937, advising the uncrowned George VI of his intention to retire from front-line politics after the Coronation, which was scheduled for 12 May.⁵³² Fortunately for the unseasoned monarch, there was little danger of this disclosure provoking Ministerial discord, as Neville Chamberlain had been the accepted 'heir apparent' since 1935. Nonetheless, it was evident that Baldwin's retirement would precipitate some degree of cabinet reorganisation; a realisation that grew more compelling with the news that both Ramsay MacDonald and Walter Runciman would also retire when the change took place. Consequently, the need for a reconstruction elicited considerable parliamentary speculation as to which Ministers would be the likeliest beneficiaries of a Chamberlain Premiership. Unsurprisingly, in view of his standing as one of the new Prime Minister's closest political confidantes, Sir Samuel Hoare was at the forefront of this conjecture.

⁵³² Jones diary, 11 Jan. 1937, p.302-3; After further consultation, the date of Baldwin's resignation was fixed for the 27 May 1937, with Chamberlain becoming Prime Minister on the following day.

Amidst this rumination in Westminster, Hoare remained notably circumspect in expressing any personal ambitions for the new Chamberlain government, even though he patently coveted a move to the Treasury. The motivation for securing this role was clear, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not only the most influential cabinet member after the Prime Minister, but also held the potential wherewithal to expedite its holder to the premiership should anything befall the incumbent.⁵³³ Notable political allies of Hoare were favourably disposed to his aspirations in this quarter, with Butler judging the Treasury to be Hoare's 'ultimate objective' on Chamberlain's accession to the Premiership, as 'Sam and Neville always hunted together'.⁵³⁴ Characteristically, Beaverbrook was also confident of his friend's promotion to the Exchequer when Baldwin stepped down.⁵³⁵ By 1937 this viewpoint had been increasingly accepted by sections of the press, with even the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Sir Warren Fisher, fully expectant that Hoare would become his superior when the change came.⁵³⁶ Notwithstanding these encouraging developments, Hoare remained reluctant to acknowledge any ambition for such a prominent position, conceivably through fear of antagonising his government colleagues. Furthermore, in the absence of any official communication regarding his future, there was little Hoare could do but concentrate on Admiralty business and await events.

⁵³³ The fact that Sir Austen Chamberlain was only a few years older than his half-brother (aged 73 when he died, two days short of Neville's 69th birthday) supported the view that the Chamberlains were a potentially short-lived family.

⁵³⁴ Butler to Brabourne, 14 Jan. 1936, Brabourne MSS, F97/21/164.

⁵³⁵ Beaverbrook to Lloyd George, 6 Oct. 1936: Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p.366.

⁵³⁶ Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, p.276.

However, in contrast to this positive speculation, Chamberlain was less positive than most of his contemporaries realised when contemplating Hoare as his Chancellor. Wishing to maintain the general symmetry of the National Government, Chamberlain believed that the National Liberal leader, Sir John Simon, should take charge at the Treasury.⁵³⁷ When apprised of this choice, Margesson (Conservative Chief Whip) was decidedly lukewarm about Simon being awarded such a prominent position, and pressed instead for a Conservative Chancellor. However, Chamberlain remained adamant; and the fact that Simon professed to little knowledge of financial affairs was apparently no drawback to the incoming Premier.⁵³⁸ In all probability there were several reasons (aside from a desire to appease the National Liberals) which explain Chamberlain's demurral from offering Hoare the position of Chancellor. As First Lord, Hoare had failed to exercise restraint in pushing for ever-increasing budgets from the Treasury, surely irksome to a Chancellor bent on demanding financial rectitude amongst his colleagues. Another possible aversion to choosing Hoare may have been the undue impetuosity displayed on his return to office, which led to Chamberlain questioning his friend's political judgement. Moreover, promoting Hoare to the Treasury so soon after his return to office would undoubtedly risk exacerbating cabinet jealousies. Over and above this supposition though, it was equally plausible that Chamberlain merely sought to avoid any accusation of sentimentality in selecting his cabinet (a charge often levelled at Baldwin), thereby disregarding Hoare for the role of Chancellor.

⁵³⁷ Sir Warren Fisher was said to be horrified on learning that Simon rather than Hoare was to become Chancellor of the Exchequer: E. O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service: A Study of Sir Warren Fisher* (1989), p.218.

⁵³⁸ Simon, *Retrospect*, p.227.

With Simon's position in the new cabinet assured, there remained the dilemma of how to assuage Hoare's frustration at missing out on the Treasury; it was Margesson who proffered a solution:

Sam will be disappointed at not becoming Chancellor; it might be a sop to make him your Principal Secretary of State. He would have much more work in the House and therefore more limelight. At present he probably only makes one speech a year on the Navy Estimates and, in any case, the Admiralty is the most advanced of the three Defence Departments in its work and needs the least drive from its Political Chief.⁵³⁹

However, Chamberlain temporised over any commitment to the Chief Whip's suggestion, and it appears no formal decision was made to award Hoare the Home Office until almost the eve of the succession. In the absence of any official pronouncements, there was a general feeling that Hoare would be staying at the Admiralty. Indeed, press speculation connecting Hoare with a move to the Home Office only emerged on 27 May.⁵⁴⁰ In truth, Chamberlain's tardiness in offering Hoare the Home Office could well be attributed to his optimistic belief that Hoare might state his contentment to remain as First Lord. Admittedly, this was an unlikely scenario, and Hoare was duly named as the new Home Secretary during the official unveiling of the cabinet on 28 May. It was evident though, that Chamberlain was not altogether enthralled with the outcome:

I had hoped that Sam would have been content to remain where he was and let me move Kingsley to the HO. But Sam's restless ambition made him eager for a place

⁵³⁹ Margesson to Chamberlain, Mar. 1937, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC8/24/1-16.

⁵⁴⁰ Amery diary, 27 May 1937, p.441.

where he would come into the hurly burly of every day politics and I could not refuse him after his disappointment at not getting the Treasury.⁵⁴¹

Oblivious to Chamberlain's reservations, Hoare embraced his new role.⁵⁴² In contrast to the Foreign Office and the Admiralty roles, his new position was far more suited to the legislative and administrative skills for which Hoare was noted. Nevertheless, as the Home Office held responsibilities for almost every facet of British life (with the Home Secretary expected to be knowledgeable on a multitude of different subjects), he was fortunate to draw on the highly capable Geoffrey Lloyd as his Parliamentary Under-Secretary. As was his wont, Hoare swiftly established an effective working relationship with both Lloyd and his immediate advisors, which soon paid dividends when responding to parliamentary questions on matters ranging from dog licences to public houses. This quickly-established rapport between Hoare and his Home Office officials was indeed propitious, as only days after gaining office he was scheduled to deliver the keynote address in a debate on the prison system in England and Wales. After being hastily briefed with regard to the present state of, and planned reforms to, the prison system, Hoare and his advisors settled on the outlines of a speech, to which the Home Secretary added a uniquely individual slant; Hoare's ancestors included notable prison reformers, the most prominent of whom was Elizabeth Fry.

⁵⁴¹ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 30 May 1937, NCDL, 4, p.250-1.

⁵⁴² Hoare informed Amery that he had been offered the Home Office because Chamberlain wished him to Chair more committees and play a more active role in the House of Commons: Amery diary, 2 June 1937, p.443.

Hoare described the House of Commons speech he made on 4 June 1937 addressing prison reform as his best parliamentary performance.⁵⁴³ Highlighting a Home Office experiment carried out at HMP Wakefield, Hoare argued that the more draconian measures imposed on those serving time was of little deterrent value, whereas empirical evidence from the Yorkshire prison suggested a more lenient approach could achieve positive results in terms of those deterred from reoffending. In a bid to enhance his reforming credentials, Hoare supported the idea that affording a prisoner certain privileges on commencing their sentence would yield more positive result than the traditional method of only granting concessions on account of good behaviour. Expounding the psychological theory behind such new thinking, Hoare rhetorically asked his fellow parliamentarians:

Is it better to appeal to a man's desire of gain or to his fear of loss? On the whole we think it is better to give a man privileges and appeal to his fear of losing them rather than starting with nothing, and living in the rather indefinite hope of getting something better later on if he behaves better.⁵⁴⁴

Concluding his speech the Home Secretary stated an intention to press for yet further improvements to the penal code, whilst expressing his belief that 'the greatest prison reform is the reform that keeps people out of prison altogether'.⁵⁴⁵ Although taking no further part in the proceedings, Hoare was heartened by the response of MPs to the issue of penal reform. This may have been due to self-interest though, following the Labour Member for Hull East, George Muff, exposing an uncomfortable

⁵⁴³ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.229.

⁵⁴⁴ *Parliamentary Debates*, 4 June 1937, vol. 324, col.1317.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.* col.1320.

truth with the proclamation that ‘we are all sinners all’, revealing that 62 spoons had been ‘pinched’ from the House on Coronation Day by Members or their guests!⁵⁴⁶

While Hoare would have been pleased with his debut, there was little time for reflection, as the report stage of a new Factory Act was due to be considered by Parliament on 15-17 June 1937. As the first significant piece of workplace legislation since the turn of the century it was deemed long overdue, and its supporters hoped it would address many of the anachronisms that remained a feature of British industry, such as the distinction in employer responsibilities for different working environments (i.e. workshops and factories). Simon had already steered the Bill through its Second Reading prior to his move to the Treasury, and in the meantime an All-Party Committee had been examining the many clauses on worker welfare which comprised the bulk of the legislation. Not unnaturally, the Committee had discovered additional concerns during their discussions, and Hoare’s principal role during the Report Stage was to inform Parliament of resultant supplementary measures.⁵⁴⁷ However, despite the bi-partisan approach in formulating these additional clauses, there remained a number of stipulations that drew the ire of the opposition benches; the Labour MP for Westhoughton, Rhys Davies, criticised Hoare as ‘not one bit more progressive than was his predecessor’ in regards to the exemptions he placed on the provision of washing facilities, adding, ‘he thought people should want to wash their

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid. col.1351.

⁵⁴⁷ New clauses included the required provision of adequate washing facilities, workers lockers and eye protection, and the establishment of factory safety committees.

hands and faces as a matter of course'.⁵⁴⁸ Nonetheless, despite the scepticism of some MPs, the Bill easily passed through its Report Stage in the allotted time.

On 22 June, five days after the Report Stage, the Factory Act had its Third Reading in the House of Commons. Hoare took centre-stage in the debate and, mindful that Britain was still emerging from recession, attempted to dampen expectation of the immediate effects of the Bill, beginning with the assertion that, 'It would be a foolish policy if in our attempt to improve conditions of employment, we destroyed the very opportunities of employment'. However, despite this sober introduction he proceeded to inform the House that the 150 clauses of the original legislation had been raised to 300 during the consultative stages, which clearly pointed to a definite raising of standards in the workplace.⁵⁴⁹ Closing his introductory address Hoare urged the House to recognise the intrinsic value of passing such a piece of legislation:

These are very great improvements, not indeed so great as all hon. Gentlemen would wish but none the less very considerable advances on the present position. When all these changes are taken into account and when the complexities of industry are remembered, I believe that the Bill will come to be regarded in future as a great measure of social reform.⁵⁵⁰

Replying for the Opposition, the Labour MP for Doncaster, Alfred Short, voiced his support for the measures in the Bill, although he subsequently accused the government of timidity in its failure to enforce all the legislation from the outset.

⁵⁴⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, 15 June 1937, vol.325, col.217; Hoare had informed the House that due to the number of workplaces affected there should be 'a measure of elasticity' in the provision of washing facilities, with only new factories and those workers involved in dirty work initially covered, col.213-5.

⁵⁴⁹ Hoare listed many of the improvements in the Bill: fresh air in the workplace; adequate lighting; machine safety; appropriate training for young workers; fire escapes; reduction in working hours from 60 to 48 for women; workers aged between 14 and 16 limited to working 44 hours a week.

⁵⁵⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, 22 June 1937, vol.325, cols.1124-28.

Referring to the Home Secretary, he remarked: 'I think he is fortunate to be associated with the Measure, especially as he came to it when all the complex and difficult work had been accomplished, though I think he stayed the course manfully during the Report Stage and showed evidence of his qualities as a Parliamentarian'. In the ensuing debate the House was generally supportive of the Home Secretary, although the suggestion by the Conservative MP for Bolton, Sir John Haslam, that Hoare had consistently achieved success in his various offices caused embarrassment for the government when followed up by Rhys Davies:

I have followed the debates from the beginning, but I am not quite sure that we ought to distribute as many bouquets as have been thrown to-night. Metaphorically, the Floor of the House is strewn with flowers; I am almost afraid to walk among them. I do not think that they are entirely justified, especially the remark of the hon. Member for Bolton that the Home Secretary had been a success in every office he has occupied. Why did they dismiss him from the Foreign Office if he was a success there?

Prolonging Hoare's discomfort Davies paid handsome homage to Lloyd's contribution to the Bill, before ending with the scathing aside: 'If I had had my way I would have appointed him Secretary of State and the present Home Secretary his deputy'.⁵⁵¹ Nevertheless, the Factory Act easily passed through the House, and despite it being largely accredited to Simon there was much appreciation for Hoare's role in adding it to the Statute Book – even after the outbreak of war in 1939 Hoare was remembered fondly by senior civil servants for the 'splendid way' in which he steered the legislation through parliament.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 22 June 1937, vol.325, cols.1159-61.

⁵⁵² Sir Duncan Wilson to Hoare, 13 Sep. 1939, Templewood MSS, XI/1.

The remaining months of 1937 saw Hoare involved in orchestrating legislation to protect Britain's civilian population against the dangers of enemy bombing. Britain's vulnerability to air attack had been recognised by the government when it first came to power in 1931, yet the conventional wisdom that the bomber would always get through consistently undermined any propensity to introduce concrete measures to protect the British people against air-raids. However, following reports that the Italians had embraced the use of gas in Abyssinia, and German aircraft had carried out bombing attacks on civilian targets in Spain, Whitehall prioritised the issue as an urgent matter. Prior to Hoare succeeding Simon, the Home Office had asked Sir Warren Fisher to investigate steps the country could undertake in order to provide some measure of protection from air attack; Fisher concluded that measures were practicable although as the field of civil defence was so vast the cost might prove prohibitive. Having studied the Fisher Report on becoming Home Secretary, Hoare informed Chatfield that he was convinced action must be taken:

There are some people who will say that the problem is so vast and intractable that it is not worth doing anything at all. My own view is that it is impossible to accept this view. No Government can refuse to take reasonable precautions.⁵⁵³

As the new field of civil defence, or Air Raid Precautions (ARP), was primarily concerned with both maintaining and protecting the population, the brunt of these preparations would naturally be carried out by the local authorities. The cabinet therefore entrusted Hoare with permission to begin immediate negotiations with the representatives of various councils on implementing the various recommendations of the Fisher Committee. However, the government soon found itself in a dilemma, as it

⁵⁵³ Hoare to Chatfield, 8 July 1937, Chatfield MSS, CHT3/1/173-4.

became apparent that the various council chiefs were reluctant to initiate concrete measures whilst the issue of funding was as yet unresolved. It was recognised that the government would fund much of the ARP programme, but there was concern on both sides as to what percentage of the cost would be the responsibility of the local authorities.⁵⁵⁴ This could only be resolved by government legislation, and although the Home Office was drafting an ARP Bill addressing the financial aspect, this would take time to reach the Statute Book. Accordingly, to avoid delay, Hoare gave an assurance on 29 July 1937 that councils who continued to implement ARP measures would receive the financial settlement (in the ARP Bill) backdated to 1 January 1937, adding: 'I trust, therefore, that those local authorities who have not yet begun the preparation of plans will not think it necessary to wait until the financial arrangements have been placed on a statutory basis'.⁵⁵⁵

Government plans for an ARP Bill were included in the King's Speech following the 1937 summer recess, although in the debate that followed Hoare was able to proffer few specific details. This apparent lack of urgency on the Home Office's part drew a stern rebuke from the opposition benches, with the Liberal MP for Barnstaple, Richard Acland, questioning the government's commitment to providing protection for the civilian population:

Having discussed the matter with a municipal civil servant who is dealing with this question in one of our chief cities, that as far as passive ground defence is concerned, the Government are not even aiming at saving the living during a raid;

⁵⁵⁴ The government called for local authorities to contribute 30 per cent of the cost, which most council chiefs thought too high. Local authorities with high populations also believed the financial burden was discriminatory as they naturally had to spend more on ARP measures.

⁵⁵⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, 29 July 1937, vol. 326, col.3295.

their objective is to clear up the dead as quickly as possible after a raid. That is about the top mark they are aiming for.⁵⁵⁶

Stung by this criticism, Hoare was eager to get the ARP Bill through the House as swiftly as possible to deflect further opposition accusations of government vacillation. For the Second Reading of the ARP Bill (15-16 November 1937) Hoare ensured that he was briefed comprehensively on the intricacies of the legislation. Introducing the main elements of the Bill, the Home Secretary highlighted the fact that many of the ARP measures would be merely an extension of pre-existing local authority responsibilities, such as policing and fire protection. Nonetheless, the Home Secretary admitted that ARP would require councils to provide additional services to ensure the continuation and protection of civil society in the event of war: air-raid shelters, protection against gas, bomb-damage repair crews. With regard to financing these measures, Hoare provided assurances that the government would pay the entire bill for the Fire Brigade and up to 75 per cent of all other costs; in total this amounted to almost 90 per cent of the predicted cost to local authorities of ARP.⁵⁵⁷ Having set out the main features of the Bill, Hoare urged his fellow MPs to ensure its swift passage to prevent further delay of the measures incorporated within it.

Hoare's optimism that the ARP Bill would be unchallenged was swiftly disabused in the All-House Committee, formed to discuss the legislation. In its first meeting on 25 November, several of its members complained that the Bill was inadequate, pointing to a lack of evacuation plans and general chaos in local ARP planning; by the time

⁵⁵⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, 29 Oct. 1937, vol. 328, col.451.

⁵⁵⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, 15 Nov. 1937, vol.329, cols.43-55.

the Committee concluded its deliberations on 30 November there was a general feeling that local authority planning had increasingly been exposed as ineffectual and that only a national organisation would have the capability to successfully coordinate ARP.⁵⁵⁸ Hoare took these criticisms on board when the ARP Bill had its Third Reading a week later (7 December). When summarising the Bill he announced a new clause whereby local authorities would be required to provide the Home Office with detailed plans for the evacuation of civilians. Furthermore, Hoare informed the House that, on reflection, he had decided that the issue warranted a new Civil Department within the Home Office; both these measures were well received. Despite winning some plaudits for his efforts in improving the Bill though, the Home Secretary concluded his speech with a distinctly Chamberlainite postscript: 'Air raid precautions must take their proper place in the general scheme of Defence finance and Defence preparation! If ARP costs were out of scale they would place an unbearable cost on the country's finances'.⁵⁵⁹ Nevertheless, government supporters who had been critical of the legislation were sufficiently reassured by Hoare's concessions and the ARP Bill was safely voted through the House by the close of that day's sitting.

Despite the ARP Bill taking precedence over all other Home Office business in the last months of 1937, Hoare was also determined to introduce a Criminal Justice Bill at the first opportunity. In November 1937 he outlined his proposals for a wide-ranging scheme to the cabinet, and he received approval for his plans by the end of the year. Significantly, Hoare's impatience in forwarding his cherished projects failed

⁵⁵⁸ Churchill also criticised the failure to plan for evacuation of civilians, during the Second Reading of the ARP Bill.

⁵⁵⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 7 Dec. 1937, vol.330, col.279-80.

to endear him to front bench colleagues, with Butler noting: 'Sam has caused a good deal of antipathy by managing to crowd out some of the other Cabinet Ministers at the gate and get in with his Prison Reform Bill when he had hardly finished his Air Raid Precautions Bill. There is naturally a good deal of jealousy'.⁵⁶⁰ Nonetheless, having gained cabinet approval for this legislation, Hoare confidently outlined the principles guiding his plans for penal reform in his constituency New Year Message. These were: to keep the young out of prison, to create a system whereby offenders are offered rehabilitation while protecting society from hardened criminals, and to strive for continual reform of prison life.⁵⁶¹

As events transpired, the Home Secretary's plans to introduce a new penal code were thwarted by more pressing matters. Difficulties surrounding ARP persisted long after the Bill had been passed in December 1937, and consequently Hoare was increasingly distracted by the need to promote this fledgling service. During the first months of 1938, he visited local authorities and delivered speeches in several locations across the country in order to encourage greater engagement with ARP measures. At the start of February 1938, Hoare also confirmed the opening of a national training college for ARP officers in London.⁵⁶² A month later, in Manchester, he viewed the city's first air-raid shelter and inspected its newly established decontamination and gas training centre; he also used this occasion to announce the distribution of 500,000 instruction manuals to those involved in ARP work.⁵⁶³ In addition to engagements of this kind, Hoare was responsible for championing the

⁵⁶⁰ Butler to Brabourne, 1 Jan 1938, Brabourne MSS, F97/22B/100-2.

⁵⁶¹ Extract from the *Chelsea Chronicle* printed in *The Times*, 4 Jan. 1938.

⁵⁶² *The Times*, 4 Feb. 1938.

⁵⁶³ *The Times*, 8 Mar. 1938.

recruitment of a million volunteers to undertake the various duties associated with ARP. This appeal was extraordinarily successful (conceivably aided by international events) and far exceeded expectations. Encouraged by the initial response Hoare requested permission from the Governor-General of the BBC to broadcast a series of talks, further enlightening the public in regards to civil defence and, incredibly, the target of a million volunteers was reached by the end of 1938. However, arguably the biggest surprise in the drive for ARP volunteers was the number of women seeking to enrol in the organisation; work in civil defence had been perceived to be a male preserve. Hoare at once recognised the potential of this phenomenon, and made an inspired decision to invite Lady Reading to head a Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) to help with ARP. The choice of Lady Reading to head the WVS proved masterly as she was quickly regarded as a highly effective chief; the Conservative MP, Ronald Tree, described her as 'one of the most formidable ladies of her time'.⁵⁶⁴ This was indeed the case, as her rigorous negotiating in preparatory talks with Hoare during April and May 1938 resulted in the receipt both of official funding and an office within the ARP department for the new organisation. (She also gained the status of a deputy Under-Secretary).⁵⁶⁵ Having resolved these matters, the creation of the WVS was formally announced on 18 June 1938, and it subsequently played a hugely significant role in the administration of ARP measures; later renamed the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS), the organisation is still active to this day.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ R. Tree, *When the Moon was High: Memoirs of War and Peace 1897-1942* (1975), p.93.

⁵⁶⁵ Details of the negotiations have been collated by the WRVS archivist Matthew McMurray, and are available under the title 'The Formation and Founding of the Women's Voluntary Services for ARP' on the official WRVS website.

⁵⁶⁶ For more information on the formation of the WVS see, chapter 2 'Lady Reading and Women's Voluntary Services' in, J. Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War* (Oxford, 2002).

Whilst Hoare was establishing the WVS with Lady Reading, an unforeseen complication hit the ARP programme when it emerged that some local authorities in London and elsewhere in the country were not obliged to provide fire protection. As fire-fighting was regarded as one of the essential components of ARP, the government was compelled to act swiftly lest this revelation should undermine public confidence in the scheme. Consequently a Fire Brigades Bill was hurriedly drafted in order to remedy this oversight, and during its Second Reading, Hoare informed the House that the passage of the first such Bill in forty years would ensure adequate protection throughout the country whilst also formalising co-operation between different authorities in regards to combating serious incidents:

Under this Bill we ensure that in every part of the country there will be a statutory obligation upon some local authority to take fire precautions. That is a great step forward. It should have been taken years ago, and it should certainly be taken now without any further delay.⁵⁶⁷

In an effort to assuage restive MPs, the Home Secretary also promised a government grant of £1,500,000 for fire appliances and the establishment of a National Training Centre for firemen in London. Duly recognised as a national priority, the Fire Brigades Bill was given precedence in the parliamentary timetable and was immediately passed by an All-House Committee on 5 July 1938.

Alongside his continual involvement with promoting ARP, Hoare was increasingly preoccupied by dealing with Britain's immigration policy in relation to Jewish refugees fleeing from Nazi persecution. Since Hitler's rise to power in 1933, a small yet steady stream of German Jews had arrived in Britain, but as many were only

⁵⁶⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, 10 May 1938, vol.336, cols.1429-35.

staying for a short period before re-emigrating (primarily to the Americas or Palestine), the Home Office felt under no pressure to review normal entry requirements. Moreover, the Jewish Refugee Committee (JRC) had assured the government that no Jewish refugee would be a financial burden on the state during their residence in Britain. As a result, the Home Office felt no compunction to reintroduce the visa requirement for German and Austrian citizens, which had been rescinded in 1927. Although concerns persisted in the intervening years that the Home Office was underrating the potential number of German Jews seeking to enter Britain, this *modus operandi* remained in place when Hoare became Home Secretary in 1937.

The German annexation of Austria (Anschluss) on 12 March 1938 and the subsequent mass maltreatment of Austrian Jews created a radically different situation for the Home Office. Naturally there was much British sympathy for the plight of the Austrian Jews, who had been stripped of both their rights and (in many cases) property. However, in contrast to the situation since 1933, there now loomed the real possibility that large numbers of destitute Jewish refugees could descend on Britain whenever Germany re-opened Austria's borders. With Britain barely emerged from recession and still suffering from high levels of unemployment, the government had little political appetite for allowing any significant immigration for fear of creating an anti-Semitic backlash. Additionally, in the wake of the events in Austria the JRC compounded the government's quandary by withdrawing its guarantee to fund further refugees entering Britain. As a precautionary move, the Home Office drafted plans to reintroduce the visa system for German and Austrian citizens if the government deemed it necessary, although Hoare informed the cabinet that he had

'great reluctance in putting another obstacle in the way of these unfortunate people'.⁵⁶⁸ Moreover, there was significant scepticism within the Home Office as to whether the restoration of this entry requirement would provide any protection against large numbers of refugees, as it was evident that the requirement to acquire a visa did nothing to prevent Jewish immigrants from completing the appropriate documentation after having landed in the country.

In the week that followed the Anschluss, the true extent of the Nazi excesses against Austrian Jews was revealed to the British public through reports in the national press. Subsequently, amidst much public anger, there were recurrent demands from many quarters that Britain should offer more assistance to those fleeing Nazi persecution, and relax its immigration rules. In correspondence with Hoare, the Archbishop of Canterbury urged the Home Secretary to afford consideration to the plight of Austrian Jews:

I have received information from Vienna of the miserable plight of the Jews in that city and in Austria and of their apprehension and even terror. I am told that those who may succeed in getting out of Austria would not be allowed to enter England. I have been told that one or two Austrian Jews who arrived at Croydon were not allowed to land but were sent back. No one knows better than I do the difficulties which might be created if any large number of Austrian Jews were permitted to enter this country. But it seems lamentable that there should be no place of refuge for these unhappy people.⁵⁶⁹

On the same day that Cosmo Lang had written to Hoare, the Home Secretary addressed the House in order to clarify Britain's immigration policy in the wake of

⁵⁶⁸ Cabinet 58 (38), 16 Mar. 1938, CAB 23/93.

⁵⁶⁹ Cosmo Lang to Hoare, 22 Mar. 1938, Templewood MSS, X/3.

recent events. It was evident from his speech that, although Britain was rightly proud of its tradition of offering sanctuary to those suffering persecution, the government was not prepared to provide *carte blanche* entry to all the refugees that sought asylum, citing the prevailing economic conditions as an obstacle. Instead Hoare outlined a strictly controlled approach to immigration:

It is essential to avoid creating an impression that the door is open to immigrants of all kinds. If such an impression were created would-be immigrants would present themselves at the ports in such large numbers that it would be impossible to admit them all, great difficulties would be experienced by the immigration officers in deciding who could properly be admitted, and unnecessary hardship would be inflicted on those who had made a fruitless journey across the Continent. I am anxious that admission shall not be refused to suitable applicants, including persons whose work in the world of science or the arts or business and industry may be advantageous to this country. It must, however, be remembered that even in the professions the danger of overcrowding cannot be overlooked, whilst in the sphere of business and industry the social and economic difficulties must be taken into account.⁵⁷⁰

Opposition MPs criticised the statement as it appeared to favour the more professional and wealthy immigrant; this charge was rebuked by the Home Secretary, disingenuously offering the assurance that all refugees would be granted equal and sympathetic consideration. Additionally, in a further attempt to deflect criticism of favouring certain socio-economic groups, Hoare highlighted that qualified people coming to Britain would only be permitted to practice at the discretion of the respective professional organisations.

⁵⁷⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, 22 Mar. 1938, vol.333, cols.991-2.

Over and above the criticism that British immigration policy was unduly restrictive in the wake of Austria's Nazi occupation, the Home Secretary was also required to acknowledge the views of those who viewed the policy as too lax. The views of a nurse who corresponded with Hoare were typical of those who sought tighter immigration control, when she wrote: 'Personally, I have no animosity towards Jews but I do think we have too many in this country and I know many Jews who think as I do'.⁵⁷¹ The fear of a large influx of Jewish refugees constantly exercised the Home Office throughout the spring of 1938, with Hoare acknowledging in his 22 March statement the necessity for a more efficient system of processing refugees coming to Britain.⁵⁷² Significantly, many British Jews agreed with the Home Secretary. On 1 April 1938 a deputation of representatives from the Board of Deputies of British Jews discussed the subject of Jewish refugees with Hoare, Lloyd and several senior Home Office officials. The principal member of the deputation, Otto Schiff (Chairman of the German Jewish Aid Committee), insisted that the visa requirement be reintroduced for German and Austrian citizens; Schiff also suggested that visa applications should be made locally, thereby preventing the need to remove failed applicants already on British soil. In a demonstration of prejudice towards both nationality and class, he recommended that:

The imposition of the visa was especially necessary in the case of Austrians who were largely of the shop-keeper and small trader class and would therefore prove very much more difficult to emigrate than the average German who had come to the United Kingdom.

⁵⁷¹ E. Alleyne to Hoare, 23 Mar. 1938, Templewood MSS, X/3.

⁵⁷² In the weeks following the Anschluss Hoare was faced with persistent parliamentary questions from Conservative MPs regarding the numbers of Austrian refugees entering Britain: *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.333, cols.859; 1351; 1642; 2157.

Hoare concurred with Schiff on the immediate need for a visa system. The two men also agreed that it would be desirable if the various Jewish organisations providing assistance for refugees were to form an overarching central body to coordinate their activities; this was believed necessary in order to assist the Home Office in dealing with visa applications. However, Hoare pointed out that:

It would be necessary for the Home Office to discriminate very carefully as to the type of refugee who could be admitted to this country. If a flood of the wrong type of immigrants were allowed in there might be serious danger of anti-semitic feeling being aroused in this country. The last thing which we wanted here was the creation of a Jewish problem.⁵⁷³

Significantly, the deputation was in wholehearted agreement with Hoare about this need for careful screening of refugees seeking to enter Britain.⁵⁷⁴

The Home Secretary's publicly uncompromising attitude to large numbers of Jewish refugees coming to Britain was arguably due to prevailing political circumstances. Hoare was personally sympathetic to their plight, declaring in his (post-war) memoirs that his heart had gone out to them on humanitarian grounds.⁵⁷⁵ However, with unemployment still at a high level, there were many groups and individuals averse to large numbers of Jews coming into Britain - particularly as they were believed to have no means of support, thereby requiring employment in the already difficult labour market; only a week after Hoare had met Schiff's Deputation, he was

⁵⁷³ Memo of Deputation received by Hoare on 1 Apr. 1938 from the Board of Deputies of British Jews: PRO, Home Office – HO 213/42 [GEN 7/49/15].

⁵⁷⁴ At the beginning of May 1938 Hoare informed Parliament that Britain was reintroducing the visa system for Austrian and German citizens: *Parliamentary Debates*, 3 May 1938, vol.335, cols.698-9.

⁵⁷⁵ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.239.

reminded by Page Croft that there were still a million unemployed in Britain.⁵⁷⁶

Moreover, the Home Office was under considerable pressure from professional organisations to prevent Jewish immigration into Britain. In the most notable case of this kind, the British Medical Association (BMA) objected to the admittance of Austrian Jewish doctors for fear they would continue to practice in Britain, and thus endanger the livelihoods of native practitioners.⁵⁷⁷ In July 1938, Hoare was involved in heated exchanges both with Conservative MPs supporting the BMA's stance and those on the opposition benches arguing of the need for more doctors.⁵⁷⁸ It was evident, though, that Hoare had been influenced by the BMA's argument as he denied there being a shortage of doctors.⁵⁷⁹ Seeking to capitalise from this admission, the Conservative MP Sir Henry Morris-Jones inquired as to how many Austrian doctors would eventually be admitted, to which the Home Secretary replied:

I have been in consultation with representatives of the medical profession, and I agree with them that the number of Austrian doctors who can be absorbed into the profession is limited. Before coming to a decision as to a precise figure I should wish to wait until there has been further opportunity of ascertaining how many of the applicants are persons possessing special qualifications or having special claims to consideration. In reviewing applications consideration will also be given to such questions as what arrangements the applicant proposes to make for acquiring

⁵⁷⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, 7 Apr. 1938, vol.334, col.512.

⁵⁷⁷ This had also been the case during Simon's tenure as Home Secretary, when a similar concern emerged after Jewish doctors were banned from practicing in Germany following the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935: London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948*, p.51-2.

⁵⁷⁸ Hoare had been aware of the difficulties encountered by Jewish doctors fleeing Germany since Hitler's rise to power in 1933. In August of that year he wrote to the Viceroy enquiring whether there were opportunities for German Jewish doctors to work in India: Hoare to Willingdon, 18 Aug. 1933, Templewood MSS (BL), E240/3/797-99.

⁵⁷⁹ The Conservative MP, Vyvyan Adams, challenged the BMA's stance through research which suggested that, of 50,000 practicing doctors in 1938, only 187 were of German Jewish extraction: Crowson, *Facing Fascism*, p.33-4.

the necessary qualification to practice in this country and in what part of the country he proposes to settle.⁵⁸⁰

Similar arguments to those exercised by the BMA were repeated in other professional bodies' attempts to 'protect' their members from undue foreign competition (dentists being a notable example).⁵⁸¹ As the application process for visas had patently been designed to afford advantage to this type of refugee, resistance to such groups resulted in considerable frustration for the Home Office; Hoare later conceded that only the opposition of the BMA had prevented him from admitting the 'Austrian medical schools *en bloc*'.⁵⁸²

Involvement in ARP and the Jewish refugee problem heightened Hoare's engagement with the realms of foreign policy. On returning to the cabinet he had sought to distance himself from foreign affairs where possible, yet there was a notable change to this disposition after May 1937. As Hoare and Chamberlain agreed on many aspects of foreign policy (the need to placate Italy, in particular), the new Prime Minister understandably wished to involve the Home Secretary in his cabinet's Foreign Affairs Committee. Furthermore, Hoare was in regular contact with Foreign Office officials over immigration, while his direction of ARP ensured regular attendance at Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) meetings. Eden's view of Hoare's renewed prominence evades any mention in his memoirs, but it is conceivable that he was far from enamoured with the fact that the Prime Minister now had two ex-Foreign Secretaries as his principal ministers. With Chamberlain

⁵⁸⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, 11 July 1938, vol.338, col.1502.

⁵⁸¹ For more information on the exclusion of dental practitioners see: J.S. Zamet, 'Aliens or Colleagues? Refugees from Nazi Oppression 1933-1945', *British Dental Journal*, vol.201 (2006), pp.397-407.

⁵⁸² Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.240.

confident of his own abilities in conducting foreign affairs, Eden must have been somewhat disheartened at the situation he suddenly faced; indeed, Halifax's trip to Berlin in November 1937 was conducted against Eden's wishes. Contrastingly gratified with his change in circumstances, Hoare's new prominence doubtlessly caused Eden discomfort during cabinet discussion, with the Home Secretary invariably supporting Chamberlain over matters of foreign policy.⁵⁸³ That is not to say that his propensity to support Chamberlain against Eden was unequivocal, as on the question of returning colonies to Germany Hoare was firmly in the Foreign Secretary's camp.⁵⁸⁴ However, with respect to the central tenets of policy Chamberlain and Hoare were as one, and this equation consequently fuelled rumours that the continued rivalry between Hoare and Eden may have served as a factor contributing to the latter's resignation on 20 February 1938. Such speculation was heightened following Hoare's comment to Amery that he believed the now ex-Foreign Minister to be 'vain and unstable'. Notwithstanding this remark, it was apparent that the majority of Ministers opposed Eden's intransigence about coming to terms with Italy, and it was this fact rather than any intrigue on Hoare's part which led to the Foreign Minister's increasing detachment from the cabinet before his resignation; Hoare also told Amery that the whole cabinet agreed with Chamberlain over Italy.⁵⁸⁵ Consequently, with Eden relatively isolated it was arguably inevitable that he would feel obliged to resign, though in the event there was nonetheless much incredulity. However, in strategic terms, Hoare was clearly one of a number of Ministers who stood to gain through Eden leaving the cabinet, thereby affording veracity to Mark Patrick's portrayal of events: 'Neville, Kingsley Wood, Sam and

⁵⁸³ Hoare claimed that by both 'instinct and training' he was bound to find himself 'in accord with Chamberlain's ideas': Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.257.

⁵⁸⁴ Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p.519.

⁵⁸⁵ Amery diary, 21 Feb. 1938, p.456.

Swinton have been “gunning” for him for some time and have at last “grassed” him’.⁵⁸⁶

Eden’s resignation generated sensationalist headlines in its wake, yet it was swiftly overshadowed by events in Europe where Hitler had long professed a desire for Austria’s incorporation into the Third Reich, abetted by Austrian Nazis who had consistently agitated for union between the two countries; in 1934 an attempted Nazi coup in Austria had failed due to Italian opposition. Four years on, tension between Germany and the Austria was exacerbated by the Austrian government’s plans to call a plebiscite in order to expose the spurious claims of resident Nazis that the population overwhelmingly desired union with her larger neighbour. Hitler was outraged as this could undermine legitimate claims for Anschluss; Britain, fearing an escalation of the crisis, called on Austria to abandon its plans for a referendum. The sudden German occupation of Austria on 12 March 1938 dumbfounded the British government, with Hoare later admitting: ‘we did not contemplate a sudden military takeover’.⁵⁸⁷ Hitler’s move also confounded Britain’s broader European strategy in that he had clearly abandoned negotiation as a means to resolve Germany’s grievances, whilst Italy had shown itself to be a benign bystander in the face of Nazi ambitions.

The *fait accompli* of the Anschluss immediately led to apprehension in London that Germany would attempt to resolve its dispute with Czechoslovakia over the Sudeten

⁵⁸⁶ Butler to Brabourne, 23 Feb. 1938, Brabourne MSS, F97/22B/87-9.

⁵⁸⁷ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.282.

Germans, whilst Britain and France remained traumatised by events in Austria. As both France and Russia were bound by treaty obligations with the Czechs, the British government sensed a real danger of becoming embroiled in a major European conflict (due to the ready acknowledgement that Britain would invariably fight alongside the French in any war with Germany). This scenario presented the British government with the acute dilemma of preventing Czechoslovakia following the example of Austria, whilst, concurrently seeking to avoid a war for which they were unprepared. In a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee on 15 March 1938, various options were considered: a Grand Alliance with France and Russia (Churchill's proposal); a commitment to support France; or no such new commitment and the assumption of a peaceful resolution. Surprisingly, in view of his previous association with Czechoslovakia,⁵⁸⁸ Hoare opted for a firm commitment to France rather than provide any specific British assurance to Prague.⁵⁸⁹ Hoare admitted that the reluctance to support any firm guarantee to the Czechs throughout the Sudetenland crisis was principally due to the prevailing military consensus that Czechoslovakia had been rendered indefensible following events in Austria.⁵⁹⁰ That said, his fellow Ministers were simply apprehensive of any official pledge of British support to France, as this could encourage the French to become more belligerent in the negotiations to achieve a peaceful settlement (the outcome to which most of the Committee was inclined). In the event, the Committee failed to reach a unanimous decision, although Hoare assured Amery that as Ministers were impressed by the impracticalities of defending Czechoslovakia, this consequently precluded any offer of explicit guarantees when Chamberlain outlined British policy to the House of

⁵⁸⁸ Hoare had played a key role in facilitating the aspirations of the Czech leaders (Masaryk and Benes) in the later stages of the First World War; this had led to the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1919, and ensured cordial relations between the two powers thereafter: Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, p.57-8.

⁵⁸⁹ I. Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet* (1971), p.109.

⁵⁹⁰ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.288.

Commons.⁵⁹¹ His assessment proved correct, as Chamberlain unveiled an ambiguous parliamentary statement on 24 March 1938, thereby retaining Britain's freedom of action in the dispute.

Hoare's affinity with the Czech leadership was an undoubted boon to Chamberlain in the early days of the Sudeten Crisis, as he served as an ideal intermediary for relaying British advice directly to Prague without the need to follow official diplomatic channels. Following Chamberlain's speech on 24 March, for example, the cabinet sanctioned the Home Secretary to relay a message to Benes, advising the Czech leader to engage in talks with the Sudeten Germans in an attempt to reach an amicable resolution to the dispute.⁵⁹² However, as a settlement increasingly appeared to depend on an as-yet-defined territorial adjustment, it was curious that Hoare acquiesced to such a request; only two weeks earlier the eminent historian Seton-Watson had warned him against the 'sheer insanity' of changing Czechoslovakia's borders.⁵⁹³ However, as events unfolded, with the dispute descending into an uneasy standoff, such ambiguity in British policy towards Czechoslovakia was arguably successful as it led Hitler to abandon any attempt to settle the Sudeten dispute during the spring of 1938, for fear of Britain's intentions.

There may be some truth in the supposition that Hoare was more willing to overlook the flaws in British policy during the early stages of the Czech Crisis due to his renewed optimism at the potential of becoming Prime Minister. Following

⁵⁹¹ Amery diary, 20 Mar. 1938, p.498.

⁵⁹² Butler to Brabourne, 8 Apr. 1938, Brabourne MSS, F97/22B/63-5.

⁵⁹³ Seton-Watson to Hoare, 22 Mar. 1938, Templewood MSS, X/3.

Chamberlain's sixty-ninth birthday on 18 March, there followed the customary speculation over his retirement, with the Home Secretary undeniably a contender for the succession. Hoare was undoubtedly alive to this state of affairs and had taken every opportunity to improve his chances of becoming Premier; he even insisted on previewing Bruce Lockhart's new book *Guns or Butter* so as to ensure it included the Paris Proposals, as the imminent Anglo-Italian agreement (announced on 16 April 1938) would appear to vindicate his actions in December 1935, leading the author to quip, 'Sam never leaves a stone unturned which may help his chances of the Prime Ministership'.⁵⁹⁴ Beaverbrook was similarly convinced that a succession was imminent (albeit through Chamberlain's death rather than retirement!); he expressed confidence that Hoare had 'first claim to the crown'.⁵⁹⁵ The Press Lord was supported in his view by, among others, Henry (Chips) Channon, who recorded in his diary that Hoare was convinced he was the logical successor to Chamberlain, and had allegedly requested Beaverbrook's advice on how to position himself as the recognised heir-apparent.⁵⁹⁶ However, despite this rise in speculation there was no succession and Chamberlain continued as Prime Minister, thus dampening Hoare's hopes; in any case Sir Thomas Inskip was arguably the leading candidate to succeed Chamberlain in the summer of 1938.

Although the British government was relieved at the avoidance of war, it was nonetheless alarmed at the limited support given during the May Crisis by France and Russia to Czechoslovakia. The observation that it had indeed been British actions which had averted the crisis led to a reappraisal of the situation; as there was

⁵⁹⁴ Lockhart diary, 5 Apr. 1938, p.390.

⁵⁹⁵ Beaverbrook to Cox, 1 June 1938: Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p.382.

⁵⁹⁶ Channon diary, 1 June 1938: R. R. James (ed), *Chips: The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon* (1967), p.158.

a distinct possibility that if Hitler had not changed his mind in May, Britain could have found itself fighting a war with Germany alone. Chamberlain was not prepared to countenance any repeat of such a danger and, in an attempt to restart the stalled negotiations between the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans, he undertook a dramatic change in policy by sending Lord Runciman as an arbitrator in order to facilitate this process.⁵⁹⁷ However, with Hitler growing increasingly restless throughout the summer of 1938, it became apparent that the Runciman Mission would not achieve its aims, meaning that any resolution of the dispute must therefore involve Germany. As a result, the cabinet instructed the British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Nevile Henderson, to return to England in order to personally inform the cabinet of Germany's position in the dispute; when Henderson addressed the cabinet on 28 August, Ministers were under no illusion that Hitler was intent on resolution by force unless Czechoslovakia made substantial concessions.

In the days that followed Henderson's visit, Chamberlain came to the conclusion that nothing less than personal diplomacy with Hitler could prevent an inevitable war over Czechoslovakia.⁵⁹⁸ However, with time thought to be running out before Germany sought to force the issue, the Prime Minister deduced it to be impractical to recall the whole cabinet (as parliament was still in recess), and therefore only informed Halifax and Simon of his proposal on 8 September. However, although this has been interpreted by some as a snub to Hoare, in reality it was due to the geographic fact that the Home Secretary was in attendance with the King and Queen at Balmoral

⁵⁹⁷ Chamberlain belief that an independent mediator could resurrect the negotiations was to prove misplaced – primarily due to Berlin orchestrating the demands of the Sudeten Germans: P. Vysny, *The Runciman Mission to Czechoslovakia, 1938: Prelude to Munich* (Basingstoke, 2003).

⁵⁹⁸ Colville suggests the idea of a personal visit to Hitler may have been a 'rehash' of a proposed visit by Baldwin to see Hitler, ultimately never undertaken: Colville, *Chamberlain Cabinet*, p.146.

until 9 September. On Hoare's return to London on 10 September he was informed by Chamberlain of his planned visit to Germany, to which Hoare replied ominously that the Prime Minister was 'taking a great political risk by personally intervening in a way that was quite likely to fail'.⁵⁹⁹ Although this was far from the prognosis Chamberlain wished to hear, Hoare was invited to join Simon, Halifax and the Prime Minister in an inner cabinet (subsequently known as the 'Big Four') for the remainder of the crisis. Writing to his wife, Hoare asserted his conviction that there would not be a war: 'Neville seemed glad to have me back and at once brought me into the conversations. I think that his and my views very much correspond'.⁶⁰⁰ Chamberlain met the German dictator at Berchtesgaden on 15 September, before returning to London the following day in order to determine cabinet support for Hitler's demand of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans; the cabinet duly concurred with this proposition. However, this attitude altered swiftly as reports reached Ministers that, during a further meeting between Chamberlain and Hitler at Godesberg on 21 September, the German dictator had increased his demands to include immediate cessation of territory prior to any plebiscites. The cabinet refused to sanction any such action during its deliberations on 23 September, and Chamberlain returned to Britain without an agreement.

On reaching London on 24 September, Chamberlain immediately met with his inner cabinet prior to attending the full cabinet later that afternoon. Chamberlain found Halifax and Simon receptive to his belief that Hitler merely regarded the Sudeten issue as one of self-determination and that its resolution would end his territorial

⁵⁹⁹ D. Faber, *Munich: The 1938 Appeasement Crisis* (2008), p.274.

⁶⁰⁰ Sam to Maud Hoare, 11 Sep. 1938, Templewood MSS, AND/2.

ambitions. Hoare's response, while not demurring from the opinion of his colleagues, was more guarded: he warned that the government might well 'find difficulty in carrying acceptance of the German proposals unless there was something to put on the other side'.⁶⁰¹ During the full cabinet that followed, there was little sign of rebellion in the face of such senior Ministerial support for the Prime Minister's view that the Godesberg terms were acceptable. However, the next day Halifax stated his position firmly opposed to an acceptance of the Godesberg proposals, and he received the backing of the majority of Ministers present; only Lord Stanhope and Kingsley Wood supported the Prime Minister. With the cabinet resisting any agreement to Hitler's scheme, Chamberlain's efforts seemed to be at an end, while fears of war scaled new heights. Providently, Mussolini made an eleventh hour intervention, and Chamberlain accepted his invitation to attend a four power conference in Munich on 28 September in order to resolve the crisis. After the conference was announced, most Ministers rallied in support of the Prime Minister and hailed his efforts to resolve the dispute. In correspondence with Chamberlain's wife after her husband had left for Germany, Hoare evinced his continuing affection for the Prime Minister whilst bestowing praise for his exertions to achieve peace:

I am a very shy person and have a bad habit of hiding my feelings. I must however, break through the ice and let a warm heart make itself felt. Neville has been wonderful and I cannot say how great is my admiration for him.⁶⁰²

⁶⁰¹ Faber, *Munich*, p.346.

⁶⁰² Hoare to Anne Chamberlain, 29 Sep. 1938, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC13/11/684.

CHAPTER EIGHT – DESCENT INTO WAR AND HOARE’S FALL FROM GRACE

The news that Chamberlain had signed the Munich Agreement in the early hours of Friday, 30 September 1938, was greeted with a palpable sense of relief throughout Britain.⁶⁰³ On his return to London later that day, the Prime Minister was welcomed by an outpouring of public affection, inspiring him – in response to the cheering crowds outside Downing Street - to utter the fateful words: “I believe it is peace in our time”, and still more, that he added “peace with honour”, which some Conservatives, especially among the junior ministers, objected to.⁶⁰⁴ Outwardly, the cabinet were equally effusive, evincing no appetite for a repetition of the Ministerial revolt which had followed the Godesberg meeting; when Chamberlain proceeded to brief Ministers, Simon stated that the whole cabinet was united in expressing ‘its profound admiration and pride in the Prime Minister’.⁶⁰⁵ With the exception of Duff Cooper,⁶⁰⁶ the cabinet acceded to Chamberlain’s belief that Munich nullified the arbitrary nature of Hitler’s earlier demands; Hoare believed it to be ‘definitely better

⁶⁰³ Chamberlain appeared to attribute more importance to the statement signed by Hitler (outlining improved Anglo-German relations) than on the Munich Agreement itself: Lord Strang, *Home and Abroad* (1956), p.146-8.

⁶⁰⁴ Collin Brooks described Chamberlain’s welcome on his return from Munich as the most frenzied ever afforded to a statesman: Brooks diary, 1 Oct. 1938, p.220.

⁶⁰⁵ Cabinet meeting during the evening of 30 Sep. 1938: Colvin, *Chamberlain Cabinet*, p.169.

⁶⁰⁶ Duff Cooper tendered his resignation over the issue, although he admitted that the differences between Munich and Godesberg were greater than he had been led to believe: Cooper diary, 30 Sep. 1938, in J. J. Norwich (ed.), *The Duff Cooper Diaries* (2005), p.271.

than the conditions of the Godesberg *diktat*.⁶⁰⁷ Nonetheless, despite this endorsement, Ministers remained apprehensive over sanctioning the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, in view of the likely reaction in parliament to such duplicity.⁶⁰⁸

Such Ministerial anxiety was well-founded, as dissident Conservatives had grown increasingly vociferous in their opposition to appeasement during the days preceding Munich, and a genuine fear remained that these rebels could unite with the opposition when the issue came before parliament on 3-6 October.⁶⁰⁹ Moreover, the cabinet held concerns that the Czech and Russian Ambassadors to London (Masaryk and Maisky respectively) and Seton-Watson were actively assisting the government's opponents in the aftermath of Munich. Further apprehension prior to the debate stemmed from the fact that many mainstream national newspapers were adopting a more critical tone in their leader columns when commenting on the delineation of Czechoslovakia's post-Munich borders.⁶¹⁰ Consequently, there was an understandable reluctance from members of the government to speak in the debate, and Hoare felt slightly aggrieved when Chamberlain belatedly asked him to represent the government in closing the first day's proceedings; although Hoare had ostensibly agreed with the Munich Agreement, he nonetheless remained

⁶⁰⁷ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.322.

⁶⁰⁸ On 30 September 1938 Halifax informed Alan Lennox-Boyd MP that he foresaw trouble in parliament over Munich: Channon diary, 1 Oct. 1938, p.214.

⁶⁰⁹ This fear was highlighted when Churchill, Eden and other prominent Conservatives met with the leaders of the opposition parties (Attlee and Sinclair) on 29 September to discuss the possibility of joint action in opposing the government over the possibility of further concessions to Hitler. Although no agreement was reached, this meeting would undoubtedly have alarmed Ministers to the potential of such a development.

⁶¹⁰ F. R. Gannon, *The British Press and Germany 1936-1939* (1971), pp.172-228.

sympathetic to Czechoslovakia and had no wish to cause his many Czech friends further anguish by defending the government's policy so soon after the event.⁶¹¹

On the first day of the debate, it was swiftly evident that Ministers would be lambasted for accepting the Munich Agreement, as the leaders of the opposition parties made plain their determination to embarrass the government over its foreign policy. Following Duff Cooper's resignation speech and a statement by Chamberlain, there ensued several hours of continuous invective against the government by opposition spokesmen.⁶¹² Eden contributed further derision from the Conservative benches to further discomfort the government. Labour's Hugh Dalton added a particularly effective oration, pouring scorn on the inner cabinet's monopoly over policy during the Czech Crisis, and asking the Home Secretary (who was to speak next) whether he could confirm Seton-Watson's assertion that British and French Ministers in Prague were ordered to send an immediate demarche to the Czech government after the Prime Minister's first meeting with Hitler.⁶¹³ Joining the debate at nearly 10.20 in the evening, Hoare delivered an ambiguous response to the opposition accusations and was regularly unsettled by the interjections of Attlee and Dalton, leading the Permanent Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office, Sir Alexander Cadogan, to describe the Home Secretary as 'too bad for words'.⁶¹⁴ Moreover, his tribute to Chamberlain prior to the adjournment seemed outlandish considering the

⁶¹¹ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.322.

⁶¹² Clem Attlee, George Lansbury, Arthur Henderson for Labour; Archie Sinclair and Richard Law for the Liberals.

⁶¹³ The demarche was intended to force Czech acceptance of an Anglo-French plan for the cessation of German-speaking border areas to Germany. Dalton highlighted four key elements of this demarche – The world would blame Czechoslovakia if war broke out on account of her refusal to accede the Sudetenland to Germany; Britain and France had a duty to prevent a European war; Czechoslovakia would stand accuse of destroying Anglo-French solidarity if it did not accept the plan; France would not fulfil her treaty obligations if Czechoslovakia refused: *Parliamentary Debates*, 3 Oct. 1938, vol.339, cols.140-1.

⁶¹⁴ Cadogan diary, 3 Oct. 1938: D. Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945* (1971), p.112.

general tone of the debate, and only succeeded in adding to the gloom on the government benches:

When the time comes for the verdict to be given upon the Prime Minister's conduct, let me tell the right hon. Gentleman [Attlee] that none of us here fears that verdict. I believe that the criticisms to which we have listened in the House to-day very little represent[sic] the great body of feeling. I believe the great body of our fellow-citizens not only in this country but in the Dominions and in the whole Empire, are grateful to the Prime Minister for the efforts he has made. They are grateful to the Prime Minister for having persistently sustained the policy of peace and mediation. They do not take the view that war is inevitable. They believe that under his wise guidance we may succeed in creating a new Europe in which men and women can go about their business in peace and security.⁶¹⁵

Though Hoare played no further part he remained in his seat for the rest of the debate and grew progressively more despondent at the worsening political atmosphere in the House. After hearing Churchill's 'unmitigated defeat' harangue on 5 October, he forwarded a memorandum to Chamberlain urging the Prime Minister to call a general election in order to take advantage of the government's existent popularity in the country. Barring that, Hoare advocated a major reconstruction of the government in order to widen its appeal, suggesting that the inclusion of Runciman, Chatfield and Sir John Anderson would be welcomed by the public.⁶¹⁶ Surprisingly, he also sought the return of Eden to the cabinet.⁶¹⁷ Furthermore, he urged the Prime

⁶¹⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3 Oct. 1938, vol.339, cols.150-62.

⁶¹⁶ Hoare may also have pressed for the inclusion of Beaverbrook in the cabinet, possibly as Minister for Agriculture: Chisolm & Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p.353; confirmation that Hoare pushed for Beaverbrook's inclusion in the government is revealed in a subsequent letter to the Press Lord, Hoare to Beaverbrook, 15 Feb. 1943, in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p.392.

⁶¹⁷ Eden's return to the cabinet would deny Conservative rebels a respectable figurehead – Churchill being generally considered a less effective threat to the government.

Minister to consider the creation of a smaller cabinet in order to convince the public of the government's commitment to rearmament:

Is it not worth considering whether you should adopt for peace purposes the conception of the small war cabinet, i.e. an inner cabinet, representative of the groups of principal Departments rather than composed of each individual minister? I believe the country wants a change of this kind. People believe that our present machinery is slow and obsolescent.⁶¹⁸

In the event, Chamberlain was not persuaded by his Home Secretary's appeal to hold either an early election or establish an inner cabinet.⁶¹⁹ Nonetheless, he did concur with the need to reconstruct the government in the wake of Munich and subsequently incorporated most of Hoare's recommendations; Runciman was immediately appointed to the vacant position of Lord President of the Council, while Anderson became Lord Privy Seal on 31 October.⁶²⁰

Hoare was to be especially relieved at Anderson's appointment, as he had persuaded Chamberlain to impart the next Lord Privy Seal with responsibility over the ARP department and relevant parliamentary questions on the subject; the choice of Anderson was seen as appropriate due to his familiarity with ARP through the chairmanship of a committee reporting on the evacuation of civilians.⁶²¹ The Home Secretary's relief was palpable as, in the weeks since he had praised ARP for its

⁶¹⁸ Hoare to Chamberlain, 5 Oct. 1938, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/31/133.

⁶¹⁹ In response to a question from Churchill on the last day of the Munich debate (6 October) Chamberlain declared that holding an early general election would be 'constitutionally indecent'. His statement was arguably intended as an olive-branch to Conservative dissidents in an attempt to persuade them not to oppose the government in the final vote; in the event this tactic succeeded, with the Conservative rebels abstaining in preference to supporting the opposition: *Parliamentary Debates*, 6 Oct. 1938, vol.339, col.548.

⁶²⁰ Chamberlain's first choice, the former Liberal leader Herbert Samuel, had declined the offer of Lord Privy Seal prior to Anderson's appointment: Viscount Samuel, *Memoirs* (1945), p.212-4.

⁶²¹ J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, *John Anderson: Viscount Waverley* (1962), p.212-4.

efficiency during the Munich debate, it had emerged that chaos and confusion typified the real picture on the ground. Adversely for Hoare, this change came too late to prevent his having to defend the Home Office's direction of ARP following an opposition motion accusing the government of manifest unpreparedness in protecting the population at a time of potential war. In the debate on 3 November, Labour's Herbert Morrison berated the government's record on civil defence since 1935. Replying in defence of the Home Office's handling of ARP, Hoare stressed the inherent difficulties involved: 'I do not suppose that this House or any other Government has ever been faced with so difficult and so vast a series of problems as is raised by what are now known as air raid precautions. They cover the whole field of national life'. Not surprisingly his answer did little to placate the Labour benches, with the Liberal MP Sir Percy Harris accusing Hoare of a complete failure to answer the opposition indictment; Hoare's announcement that Anderson was to take charge of ARP did, however, succeed in drawing some of the opposition ire.⁶²² As a result of his ineffective response, Hoare was vulnerable to charges of incompetence for his handling of ARP, and he duly suffered a forthright reproof from the usually mild-mannered Labour MP, George Garro-Jones:

I should be sorry to make a personal attack upon the Home Secretary, for I have never made a personal attack upon anybody in this House. I have heard the Home Secretary for many years making speeches about our air preparedness, and I say that the same qualities which are failing us now in his present office have failed us in his former offices.

Surprisingly ignoring the archetypal lament over the Home Secretary's tenure at the Foreign Office, Garro-Jones charged Hoare with consistently ill-judged decision

⁶²² Amery also believed Hoare's defence against the opposition attack to be inadequate: Amery diary, 3 Nov. 1938, p.534.

making while Minister for Air.⁶²³ 'So', he concluded, 'we find again and again in looking over his speeches year after year that the present Home Secretary is incapable of grip or decision in the administration of his responsible office'.⁶²⁴ The charges levelled by Garro-Jones were spurious, yet undoubtedly pertinent with Britain seemingly under threat of enemy bombing. Consequently, despite the government's straightforward victory over the opposition by 355 to 130, the ARP question had doubtlessly proved a chastening experience for Hoare.

In the wake of this mauling in the House of Commons, Hoare was subsequently involved in an extraordinary affair involving Beaverbrook. On 4 November Lady Hoare wrote to the Press Lord apprising him that she feared for her husband's future continuation in politics, on account of persistent financial worries:

Sam must make up his mind whether he goes on in active politics after the next election, or whether he tries to make a new career. ... Sam is convinced and I rightly believe so – that we can hardly afford to go on in office. ... We grow poorer every year & that is worrying all enjoyment out of Sam. ... What is he to do? If he is not to retire at this election, he must be relieved of financial anxiety. The double burden is too heavy. If he goes, I believe it will be a great loss to the country. ...but unless my view is shared by those who can help, go he must. Do you share this view?⁶²⁵

⁶²³ Garro-Jones reminded the House that, during the 1920s, Hoare had stated the RAF to be prepared for rapid expansion should the need arise, and of his assurances that the changeover to metal aircraft would afford Britain a significant advantage over other nations due to her metal and engineering expertise and resources.

⁶²⁴ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3 Nov. 1938, vol.340, cols.411-88.

⁶²⁵ Lady Hoare to Beaverbrook, 4 Nov. 1938, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/308a; Although Lady Hoare did not elaborate on the cause of these monetary worries, it is conceivable that they originated from the implementation of death duties following the sale of Sidestrand Hall. This possibility was voiced by Dr Peter Martland of Trinity College, Cambridge, during a conversation with the author of this thesis in 2008 (Dr Martland was responsible for cataloguing Hoare's papers). Another possible explanation was the cost of building the Hoares new residence in Norfolk, Templewood Hall, at a cost of £8,000 – it was completed in

Notified of his friend's angst, Beaverbrook assured Hoare of his support in this matter, and evidently an offer of assistance was swiftly realised; on 18 November Lady Hoare comprised a brief note to the Press Lord, in gratitude for his support: 'He has been so overworked ... he was losing confidence in himself & in his abilities. But what a tonic! Thanks a thousand times'.⁶²⁶ Confirming his offer, Beaverbrook wrote to Hoare a few days later:

My long experience in public life has given me a very brilliant picture of the misfortunes of the man who takes public office. He not only loses his income from directorships and other employments but he invariably neglects his investments and loses capital. A very superficial enquiry has disclosed to me that you conform in every respect to this picture of the man who takes office. It is on this account that I send you out of a full pocket a very small sum which I would like you to put into your empty purse. And this time next year and for the rest of this Parliament and for the next parliament, if you still decide to stay in office and if I still have the necessary money, I will send you another dribble of the same size.⁶²⁷

It transpired that Beaverbrook had decided to enhance Hoare's ministerial salary of £5,000 by a further £2,000 per annum.⁶²⁸ However, this largesse was manifestly dependent on him remaining in the cabinet, thus highlighting Hoare's expediency to the Press Lord; Hoare undoubtedly kept his friend abreast of government intentions

1938. The present owner, and great nephew of Sir Samuel, Mr Eddy Anderson, informed the author that the land on which the house was built was already owned by Hoare, although it was constructed with fairly cheaply sourced materials – which would suggest a lack of financial means. However, as there appears to be no explicit documentary evidence, it must be noted that these potential reasons for financial concern are primarily conjecture.

⁶²⁶ Lady Hoare to Beaverbrook, 18 Nov. 1938, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/308a.

⁶²⁷ Beaverbrook to Hoare, 22 Nov. 1938, BBK/C/308a; this letter appears to suggest that Hoare may have lost money on the stock-market – Beaverbrook had invested money for Lady Hoare on previous occasions.

⁶²⁸ A.J.P. Taylor asserts that Hoare was paid £2,000 at the time of his wife's initial letter in November 1938, and two further instalments of the same amount in September and November 1939: Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p.386.

and Beaverbrook's daughter accredited him with being 'Father's spy in the cabinet' in her memoirs.⁶²⁹

Hopes that Nazi Germany would conduct its ambitions with greater caution after Munich were swiftly shattered on 9-10 November 1938, with the news that state organs had sponsored a campaign of looting and murder against their own Jewish community. Britain's response to the increase in Jews wishing to emigrate - was initially encouraging, with Chamberlain informing the House of Commons on 14 November that the government would attempt to offer more aid to Jewish refugees.⁶³⁰ Nonetheless, it was quickly evident that such high-minded statements without any corresponding change in policy were wholly inadequate, especially in light of a report from the British Embassy in Berlin:

The civilised world is confronted with the sight of over 500,000 people deliberately excluded from all trades and professions, and consequently unable to earn a living. They dwell in the grip and at the mercy of a brutal oligarchy which fiercely resents all humanitarian foreign intervention. Misery and despair are already there, and when their resources are either denied to them or exhausted, their end will be starvation.⁶³¹

However, although this communiqué informed London of the desperate situation facing Germany's Jews, it was clear that Ministers still failed to appreciate the magnitude of the refugee problem in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*; in response to probable increases in Jewish emigration to Britain, Hoare pledged to increase the number of staff available in the foreign consulates, to increase the efficiency of visa

⁶²⁹ J. Atkin-Kidd, *The Beaverbrook Girl* (1987), p.163.

⁶³⁰ *Parliamentary debates*, 14 Nov. 1938, vol.341, cols.503-5.

⁶³¹ Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes to Halifax, 16 Nov. 1938: Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939*, p.169.

applications.⁶³² Exasperated by this dilatoriness in the face of an inevitable increase in immigration, the opposition parties hurriedly organised a Commons debate for 21 November in order to discuss Britain's refugee policy.

On the day of the debate it was evident that the government was unlikely to countenance any change in policy. When Chamberlain delivered a statement in answer to an earlier question regarding the number of refugees to have entered Britain since 1933, he concluded by asserting: 'I must emphasise that, however great may be our desire and that of other countries to assist in dealing with this grave situation, the possibilities of settlement are strictly limited'.⁶³³ Notwithstanding this Prime Ministerial statement, the debate began in a somewhat extraneous manner (considering its subject), with Hoare proclaiming himself as both a believer in the 'possibility of Anglo-German friendship' and a 'staunch supporter of the Munich Agreement'. Continuing, he informed the House that the refugee issue was an international problem which no country could expect to resolve unilaterally. In considering Britain's response, the Home Secretary alluded to a number of difficulties which prevented the influx of large numbers of refugees:

In this country we are a thickly populated industrial community with at present a very large of unemployed. Competition is very keen with foreign countries, and it is difficult for many of our fellow-countrymen to make a livelihood at all and keep their industries and businesses going. It is quite obvious that there is an underlying current of suspicion and anxiety, rightly or wrongly, about alien immigration on any big scale.

⁶³² *Parliamentary Debates*, 17 Nov. 1938, vol.341, cols.1037-8.

⁶³³ *Parliamentary Debates*, 21 Nov. 1938, vol.341, cols.1314-6.

As a result, he was convinced that Britain could face the 'making of a definite anti-Jewish movement' should the government allow anything that appeared to be mass immigration.⁶³⁴

In view of these fears, Hoare insisted that Britain's present immigration policy was appropriate and that the visa system would be retained as an essential guard against 'an influx of the undesirable'. Despite being challenged by several opposition MPs to shorten the inordinate length of time that each application process took, the Home Secretary remained steadfast in his view that the current arrangement was efficient. However, he did assure the opposition that the government would provide more assistance to those refugees willing to re-emigrate after a period of training; Hoare informed the House of an expansion to a scheme whereby Jewish boys had trained in agriculture and girls were schooled in domestic service (before leaving Britain). Moreover, the government would not restrict the number of children entering Britain, provided they had some means of support, either through individuals or the Co-ordinating Committee.⁶³⁵ Concluding his statement, Hoare earnestly declared that no government was more sympathetic than Britain to the plight of the Jewish refugees.⁶³⁶ Nonetheless, despite Hoare having essentially retained all the principal elements of British immigration policy, there were still government MPs who believed the rules of entry to be too lax. In December 1938 a deputation of Conservative

⁶³⁴ Although the 1936 Public Order Act had to some extent diminished the impact of Fascism, the British Union of Fascists continued to be popular in areas with a significant Jewish population (gaining a number of seats during local elections in the East End of London during 1938) and persisted in holding unofficial demonstrations such as that staged at Piccadilly Circus on 23 April 1938. In addition, the British government would have been aware of a similar growth in anti-Semitism in France - anti-Jewish riots broke out in Strasbourg in late September 1938. For more information on this aspect see chapter 12, 'Anti-Semitism and the Reorganisation of Fascism 1936-8' in M. Pugh, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts* (2005), pp.213-234.

⁶³⁵ This measure was criticised a few weeks later by the Conservative MP for Hartlepool, Howard Gritten: *Parliamentary Debates*, 8 Dec. 1938, vol.342, cols.1345-6.

⁶³⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, 21 Nov. 1938, vol.341, cols.1463-75.

backbenchers had an audience with the Home Secretary in order to voice their concerns over refugees taking British jobs.⁶³⁷ Consequently, this largely irrational public fear of refugees displacing native workers was to dominate official thinking on immigration policy right up to the outbreak of war in September 1939.

By the end of November 1938, Hoare had finally secured a place in the parliamentary timetable for the Second Reading of his Criminal Justice Bill. On 29 November he outlined the hugely complicated Bill, of 83 separate clauses, with his opening statement providing a detailed overview of Britain's antiquated Penal Code and his various solutions to modernise it. Employing anecdotal evidence which had guided him in determining his conclusions, Hoare expounded the conviction that young people should be kept out of prison if at all possible – particularly in respect to minor offences; the Home Secretary quoted a prison officer, that young people given short sentences 'often go in crying and come out laughing' due to the habits they acquired during their brief term behind bars. To prevent the continuation of this practice, Hoare informed the House that the Bill would provide for new categories of institution where young offenders could benefit from specialist monitoring and training. Nonetheless, in contrast to this progressive measure, the Home Secretary contended he had framed the new legislation to deal effectively with persistent offenders through tougher sentencing powers. He was also intent on removing the category of criminal lunatic from the lexicon of penal terms, and stated that in future Broadmoor would be referred to as a hospital in place of its previous title of a Criminal Lunatic Asylum. Finally, and most contentiously, Hoare gave notice that the Bill would abolish corporal punishment, in all but cases of mutiny and gross assault

⁶³⁷ Crowson, *Fighting Fascism*, p.33-4.

in prisons. Concluding this statement to the House, the Home Secretary stated his belief that the Bill would continue to ensure the 'balance between the interests of the individual and the security of the state'.⁶³⁸

The response to Hoare's opening statement was effusive, with almost every speaker proclaiming the merits of the Bill; the sole exception was the newly elected MP for Oxford, Quintin Hogg, who questioned the wisdom of disposing with corporal punishment. Contrastingly, his Conservative colleague, Edmund Harvey, was frustrated that the Bill did not seek to question the continuation of capital punishment (or at least raise the age-limit); in the debate Harvey declared himself firmly in favour of the new legislation, and bestowed this accolade on its architect:

The House has shown that it is grateful to the Home Secretary for this very remarkable Measure of Penal reform. It will certainly be a landmark in our history, and in the days to come I think men will look back with gratitude on the memory of the statesman who was responsible for it.⁶³⁹

However, on the second day of the debate signs of discord amongst a number of Conservatives (such as Alfred Beit) emerged, echoing the concern of Quintin Hogg regarding corporal punishment. Moreover, they were joined by further colleagues dissatisfied with other aspects of the legislation: Sir Arnold Wilson, for example, was sceptical of Hoare's claim that six months imprisonment with hard labour was worse for a youth than a longer period in a borstal.⁶⁴⁰ In contrast, the opposition remained unanimously supportive of the Bill throughout the remainder of the debate, with even

⁶³⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, 29 Nov. 1938, vol.342, cols.267-86.

⁶³⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 29 Nov. 1938, vol.342, col.315.

⁶⁴⁰ A. Wilson, *More Thoughts and Talks: The Diary and Scrapbook of a Member of Parliament from September 1937 to August 1939* (1939), p.184-5.

the firebrand Glasgow Labour MP, George Buchanan, eliciting unexpected praise of Hoare: 'When I entered the House of Commons I looked upon the present Home Secretary as the most reactionary Tory in the House, representing Chelsea, the home of reaction. He has at least proved that he has decent instincts'.⁶⁴¹ Hoare would doubtlessly have appreciated this couched approval from the normally hostile Glaswegian. Moreover, he would have been confident entering the Committee stage with the knowledge that this Labour endorsement far outweighed the objections of a few irascible Conservative backbenchers.

Notwithstanding the sense of shock over *Kristallnacht*, the cabinet remained cautiously optimistic that Germany would continue to abide by the terms of the Munich Agreement. This faith appeared increasingly justified in January 1939, as fears of war receded when Hitler spoke of reconciliation during his annual address to the Reichstag.⁶⁴² Significantly, his speech was delivered amidst a realisation in Berlin that rapid rearmament had severely distorted Germany's economy, leading to speculation that she would be forced to curtail military expansion in favour of increased trade with the rest of Europe, and an Anglo-German trade deal was being considered at the start of 1939. Furthermore, Mussolini's ardour in signing the Anglo-Italian Agreement of January 1939 was interpreted in London as further evidence that Germany's strategy was unravelling; Chamberlain promptly stated that Hitler had 'missed the bus' if his intention was to start a new European war.⁶⁴³ Moreover, the Prime Minister appeared increasingly convinced that Britain's foreign policy had

⁶⁴¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 1 Dec. 1938, vol.342, cols.671-705.

⁶⁴² Trepidation that Germany was preparing a surprise attack on Holland and Switzerland in January 1939 proved groundless: D. Gillard, *Appeasement in Crisis: From Munich to Prague, October 1938 – March 1939* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp.83-94.

⁶⁴³ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 5 Feb. 1939, NCDL, 4, p.377.

been vindicated by this turn of events, confidently informing diners at the 1936 Club on 7 March 1939 that he foresaw 'no crisis on the horizon'.⁶⁴⁴ Two days later, he reinforced this optimism when apprising a number of lobby journalists that he believed Anglo-German relations to be demonstrating clear signs of improvement. Taking their lead from the Premier, Simon and Hoare both echoed this message on 10 March, though it was the Home Secretary's speech to his local Conservative Association that received the lion's share of the resultant media coverage. Addressing the meeting in Chelsea, Hoare advanced the prospect of better times ahead should the current international climate continued to improve:

Here is a great opportunity for the statesmen of the world. Once freed from political crises, trade and industry could start upon the most inspiring chapter of prosperity that the world has ever known. The present trade revival in the face of many difficulties should fire their imaginations to the contemplation of the prosperity that the world would enjoy if the present troubles could be removed. Suppose that political confidence could be restored to Europe, suppose that there was a five year plan, immensely greater than any five year plan that this or that country had attempted in recent times, and that for a space of five years there were neither wars nor rumours of wars; suppose that the peoples of Europe were able to free themselves from a nightmare that haunted them and from an expenditure upon armaments that beggared them, could they not then devote the almost incredible inventions and discoveries of the time to the creation of a golden age in which poverty could be reduced to insignificance and the standard of living raised to heights never before attained. Here, indeed, is the greatest opportunity that has ever been offered to the leaders of the world.⁶⁴⁵

As events transpired, the timing of this speech could scarcely have been more damaging for the Home Secretary, as German troops occupied Prague on 15

⁶⁴⁴ Channon diary, 7 Mar. 1939, p.229.

⁶⁴⁵ Hoare's speech to the Chelsea Conservative Association on 10 March: *The Times*, 11 Mar. 1939.

March.⁶⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, his referral to a 'golden age' was widely used to condemn the government over its misplaced optimism in the Munich Agreement, with Hoare lampooned mercilessly by press and politician alike for such inopportune comments; Brendan Bracken concluded that Hoare's 'stock is now quite unsaleable'.⁶⁴⁷

Hoare was distraught at this backlash over his imprudent remarks.⁶⁴⁸ Dejected, he remained incommunicado for several days, failing to attend either cabinet or the House of Commons.⁶⁴⁹ As a result, he was to play no part in framing the government's initial response to Germany's actions, although admittedly Chamberlain's statement to the House on 15 March appeared somewhat ambivalent to the plight of Czechoslovakia, announcing no more than the cancellation of a trade delegation to Germany.⁶⁵⁰ Nonetheless, following reports of further German machinations in Eastern Europe the Prime Minister's attitude hardened noticeably during a deviation from his prepared speech to the Birmingham Unionist Association on 17 March, in which he unequivocally condemned Hitler's violation of the Munich Agreement and served notice that Britain would not acquiesce in any future German aggrandisement. Though still *in absentia*, Hoare immediately voiced support for this more robust approach towards Germany, advocating both an acceleration of

⁶⁴⁶ Germany successfully annexed the territories of Bohemia and Moravia in connivance with Slovakia, which had declared independence on 14 March 1939. With the country therefore ceasing to exist, Britain and France considered themselves released from their Munich commitment to guarantee the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak state.

⁶⁴⁷ Bracken to Beaverbrook, 16 Mar. 1939: R. Cockett (ed.), *My Dear Max: The Letters of Brendan Bracken to Lord Beaverbrook, 1925 – 1958* (1990), p.45-6.

⁶⁴⁸ Hoare's memoirs assert that he considered retiring from politics when suffering from depression over the German coup of 15 March 1939, but was persuaded by Beaverbrook to remain in office: Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.329.

⁶⁴⁹ Hoare blamed his absence on a cold; he failed to attend cabinet meetings on 15 and 18 March, and did not return to Parliament until 22 March.

⁶⁵⁰ Chamberlain blamed his initial blasé reaction on having had insufficient time to consider the government's response prior to his obligation to give a statement to the House: Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 19 Mar. 1939, NCDL, 4, p.393-4.

rearmament and a greater degree of cooperation with the opposition parties.

Regardless of such pugnacity though, Hoare remained sensitive to Chamberlain's obvious despondency following the unravelling of his foreign policy:

There is nothing on your side that you need regret and I do not believe looking back over the last six months there is anything that you could have done differently.⁶⁵¹

However, despite both men agreeing on the need to forestall further acts of German aggression, it swiftly transpired that they held divergent views over the preferred route by which to achieve this end.

This variance between Chamberlain and his Home Secretary emanated from their differing attitude to the importance of achieving an accommodation with Russia in the weeks after 15 March. Almost immediately following the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia, the British government was alerted to the prospect of further Nazi aggression in Eastern Europe when on 17 March the Rumanian Ambassador in London (Veoril Tilea) informed Halifax that Germany had demanded preponderance over his country's principal exports, thereby accounting for Chamberlain's tone in his Birmingham speech. Although the Foreign Office suspected Tilea of exaggeration, trepidation remained in Whitehall that Hitler was bent on dominating Central Europe; consequently, Chamberlain called an emergency cabinet on Saturday 18 March (which Hoare failed to attend) in order to formulate Britain's response to this new threat.⁶⁵² Emphasising the gravity of the situation, the Chiefs of Staff (COS) were instructed to report to the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence and the three Service

⁶⁵¹ Hoare to Chamberlain, 17 Mar. 1939, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/32/128.

⁶⁵² Any attempt by Hitler to gain control of Rumanian oil and grain was viewed with anxiety in London, as such action would patently subvert a blockade by the Royal Navy in the event of war.

Ministers prior to the cabinet meeting in order to outline Britain's options should Hitler act against Rumania.⁶⁵³ Ominously, the COS concluded that Britain could only deter Hitler from occupying the entire Balkan region if Germany were forced to fight a war on two fronts; in practice, this required an alliance with one or both of the principal regional powers also under threat from Hitler - Poland and Russia. In terms of military capability the COS were confident that the Poles would 'fight stoutly', though geography and the efficiency of the German Army would in all likelihood conspire to undermine their continued resistance. In contrast, the COS viewed Russia as a more suitable partner by virtue of her ability to render Germany more circumspect, while simultaneously deterring Japan from contemplating aggression in the Far East. When the cabinet met on the afternoon of 18 March (without Hoare), Chatfield outlined COS deliberations regarding the imperative of obtaining Russian and Polish support in any war over Rumania. However, Chatfield inexplicably failed to mention the military value (as set out by the COS) of either Poland or Russia, with the Service Ministers colluding in this omission. On hearing the COS report, Ministers were agreed on the need to contact potential allies in Eastern Europe in order to ascertain their commitment to join Britain in opposing any further German aggression, although Chamberlain somewhat prejudged this decision by declaring his belief that Poland held 'the key to the situation'.⁶⁵⁴

Britain's attempts to form a 'peace front' with France, Russia and Poland quickly stalled in the face of the latter's reluctance to be associated with its eastern neighbour; plans for a less-binding public declaration of mutual support against

⁶⁵³ Chatfield had been appointed Minister for Co-ordination of Defence in February 1939.

⁶⁵⁴ R. Manne, 'The British Decision for Alliance with Russia, May 1939', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.9, No.3 (July 1974), pp.3-26.

German aggression were abandoned for the same reason, leading Halifax to conclude that Poland was 'unwilling to be publicly associated in any way with Russia'.⁶⁵⁵ Subsequently, during the meeting of the FPC on 27 March, committee members were generally in agreement with the Chamberlain and Halifax line, offering a guarantee to Poland and Rumania alongside efforts to seek common ground for an agreement involving Moscow. For his part, the Home Secretary stressed an objection to undertake any scheme prior to gaining Moscow's acquiescence, outlining his view that the vastness of Russia would in itself act as a deterrent to Hitler, and the fear that her exclusion from any deal would be viewed 'in many quarters' as a 'considerable defeat' for British foreign policy.⁶⁵⁶ Although Hoare acknowledged the difficulties inherent in reaching any agreement involving Russia and Poland, he was nonetheless alarmed any prospect of Britain overlooking Moscow again so soon after snubbing her at Munich.

When the full cabinet met on 29 March to consider the FPC recommendations, Hoare's belief in an accommodation with Russia was supported by the Minister for Health, Walter Elliot, who impressed on his colleagues the benefits of such an arrangement for industrial relations (in view of rearmament and conscription). Speaking for the Prime Minister, Halifax stated his understanding of this argument yet stressed that priority must be afforded to achieving an arrangement with those countries deemed most under threat from Germany; a formal undertaking was

⁶⁵⁵ Halifax to Salisbury, 25 Mar. 1939, quoted in K. Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919-1939* (Cambridge, 2006), p.276; Poland may also have been reluctant to reach any agreement due to her wish not to offend Germany at this time, as negotiations between Berlin and Warsaw to resolve the the dispute over the Polish Corridor had ended in acrimony on 24 March 1939. Subsequently, Britain and France increasingly viewed Poland as being the country most in danger from German attack.

⁶⁵⁶ L.G. Shaw, *The British Political Elite and the Soviet Union 1937 – 1939* (2003), p.108-9.

consequently reached with Poland and Rumania on 31 March 1939 (though it was carefully worded to guarantee their independence, not territorial integrity).⁶⁵⁷

However, despite this assurance from Halifax the government accorded little precedence to negotiations with Russia in the weeks following the Polish guarantee. Surprisingly, this lack of movement elicited little comment from Hoare, although in all probability he was sidetracked for much of April due to the confusion surrounding the nascent Ministry of Information.⁶⁵⁸ (He was also conceivably embarrassed amidst his cabinet colleagues by Hitler's sudden abrogation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement on 28 April.) Subsequently there was much consternation at the beginning of May in response to Moscow's suggestion of a Tripartite Agreement with Britain and France, whereby each offered mutual support should any of the signatories be attacked by Germany. A meeting of the cabinet on 3 May to discuss the offer swiftly elicited disquiet amongst Ministers as to the inherent difficulties in accepting such a proposal. Halifax asserted that an acceptance of the scheme would require the prior consent of Poland and Rumania, adding that it could even increase the prospect of a war should Germany perceive herself to be surrounded. The problem of Dominion objection to an alliance with Russia was also raised, with Inskip convinced that both Canada and South Africa would be firmly opposed to any such undertaking. Significantly, only the Secretary of State for War (one of those privy to

⁶⁵⁷ Cabinet 15 (39), 29 Mar. 1939, CAB23 (98);

⁶⁵⁸ The Ministry of Information faced numerous difficulties in its formative months due to the jealousies of rival departments (Foreign Office, Colonial Office, service departments) which had no wish to subject the dissemination of their own communiqués to a new body. Additionally, there was a great deal of tribulation over securing a candidate to head the organisation, with Lords Reith and Perth among the contenders. Due to his responsibility in constituting this new body, Hoare earned the chagrin of several cabinet colleagues over the new Ministry's encroachment into their territory, and eventually, after many weeks of friction, it was decided to maintain the fledgling organisation under Foreign Office auspices until any commencement of hostilities had broken out: I. McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (1979), pp.12-33.

the COS report of 18 March), Leslie Hore-Belisha, cautioned his colleagues that a refusal could drive Moscow to an agreement with Germany.

Despite his views on Russia, Hoare made little comment during the cabinet discussion on Moscow's proposal for a pact, although there was arguably a more pressing matter on his mind; following the cabinet's deliberation over Russia, the Home Secretary informed fellow Ministers that he had received information suggesting that more than 200 Conservative MPs intended to vote in support of an amendment stipulating the deletion of the corporal punishment clause from his Criminal Justice Bill. Outlining his fears that a rebellion on this scale could jeopardise the entire Bill, Hoare suggested it would be prudent for the government to placate opponents to the clause by insisting the abolition of corporal punishment was to be an experimental measure for a period of five years in order to judge its effectiveness.⁶⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, Conservative antagonism over the proposed abrogation of corporal punishment caused anxiety for Hoare, still mindfull of dissident MPs threatening the India Bill several years earlier. Since the legislation had received its Second Reading in November 1938, Conservative Association meetings witnessed clear signs of disquiet at the prospect of dispensing with corporal punishment; in May 1939 the influential Women's Central Advisory Committee of the NUCUA stated complete opposition to its abolition, leading the *Daily Telegraph* to proclaim: 'Even the obduracy of Sir Samuel Hoare is likely to be impressed by Wednesday's revelation of what Conservative women think of his proposal to remove flogging as penalty from the criminal code'.⁶⁶⁰ In the face of this

⁶⁵⁹ Cabinet 26 (39), 3 May 1939, CAB23 (99).

⁶⁶⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, 12 May 1939, Templewood MSS, AND/23.

growing opposition from the Conservative grassroots, and the fear of an overwhelming number of Tory MPs contesting the clause at the end of the Bill's Committee Stage, the cabinet concluded that the issue must be a free vote; if Ministers disagreed with the clause, though, they should merely abstain.⁶⁶¹ In spite of the pragmatism of this approach, it was roundly condemned by supporters of the Bill, with the *Manchester Guardian* particularly forthright in its criticism:

The Government's decision to allow a free vote on the clause of the Criminal Justice Bill dealing with flogging looks much more like a concession to uninformed prejudice than any appeal to free and enlightened judgement. Sir Samuel Hoare is personally convinced that, whatever else may be said about it, flogging does not work. It has not proved a deterrent, either to those who have undergone it themselves or to those who commit crimes for which flogging is a punishment. Anyone who has studied the report of the Departmental Committee on Corporal Punishment with an open mind must necessarily come to that conclusion. There is no excuse for retaining flogging as legal punishment except the vague feeling that it is a pity to let it go.⁶⁶²

Hoare may well have agreed with the *Manchester Guardian*, but in view of increased speculation that a general election may be held in November 1939, he would have been aware that the Bill must pass through its Committee Stage swiftly if its survival was to be ensured.

Notwithstanding this preoccupation with the Criminal Justice Bill during May, Hoare continued to urge the cabinet to place more emphasis on gaining an agreement with Russia. When the cabinet met on 10 May (a week after Moscow's offer of a pact had

⁶⁶¹ Cabinet 31 (39), 7 June 1939, CAB23 (99).

⁶⁶² *Manchester Guardian*, 14 June 1939, Templewood MSS, AND/23.

first been discussed) it was quickly evident that an agreement was no closer, as Poland continued to resist any suggestion of Russian troops crossing Polish territory; Moscow meanwhile was equally insistent that it would not enter into any alliance with Britain without first gaining assurances that the Poles would accept the transit of troops across its territory. In response to rumours that a German-Russian reconciliation could result from this deadlock, Hoare outlined his view that present difficulties could best be surmounted through high-level talks between Halifax and his Soviet counterpart, Molotov; fellow Ministers agreed with the Home Secretary's suggestion. Halifax, though, was decidedly unresponsive to the idea of immediate face to face talks with the Russian Foreign Minister, suggesting there was little need for urgency in the matter and pooh-poohing any possibility of a deal between Hitler and Stalin.⁶⁶³ Such insouciance was to prove short-lived, however, as during further cabinet discussions on the Russian question two weeks later the Foreign Secretary was forced to acknowledge the evidence that a rapprochement between Germany and Russia could no longer be dismissed. Taking this into account, Halifax informed the cabinet that he and the Prime Minister were now receptive to a suggestion from Hoare, that in order to circumvent the current impasse Britain should seek to formalise an arrangement with Russia through the League of Nations. At that point Chamberlain gave his approval to the Home Secretary's proposal, though with the caveat that he far from relished a deal with Moscow.

I view anything in the nature of an alliance with Russia with considerable misgiving. I have some distrust of Russia's reliability and some doubt of her capacity to help us in the event of war. Further, an alliance with Russia would arouse considerable opposition in many quarters both here and in the Dominions.

⁶⁶³ Cabinet 27 (39), 10 May 1939, CAB23 (99).

Despite the Prime Minister's reservations, the cabinet were in agreement that a treaty with Russia was undoubtedly preferable to a possible breakdown in talks between the two parties; Chatfield voiced his opinion that staff talks should begin immediately as a prelude to any formal alliance.⁶⁶⁴ In the event, however, Britain's commitment to reach an agreement with Russia continued to prove half-hearted, and only when faced with direct talks between Germany and Russia did the government place any urgency on the outcome of this strategy, by which time it was arguably too late.

During the summer of 1939 Hoare was required to respond to a concerted bombing campaign on mainland England by members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA); the cabinet had grown particularly alarmed after an attack in Piccadilly Circus on 24 June. Following advice from the police and security services, Hoare informed his fellow Ministers that the most effective means of preventing these terrorist acts was the introduction of internment for known sympathisers and suspected IRA members currently domicile in England; the Home Secretary admitted that interning suspects would provoke parliamentary criticism through its suspension of *Habeas Corpus*. Nonetheless, Hoare also pressed for legislation allowing the deportation of Irish citizens resident in Britain for less than ten years who were suspected of involvement in the IRA campaign, thereby avoiding the legal minefield inherent with internment.⁶⁶⁵ Less than a week later Hoare returned to the question of deportation during a cabinet meeting, and highlighted a number of difficulties the Home Office had encountered whilst attempting to frame a Prevention of Violence Bill. The principal of

⁶⁶⁴ Cabinet 30 (39), 24 May 1939, CAB23 (99).

⁶⁶⁵ Cabinet 35 (39), 5 July 1939, CAB23 (99).

these problems was that the ten year rule would remove only 60 of the 80 most dangerous IRA suspects identified by the police. Professing incredulity that the ten year rule was not sufficient to expel all those linked to the IRA, Chamberlain consequently supported an increase of the limit to twenty years. Due to the gravity of the ongoing IRA campaign, the cabinet unanimously agreed to this extension of the time-limit, and pressed for both the Second Reading and Committee Stage of the legislation to be completed within the week.⁶⁶⁶ The Home Secretary duly complied with his colleagues wishes and the Bill entered the Statute Book by the end of the month; corresponding with his Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) William Astor at beginning of August, Hoare jubilantly declared: 'the Act has been working satisfactorily and we have already deported some of the most dangerous'.⁶⁶⁷

Negotiations had been ongoing between London and Moscow when news broke on 23 August 1939 that Russia and Germany had signed a non-aggression pact. Ministers were nonplussed at this turn of events; Hoare, in particular was despondent at Stalin's duplicity, subsequently asserting his belief that the attempt to reach an accommodation with Russia had been futile: 'It would not have made the least difference to the result if we had sent to Moscow Halifax, the Prime Minister, or the chiefs of all three fighting services'.⁶⁶⁸ However, the Home Secretary had little opportunity to indulge in recrimination at the time, as with war seemingly imminent he was immediately tasked with framing legislation to enable the government to prosecute such a conflict effectively. After consulting Labour and Trade Union leaders (due to the measure's impact on everyday life), Hoare succeeded in

⁶⁶⁶ Cabinet 38 (39), 11 July 1939, CAB23 (99).

⁶⁶⁷ Hoare to Astor, 1 Aug. 1939, Templewood MSS, X/4.

⁶⁶⁸ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.370.

marshalling the Emergency Powers Bill through parliament on 24 August.⁶⁶⁹ Additionally, at this time he was preoccupied with a myriad of other assignments: ensuring the proficiency of the Ministry of Information, briefing the press, and even discussing the potential evacuation of the King and Queen from London.⁶⁷⁰ Despite the urgency behind these preparations it was still far from certain that war was inevitable, as the supposed date of Germany's attack on Poland (26 August) passed without incident; Cadogan judged Hitler to have 'cold feet' in light of the previous day's ratification of the Anglo-Polish Treaty's clause providing mutual assistance should either country be attacked.⁶⁷¹ The Nazi leader had further muddied the waters with the disclosure to British Ambassador in Berlin, Neville Henderson, that he remained hopeful of engendering some form of alliance or friendship between their two nations following the resolution of the Polish dispute.⁶⁷² Though the cabinet swiftly rejected any possibility of a treaty with Hitler, reports that a Swedish intermediary was currently relaying messages between London and Berlin reinforced the impression that Ministers were earnest in exploring such a settlement; Halifax's Private Secretary feared the government was intent on another Munich.⁶⁷³ This suspicion gained further credence on 30 August when it became evident that Ministers were awaiting confirmation of whether Hitler was prepared to enter into negotiations with Poland. However, despite the cabinet's preference for arbitration,

⁶⁶⁹ The Emergency Powers Bill was more commonly known by its Great War monicker DORA (the Defence of the Realm Act).

⁶⁷⁰ Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, p.299.

⁶⁷¹ Cadogan diary, 28 Aug. 1939, p.203; alternatively, Hitler may have been awaiting confirmation of Mussolini's intentions prior to attacking Poland: P. Schmidt, *Hitler's Interpreter* (1951), p.143-4.

⁶⁷² N. Henderson, *Failure of a Mission* (1941), p.259.

⁶⁷³ Harvey diary, 27 Aug. 1939, p.307.

Hoare was adamant that 'it would be impossible to delay an ultimatum if Poland was invaded'.⁶⁷⁴

Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 dashed any lingering hopes that Hitler was genuinely seeking a peaceful resolution. When the cabinet met to formulate Britain's response to Germany's action, Ministers agreed to sanction a communiqué to the Hitler warning that HMG remained committed to supporting Poland unless German troops withdrew immediately; Chamberlain informed parliament that the reversion to an initial warning was in response to a France's request to delay an ultimatum for at least 24 hours in order that she could complete the mobilisation of her armed forces.⁶⁷⁵ However, when on the morning of 2 September Chamberlain and Halifax urged Ministers to accept a further delay there was considerable disquiet; Hoare, unusually, led the criticism by asserting his belief that the Prime Minister's statement to the House of Commons was adjudged to be an ultimatum, hence the government was running 'tremendous risks in accepting any delay which might well have considerable reactions on public opinion'.⁶⁷⁶

Chamberlain chose to ignore the cabinet's reservations when he addressed parliament that evening and remained insistent that a second deferment was necessary; after witnessing the hostile reaction to Chamberlain's statement, Simon and a number of senior Ministers confronted the Prime Minister in his Commons

⁶⁷⁴ Cabinet 46 (39), 30 Aug. 1939, CAB23 (100).

⁶⁷⁵ The reason for the delay given by Chamberlain was erroneous as it has since emerged that the British and French governments were in contact with the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, regarding an Italian proposal to organise a conference to bring about a settlement. On 2 September 1939 Ciano alleges he received a positive response to this idea from his French counterpart Georges Bonnet. However, when he contacted Halifax to gauge his opinion, the British Foreign Secretary insisted his government would not participate unless there was a full German withdrawal prior to any conference – manifestly this call to Halifax occurred after the cabinet meeting that day: Ciano diary, 2 Sep. 1939, in M. Muggeridge (ed.), *Ciano's Diary 1937 – 1943* (2002 ed.), p.271.

⁶⁷⁶ Cabinet 48 (39), 2 Sep. 1939, CAB23 (100).

office and pressed him to issue an ultimatum at 8am the next day, with compliance required within three hours.⁶⁷⁷ Having decided not to attend the House of Commons that evening, Hoare was not involved in this Ministerial insurrection, although his earlier outburst in cabinet would suggest he shared his colleagues concerns.⁶⁷⁸ Nonetheless, the revolt achieved its aim and an ultimatum demanding the immediate withdrawal of German troops from Poland was delivered on the morning of 3 September; with no response from Berlin by 11am, Chamberlain subsequently declared war on Germany.

Following the declaration of hostilities, Hoare became Lord Privy Seal in a nine-man war cabinet.⁶⁷⁹ This remit was principally affiliated with the important role of chairing the Home Affairs Committee, although with no specific portfolio Hoare largely adopted the position of overseer to his cabinet colleagues, a task he later admitted was laden with pitfalls:

However tempting it might seem to have an interest in the affairs of ones colleagues, the post of an overlord was beset with many obstacles and dangers.

The appointment of a co-ordinating Minister was unexceptional in history. In practice, it was likely to run counter to one of the fundamental principles of British Cabinet Government – departmental responsibility.⁶⁸⁰

Despite these reservations, Hoare's administrative abilities were quickly appreciated through his chairmanship of the Land Forces Committee (LFC), which was tasked

⁶⁷⁷ Pownall diary, 2 Sep. 1939, p.222-3.

⁶⁷⁸ Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, p.299-300.

⁶⁷⁹ Hoare states in his memoirs that, although he welcomed Chamberlain's offer of serving in the war cabinet, he was also perfectly ready to accept retirement from politics – the Prime Minister rejected this notion: Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.395; his decision to join the war cabinet provides a possible rationale for Beaverbrook's decision to award Hoare an additional £2,000 in September.

⁶⁸⁰ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.396.

with determining Britain's military requirements for the predicted three year duration of the war. Astoundingly, the committee delivered its initial report only 24 hours after it first met on 7 September; the LFC concluded that the Army should be increased to 55 divisions by the end of the second year, ship-building tonnage should be raised from 800,000 to 1,500,000 tons per annum, and provision should be made to afford the RAF up to 2,550 replacement aircraft each month.⁶⁸¹

In contrast to his success with the LFC, Hoare was to find other responsibilities more exacting, in particular those as the Minister responsible for the much derided Ministry of Information.⁶⁸² The inefficiency of the Ministry became almost a national obsession in the first months of the war, with public and politicians alike bemused by its ambiguous statements on the war effort. The national press who were duty-bound to liaise with the Ministry were also increasingly exasperated by its ineptitude, with Collin Brooks in disbelief when officials refused to divulge its telephone number to foreign correspondents.⁶⁸³ With officials at the department likewise complaining that the relentless criticism of their work was undermining the national interest, Hoare found himself pressurised to expound the virtues of the Ministry, no easy task whilst being barracked in the Commons for heading a 'Mystery of Information'.⁶⁸⁴

Furthermore, Hoare was also subject to scrutiny for other matters on the Home Front, with Churchill (now in the war cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty) eager to ascertain the reasoning behind such contradictions as meat rationing when there

⁶⁸¹ Amery, *My Political Life*, p.327-8; Roskill, *Hankey*, p.440.

⁶⁸² As the official Head of the Ministry of Information (Lord MacMillan) sat in the Lords and no junior minister had been appointed, the responsibility fell to Hoare by default.

⁶⁸³ Brooks diary, 9 Sep. 1939, p.254-5.

⁶⁸⁴ Comment by Labour's Arthur Greenwood during a Commons debate on the Efficiency of the Ministry of Information: *Parliamentary Debates*, 11 Oct. 1939, vol.451, cols.376-484.

was no shortage, and blackouts when there had been no air raids, reproaching his colleague – ‘Can’t we get at it?’⁶⁸⁵

This innate attention given to the numerous irritants blighting life on the Home Front was not difficult to comprehend given the apparent lack of military action involving British forces. Although the Royal Navy was active from the first day, the other two services had been notable rather for their inaction in the months following the declaration of war; the RAF were primarily dropping leaflets and the Army encamping alongside their French counterparts near the Belgian border. With Germany having defeated Poland in a matter of weeks, there had been an expectation that Hitler would strike quickly in the West before the winter weather set in, yet no such assault occurred.⁶⁸⁶ Due to the dogmatic belief amongst Allied strategists that Germany’s best hope of victory lay in successive victories prior to the full mobilisation of British and French resource, this phoney war was invariably seen in a positive light in Paris and London. In accordance with this view, Hoare delivered a particularly upbeat speech to his local Conservative Association at the end of November:

Who shall say that nothing has happened during the last three months when destiny has been moving with a relentless force towards the ultimate climax. In the early days of September the German Government believed that the Russian Agreement meant preponderance, or at least a balance of force in the world. Yet throughout these three months the German army has been pinned to its muddy trenches on the western front. Hitler has been foiled of his knock-out blow,

⁶⁸⁵ Churchill to Hoare, 7 Oct. 1939, Churchill MSS, CHAR19/2C/311-3.

⁶⁸⁶ As the end of October approached Hoare predicted there would be no German offensive that year: Hoare to Beaverbrook, 25 Oct. 1939, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/308a.

although it is the very essence of his strategy. He has not delivered it. He might have attacked the Maginot Line. He did not attack it. He might have attacked France through Belgium and Switzerland. He has not attacked them. He might have invaded Holland. He has not invaded it. Instead, there has been endless discussions at his headquarters. There have been rumours of wrangling with his advisors; there have been ominous outbreaks in Poland and Czechoslovakia; there have been murmurs of discontent in Germany itself. I do not exaggerate the importance of these reports. I do not suggest that morale is likely to break in Germany. But what I do say is that whilst Hitler was determined to finish his quick war in a few months, these twelve weeks have left him weaker and not stronger, and they have enabled the French and ourselves to strengthen our military position in the world. The knock-out blow can never be delivered.⁶⁸⁷

Two days after the Lord Privy Seal had delivered this address, news broke that Russia had attacked Finland over a territorial dispute. Among all his colleagues, Hoare was particularly disposed to offer support to Finland against the Russians; convinced that there would be no attack in the West, he urged Chamberlain to provide as much assistance to the Finns as possible.⁶⁸⁸ However, despite eventual proposals to forward military aid to Finland through Sweden (with Hoare offering to act as an emissary to the Swedish government) the scheme was abandoned due to the Finns suing for peace on 6 March 1940.⁶⁸⁹

Though Hoare was supportive of Finland, and made the obligatory Ministerial trip to inspect the Maginot Line in late December, fundamentally he remained firmly entrenched in domestic affairs throughout the winter of 1939-40. During the first

⁶⁸⁷ Hoare's speech to the Chelsea Conservative Association, 28 Nov. 1939, Templewood MSS, XI/3.

⁶⁸⁸ Hoare to Chamberlain, 26 Dec. 1939, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/32/132.

⁶⁸⁹ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p.426-7.

months of 1940, he undertook several trips round Britain to promote the war effort, and in a speech in Nottingham he demonstrated his Chamberlainite credentials by stressing the continuing importance of exports in maintaining Britain's balance of payments.⁶⁹⁰ However, this association with the Home Front was not to last as it transpired that Chamberlain wished Hoare to trade roles with the ineffectual Kingsley Wood at the Air Ministry during a reshuffle planned for the beginning of April 1940. Although Hoare initially refused this new posting when the idea was first mooted by the Prime Minister, he subsequently changed his mind in response to a degree of coaxing by his wife and Beaverbrook; he was officially confirmed as Kingsley Wood's successor on 3 April.⁶⁹¹ Hoare's appointment as the new Air Secretary was judged a significant surprise, with *The Times* admitting it was the 'least expected' move amongst those Ministers involved in the reshuffle.⁶⁹² There was also criticism expressed at the news, with many considering Hoare an unusual choice to lead the RAF at such a time; according to Amery, Eden was highly critical of the appointment, doubting 'that the airmen will feel greatly inspired by having Sam back again'.⁶⁹³ Unfortunately, Hoare had scant time to acclimatise to his new office before the Norway campaign got underway and he was consequently faced with providing air cover both for the troops and Royal Navy vessels participating in the operation. His task was unenviable, thanks to the confused nature of Allied planning and the surprising efficiency of the German invasion forces. Significantly, he was also hampered by a strained relationship with his senior air commanders, who were unaccustomed to their new chief's administrative style of consulting them separately;

⁶⁹⁰ *The Times*, 19 Feb. 1940; Whilst visiting Sheffield munition factories Hoare was informed by managers of their despair at seeing skilled workers conscripted, given the subsequent risk of failing to maintain orders – on returning to London he immediately wrote to Minister of Supply, Leslie Burgin, to rectify this problem: Hoare to Burgin, 11 Mar. 1940, Templewood MSS, XI/1.

⁶⁹¹ Hoare memoranda, Apr. 1940, Templewood MSS, XII/3.

⁶⁹² *The Times*, 4 Apr. 1940.

⁶⁹³ Amery diary, 3 Apr. 1940, p.585.

the Under-Secretary at the Air Ministry, Harold Balfour, subsequently described Hoare's tenure as, 'the most miserable weeks I ever had in the department'.⁶⁹⁴

The Norwegian campaign proved calamitous for the Chamberlain government. The decision to evacuate British forces from the central Norwegian towns of Andalsnes and Trondheim at the end of April resulted in savage press criticism of Ministers amid growing discontent in parliament over the conduct of the war; in particular, the Director-General of the BBC regarded Hoare's upbeat manner in a radio broadcast about Norway as most damaging.⁶⁹⁵ With British forces subsequently restricted to the northern-most part of Norway, it was manifest they had little chance of altering the course of events in the remainder of the country, therefore leaving it only a matter of time before they too were compelled to withdraw. As a result of this debacle, the Commons debate of 7-8 May 1940 on the conduct of the campaign was expected to be a difficult experience for Ministers. On the second day of proceedings, Hoare delivered an account of the air forces' operation in Norway, arguing that the RAF had suffered severe disadvantage through being denied the use of local aerodromes. In a seemingly innocuous error he stumbled when questioned as to whether RAF or FAA pilots had been charged with flying planes onto an aircraft carrier off the Norwegian coast, leading Labour's George Griffiths to sum up the House's general feeling towards the hapless Air Minister by suggesting 'you do not seem to know anything about it'.⁶⁹⁶ Unfortunately for Hoare, the mood of the House was little swayed by the exploits of British airmen for, as Amery later recorded, 'it was all irrelevant to the issue which was the general incompetence of

⁶⁹⁴ H. Balfour, *Wings over Westminster* (1973), p.119.

⁶⁹⁵ Reith diary, 29 Apr. 1940, p.247-8.

⁶⁹⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, 8 May 1940, vol.360, cols.1266-77.

the government'.⁶⁹⁷ In the division at the end of that day's session it was manifest that this was the case as, although the government won the count by 281 to 200, many of its supporters had either abstained or voted with the opposition.

On 9 May it was evident that Chamberlain could no longer ignore the fact that many of the government's supporters had chosen to disregard both his appeal for support, and the deployment of Whips. Hoare in particular appeared to be maligned in the press amid rumours that he was certain to be replaced, with Eddie Winterton forewarning the Air Minister that there was 'a "deal" being made against him'.⁶⁹⁸ When the cabinet met that day, it was already apparent that machinations were underway behind the scenes to form a new government and, significantly, only Hoare amongst those present supported the Prime Minister's continuation in office. With MPs invariably demonstrating their support for the creation of a genuinely all-party government, Hoare's loyalty proved futile as the Labour Party was unwilling to countenance the prospect of serving in a Chamberlain-led administration. In the face of this intransigence, Chamberlain accepted that he had to stand down, and in favour of either Halifax or Churchill; the subsequent deliberations witnessed Churchill outmanoeuvring Halifax to become Prime Minister of a coalition government on 10 May 1940. Disheartened for Hoare it swiftly transpired that almost all of the other Ministers who had served under Chamberlain were offered posts in this new administration, yet he had been overlooked.

⁶⁹⁷ Amery diary, 8 May 1940, p.610-1.

⁶⁹⁸ Winterton to Hoare, 9 May 1940, Templewood MSS, XII/2; in a letter to Halifax (and subsequently shown to Churchill) Lord Stonehaven urged the replacement of Hoare by his colleague and former Air Minister during 1918-19, Lord Weir: Stonehaven to Halifax, 9 May 1940, Churchill MSS, CHAR20/11/53.

In the immediate aftermath of his exclusion from office Hoare became a forlorn figure, with Amery noticing that the former Minister appeared 'rather a pathetic figure' amidst the hubbub involved in the change in government.⁶⁹⁹ Increasingly conscious that no new ministerial role would be forthcoming, Hoare appealed to Chamberlain for help in escaping his current predicament:

Unlike almost all my colleagues, I have not gone into the Government, and I greatly fear that the world at large will explain my exclusion as evidence of weakness and incompetence. No-one has said a word in my defence. You know my record, and if it were generally known, it would need no defence, but it is not known and I alone of the four of us who went through Munich am left isolated to stand this unjust criticism. All this makes me ask you to press Winston to give me India. I know that I can do it, and having served you very faithfully through thick and thin, I feel justified in asking you to re-establish in this way my reputation in the eyes of the world.⁷⁰⁰

Although Chamberlain failed to reply to his friend's entreaty, the possibility of Hoare going to India was unquestionably discussed by some in Churchill's inner circle, with Brendan Bracken assuring the former Minister that he would strive to achieve his appointment to the Viceroyalty.⁷⁰¹ However, with fears that Spain could be tempted to join the war on Hitler's side, Hoare was instead asked to head the Spanish Embassy on a temporary basis until the present emergency was over; Hoare acquiesced as no decision on Linlithgow's replacement was required until late 1940.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁹ Amery diary, 13 May 1940, p.617.

⁷⁰⁰ Hoare to Chamberlain, 14 May 1940, Neville Chamberlain MSS, NC7/11/33/98.

⁷⁰¹ Bracken to Hoare, 15 May 1940, Templewood MSS, XII/4;

⁷⁰² Hoare's appointment to the Spanish Embassy was announced on 24 May 1940.

Hoare shortly had cause to regret his decision to accept the Spanish mission, as the weeks continued to pass with no news on India; after nearly three months at the Spanish Embassy, Hoare was becoming increasingly restless, bemoaning to Beaverbrook: 'The original idea, as you remember, was that after a short stay in Madrid, Winston would announce the Indian appointment'.⁷⁰³ The new Minister for Aircraft Production gave his assurances that this was still the case, but with Chamberlain retiring from public life at the beginning of October 1940, Hoare realised his chances of becoming the new Viceroy were rapidly diminishing;⁷⁰⁴ Churchill apparently informed Hoare towards the end of October that he was extending Linlithgow's tenure in India.⁷⁰⁵ Snubbed by Churchill over the Viceroyalty, Hoare remained in Spain until the D-Day landings, after which he joined the peerage as Viscount Templewood of Chelsea on 14 July 1944, effectively accepting the end of his political career.

⁷⁰³ Hoare to Beaverbrook, 29 Aug. 1940, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/308a.

⁷⁰⁴ In view of Churchill's deference to Chamberlain after he became Premier on 10 May, it was unlikely that he would have refused the former Prime Minister over Hoare becoming Viceroy if he had pressed the issue.

⁷⁰⁵ Hoare to Beaverbrook, 29 Oct. 1940, Beaverbrook MSS, BBK/C/308a; Although Churchill's reasons for denying Hoare the Viceroyalty are unknown, it is conceivable that Churchill was influenced by his wife, who according to Ronald Tree 'disliked Sir Samuel intensely and had always considered him one of Chamberlain's ministers who had done everything to keep Churchill from the Cabinet': Tree, *When the Moon was High*, p.148-9.

CONCLUSION

Objective evaluation of Hoare's ministerial career during the 1930s has generally been overshadowed by his resignation over Abyssinia and support of appeasement during the Munich Crisis. Notwithstanding the significance of these two events, they cover at most three or four weeks of a nine year period, and thus shed little light as to how Hoare was able to remain such a dominant political figure throughout the National Government, or what he achieved in office. Thereby, a review of his achievements during 1931-40 is warranted in order to reach a dispassionate judgement on this most controversial of interwar politicians.

Although arguably fortunate to be an original member of the Conservative contingent that formed the National Government at the height of Britain's financial crisis in August 1931, Hoare proved himself to be one of the new administration's most proficient performers in the key post of Secretary of State for India. With the new government committed to introducing Indian constitutional reform, he was charged with the unenviable task of framing legislation which would both satisfy nationalists in India and be acceptable to a Conservative Party highly suspicious of any scheme extending self-government to the sub-continent. Despite initial friction with the Viceroy over financial autonomy and notable Indian discord at the second RTC,

Hoare refused to be overawed by the enormity of framing a new constitution for India and a White Paper was duly published at the beginning of 1933. Nonetheless, the success of the Bill was far from certain due to increasing opposition within the Conservative Party; Churchill and Salisbury campaigned relentlessly against the proposed legislation. Subsequently, the government opted to keep appraisal of the legislation within the confines of a Joint Select Committee (JSC) rather than risk the proposals being derailed in Westminster and Hoare greatly impressed his fellow committee members during lengthy cross-examination by opponents of the Bill. He also demonstrated a pragmatic disposition in his determination to get the legislation onto the statute book, when he risked the wrath of the Viceroy by bowing to Austen Chamberlain's demand for smaller chambers and indirect elections. However, the desire to remove obstacles to the India Bill left Hoare vulnerable to Churchill's accusation that he had abused his parliamentary privilege by attempting to influence the substitution of evidence to the JSC. Although Hoare was declared innocent, the suspicion remained that he was not entirely blameless in this instance. Nevertheless, with Churchill's reputation undermined by his decision to question the verdict of the Privilege Committee, the Bill proceeded swiftly through its remaining parliamentary stages, and Hoare was lauded for his persistence in surmounting the multitude of challenges which had obstructed the passage of Indian constitutional reform through Westminster. Accordingly, when the India Bill reached the Statute Book in August 1935 (after Hoare had left the India Office) it created parliamentary history in terms of its overall complexity and magnitude for Britain's Empire, and Hoare's pivotal role found ample testimony in the 4,000 pages of Hansard which recorded its progress through parliament .

Although badly in need of a rest after his India marathon, Hoare replaced Simon at the Foreign Office during the cabinet reshuffle which marked the start of Baldwin's third premiership. His appointment came at a most inopportune moment as Britain was simultaneously at loggerheads with two of its principal European allies - France and Italy. Within days of coming into office, he was obliged to sign the Anglo-German Naval Agreement which his predecessor had orchestrated during the final days of his tenure. Hoare was thereby placed in an unenviable position as whatever decision he made another party would be aggrieved: Simon would feel snubbed if the agreement was not signed; France would be indignant at any unilateral treaty with Germany; the Admiralty wanted the deal as it would negate the possibility of a naval arms race; Hitler would be incensed if the deal was vetoed. Despite being fully aware of German insincerity over arms limitations, Hoare was loath to alienate either Simon or the Admiralty, and subsequently signed the Treaty on 18 June 1935. However, he quickly had cause to regret his decision (which he acknowledged a few months later in Geneva), as French dismay at Britain's action was continually to hamper a united response to Italy's threats against Abyssinia. With its foreign policy inviolably linked with defending the Covenant of the League of Nations, Britain was pledged to defend Abyssinia against outside aggression, and this duly placed Rome and London on a collision course if Mussolini persisted with his threats against the East African country. The rift between London and Paris over the naval agreement merely exacerbated the situation, as France was not prepared to abandon its friendship with Italy in the wake of what it considered British perfidy in signing a unilateral treaty with its arch-enemy. Though both Hoare and his French counterpart, Laval, subsequently pronounced support for the League of Nations in Geneva, it was manifest that both nations were desperate that the crisis be resolved amicably. However, Italy's

invasion of Abyssinia made this a forlorn hope, and the British and French governments concentrated their efforts on devising a last-ditch scheme to end the conflict before the onset of tougher League sanctions made any rapprochement with Italy impossible. The fact that Hoare's meeting with Laval on 7-8 December was merely part of these ongoing negotiations would tend to suggest that the cabinet was conscious of the general trend and aims of the policy being advanced by the Foreign Secretary. Certainly, Hoare was dismayed when he was given the choice of resignation or recantation after the agreement he had signed was disowned by his fellow ministers, following its nationwide condemnation.

Although Hoare's decision to take sole responsibility for the Paris proposals earned him a good deal of sympathy, his ham-fisted attempts to orchestrate an early return to office further marred his reputation in Westminster; Hoare's excessive praise of Baldwin during a speech on rearmament in March 1936 was viewed by MPs as an overly brazen attempt to ingratiate himself with the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, the fact that Hoare returned to office barely six months after his resignation evinced one of two things: either that he been given an assurance of a swift return at the time of his resignation, or that the leadership was concerned that their former colleague could severely embarrass the government if he remained on the backbenches – particularly as the cabinet's reliance on sanctions had proved wholly ineffective in preventing Italy's conquest of Abyssinia. Returning as First Lord of the Admiralty in June 1936, he refrained from cabinet discussion, except in Navy matters such as the blockade of ports during the Spanish Civil War. Accordingly, he was most reluctant to involve himself in controversial matters, notably avoiding the continuing dispute over the FAA which had reignited a few months prior to his appointment. That said,

Hoare was greatly appreciated by the First Sea Lord, Chatfield, for his adroit espousal of naval matters in cabinet, particularly after he used his influence with the Chancellor to obtain additional resources for the Royal Navy's expansion programme.

When Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister in May 1937, Hoare was naturally disappointed not to move to the Treasury, although the Home Office provided some compensation. In fact, it was at the Home Office that Hoare's administrative abilities came once again to the fore. In his two and a half years as Home Secretary, he was responsible for significant new legislation, including workplace regulation, ARP, nationwide fire cover and much more besides. Moreover, he was responsible for the initial launch of the WVS (which continues to operate to this day), while the much-lauded 1948 Criminal Justice Act was fundamentally his penal reform bill which had been delayed by the war. He was also responsible for Britain's immigration laws at the time of the worst pre-war Nazi persecutions of Germany's Jews. Despite criticism from some quarters over the government's lack of action in this matter, Jewish immigration dramatically increased in the wake of the Nazi takeover of Austria and *Kristallnacht*, and Britain's record in this tragic saga far exceeded that of other European countries. Indeed, Hoare later insinuated he had wished to admit more refugees, but was deterred by the regular Home Office briefings warning of anti-refugee troubles should Britain further relax its entry requirements.

Hoare's achievements at the Home Office are largely overlooked due to his support of the Munich Agreement. However, although he endorsed Chamberlain's attempt to

reach a settlement, he was downcast when the full impact for Czech sovereignty was realised; Hoare was subsequently reluctant to defend the government's actions when asked to do so in the parliamentary debate on the subject. That said, Hoare remained broadly supportive of Chamberlain in the months after Munich, and was subject to much ridicule after echoing the Prime Minister's belief in peace only days before Germany invaded the remainder of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. In the wake of this incident his slavish support of Chamberlain declined as he began to express criticism of the government's tardiness in reaching an accommodation with Russia. Further signs of this estrangement were evident during the cabinet meeting of 2 September 1939, when Hoare demanded that the Prime Minister send an immediate ultimatum to Germany after it emerged that Chamberlain was seeking a delay.

Despite his irritation at Chamberlain over Russia and the delay in declaring war, Hoare had no hesitation in joining the nine-man war cabinet as Lord Privy Seal. Without a specific portfolio, he primarily chaired various committees relating to the Home Front and acted as an official cabinet overseer – which no doubt caused his fellow Ministers much irritation. Accordingly, this association with domestic issues saw Hoare regularly criticised in both the press and parliament for arcane regulations and lack of information in the months following the outbreak of hostilities. However, this preoccupation with civilian matters did not prevent him from adding his voice to the demand that the Allies assist the Finns in their war with Russia at the end of 1939. Seven months after he joined the War Cabinet, Hoare reluctantly became Air Minister at the beginning of April 1940, just as the Norwegian campaign was beginning. Despite Britain's inadequate planning for the operation, he attempted to

make the best of the situation but, with Allied forces increasingly staring at defeat in Norway, the search for scapegoats began, and Hoare's name was only below that of the Prime Minister's on many lists.

Notwithstanding his advocacy of the aforementioned reforms, it would be erroneous to place Hoare on the left of the Conservative Party. Indeed, in terms of his political outlook, he was far more orthodox than he sometimes appeared. His attitude towards Indian self-government was more that of a cautious moderniser than a radical reformer, and on several occasions he let it be known that he was inclined to support the more limited provincial autonomy outlined by the Simon Commission rather than the federal scheme championed by Baldwin and Irwin. Moreover, his standpoint on foreign and defence policy generally accorded with the prevailing consensus within the party ranks, which was that appeasement was commendable whilst it appeared to have some chance of success. Even as Home Secretary, his perspective in such areas as penal reform was as much influenced by the pragmatic advice of officials and a desire to ensure administrative efficiency, than by any liberal instincts. Therefore, whilst Hoare was associated with a significant number of progressive policies, he was invariably part of the mainstream centre in the spectrum of Conservative opinion.

Hoare's personality and character also have a bearing on his ministerial career. Acknowledged as an extremely hardworking politician, he was widely admired for his mastery of departmental briefs. Moreover, his continual diligence in comprehending complex legislation was one of his principal strengths and was appreciated by almost

all those who worked under him; in the 1950s, Butler attested that Hoare was the most efficient politician he had ever encountered during his long political career. The one exception to this rule was the Chiefs of the Air Staff during Hoare's last weeks in office, although this strained relationship could arguably be blamed on his unexpected move to the Air Ministry amidst the pressurised circumstances surrounding the ill-fated Norway campaign. However, despite praise for his ministerial proficiency, Hoare's general disposition won him few friends as his introverted demeanour provided little scope for engaging in small-talk with either his officials or fellow MPs. This deficiency in natural affability was exacerbated by his fastidious habits at the dispatch box and monotone delivery of lengthy set speeches, which merely emphasised Lord Birkenhead's acerbic observation, made in the 1920s, that Hoare was 'last in a long line of maiden aunts'.⁷⁰⁶ Moreover, his ability to extricate himself from potentially damaging situations, such as the Privilege case, increased the repertoire of underhand taunts that were directed at him, such as 'Soapy Sam' or 'Slippery Sam'. Inexplicably, Hoare made little attempt to dispel such prejudices, and even those closest to him were unable to fathom his convoluted persona:

I was amazed by his ambitions; I admired his imagination; I shared his ideals; I stood in awe of his intellectual capacity; But I was never touched by his humanity. He was the coldest fish with whom I have ever had to deal.⁷⁰⁷

Consequently, though Hoare was doubtlessly held in high regard for his ministerial competency, the manifest flaws in his character, though merely idiosyncratic, were to preclude him from any great popularity amongst his fellow MPs - a major handicap for one who aspired to the Premiership.

⁷⁰⁶ Lord Birkenhead, cited in Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory*, p.202.

⁷⁰⁷ Butler, *Art of the Possible*, p.57.

In spite of being unduly disadvantaged by his austere mannerisms and lack of sociability, it was not inconceivable that Hoare might have achieved his Prime Ministerial ambition if events had played out differently; after all, Neville Chamberlain was similarly lacking in conviviality. He certainly had the necessary credentials in terms of connections, and prior to the formation of the National Government his stance on many of the key issues, such as tariffs and India, instinctively accorded with those of the majority of Conservative backbenchers. Even though his actions at the India Office sometimes belied his rhetoric whilst in opposition, he was careful not unduly to antagonise moderate opinion in his party; Hoare was insistent that he viewed adequate safeguards as an essential element in any constitutional reform bill and uncharacteristically overruled his officials in relation to indirect elections and smaller chambers when it became clear their inclusion in the legislation was alienating moderate members of his party. Accordingly, despite the continual apprehension of Conservative MPs towards the reforms, appreciation of Hoare's ministerial efficiency actually increased amongst his contemporaries. A successful stint at the Foreign Office may arguably have made him favourite to replace Baldwin, or, perhaps more likely, to succeed Chamberlain, who could not be considered a long-term leader in view of his age; Hoare was 55 at the time of MacDonald's retirement whereas Chamberlain was eleven years his senior and barely a year younger than Baldwin. However, this is mere speculation, and even though there was some speculation in the summer of 1938 that he could still accede to the highest office, any chance of the Premiership realistically evaporated in the wake of his resignation over Abyssinia.

Although Hoare may have been disappointed that Chamberlain had long been accepted as Baldwin's 'heir apparent', there was little possibility of any discord between the two men. They had been close politically since the fall of the Lloyd George Coalition, when both men heeded Baldwin's argument that the Conservative Party had to become more progressive if it was to combat the appeal of the Labour Party; all three realised that the changed makeup of Britain's electorate after 1918 (and still more in 1928) necessitated a new emphasis on social policy if the Conservatives were to remain a party of government. Chamberlain and Hoare increasingly worked together in various capacities during the 1920s, and provided effective cabinet support for Baldwin's programme of 'energetic social reform' after his victory over MacDonald in the 1924 general election.⁷⁰⁸ The subsequent creation of the National Government in August 1931 provided further succour for their views, with Baldwin, Hoare and Chamberlain occupying three out of the four Conservative seats in the ten-man emergency cabinet; indeed the more benign ambience of the National Government was arguably more conducive to the political convictions of all three men than a purely Tory administration which would be obliged to include a number of prominent right-wingers in the cabinet. Moreover, sharing power with National Labour and the Liberals ensured a degree of Conservative acquiescence towards a reformist agenda (including Indian reform), and was undoubtedly a significant factor in Baldwin's decision to fight the 1931 general election on a coalition ticket.

Though they held similar views on the need for progressive politics Hoare never enjoyed a particularly close rapport with Baldwin during the 1930s and he was

⁷⁰⁸ S. Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929-1931* (1988), p.218.

notably less liberal in his views than the Conservative leader on the question of Indian autonomy; he also questioned the Conservative leader's reluctance to champion rearmament from 1934 onwards. The fact that Hoare was left in the dark until the last possible moment about replacing Simon at the Foreign Office would also suggest a less than intimate relationship between the two men. In contrast, Hoare continued to place great value on his friendship with Chamberlain, and there was a general expectation that they would combine to champion a programme of wide-ranging domestic reforms when the latter succeeded Baldwin; Chamberlain's urgency to bring about peace in Europe may well have been driven by his desire to concentrate his efforts on social issues. Although this did not materialise due to the continued primacy of foreign policy throughout 1938-39, Hoare promoted his credentials as a progressive Conservative by advancing legislation on workplace and penal reform. Although he differed with the Prime Minister over Russia, he was to remain consistently loyal to Chamberlain throughout his Premiership, ostensibly failing to realise that this had not been reciprocated since his resignation over Abyssinia; Chamberlain felt Hoare had displayed a distinct lack of judgement in his impatience to return to office in early 1936, and this may well have persuaded him to pass over Hoare when naming his successor at the Treasury. Nonetheless, Hoare either did not detect any change in their relationship or rather remained hopeful that it was only temporary, and continued to revere his friend to the day the former Prime Minister died in late 1940.

So how successful was Hoare's ministerial career during the National Government? The India Bill was undoubtedly a monumental piece of legislation, yet it never came to be implemented due to the outbreak of war in 1939. By the end of that conflict, the

situation in India had changed to such an extent that only full independence was acceptable to India's politicians, a fact quickly grasped by Britain's new Labour government; despite the shambolic nature of Britain's withdrawal in 1947, the new leaders of India and Pakistan indicated their appreciation of the Bill, claiming that much of their respective constitutions were based on the 1935 legislation. Patently, Hoare's resignation over the Paris peace proposals would suggest that his tenure at the Foreign Office was an abject failure, although there is a compelling argument that had the government held its nerve over the plan and retained Italian amity, Hitler may well have been deterred from his occupation of the Rhineland and Austria. However, this scenario cannot be determined, and this episode will always blight his reputation at this juncture of his career. His year at the Admiralty provided for a period of rehabilitation and allowed him the opportunity to rebuild his standing away from the glare of the day-to-day parliamentary routine. Consequently, his principal achievement as First Lord was arguably the increase to the naval budget in his 1937 Estimates which significantly increased the Navy's frontline strength, with the first of the capital ships laid down coming into service as the country went to war.

As Home Secretary, Hoare had a major influence both in domestic issues and Britain's preparations for war. His strengthening of the Factory Bill potentially improved the lives of millions of Britons working in industry through better conditions and more stringent health and safety rules. Penal reform was championed by Hoare, and although his Bill did not reach the Statute Book before the outbreak of war, his enlightened views on prisoner rehabilitation subsequently underpinned the British justice system throughout the post-war years. His work in the fledgling field of ARP, although chaotic at times, resulted in coherent civil defence procedures which

undoubtedly aided the Home Front when war came; the significant resources that were invested in fire-fighting equipment were to prove essential less than two years later. Hoare also promoted the recruitment of nearly one million ARP volunteers and the establishment of the WVS, both of which played an essential role during the war. In terms of Jewish immigration, the Home Office admitted between 50,000 and 80,000 German, Austrian and Czechoslovakian Jews during Hoare's tenure, although there is evidence that a far greater number were given permission to land in Britain.⁷⁰⁹ Unfortunately his achievements as Home Secretary tend to be eclipsed by Munich. Likewise, despite a conspicuous record as a Minister in the war cabinet, Hoare's record has been characteristically overlooked due to the ignominy of being the major casualty in Churchill's accession to the Premiership. Be that as it may, even a cursory glance at Hoare's record would evince his legislative achievements as a Minister in the National Government, albeit overshadowed by infamous lapses of judgement.

⁷⁰⁹ W.D. Rubenstein, *The Myth of Rescue* (1997), p.29.

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