

(January 8th, 1936)

Britain's Foreign Policy

BY SIR ALFRED E. ZIMMERN.

COLONEL A. L. BISHOP:—We welcome back to our midst today one who came to us some eight years ago and addressed us on the subject of The British Commonwealth, in respect to its International Relations. Today he comes to us, having been honored by the Sovereign in the last New Year's Honors list; and I should like to take this opportunity, on your behalf, or expressing to him our heartiest congratulations and good wishes. In this very disordered and naughty world there seems to stand out one fact that gives us hope and a good deal of confidence for the future, and that is the stand that the British Empire has taken in respect to the rights of small nations. The British Foreign policy seems to us out here sometimes to be inexplicable, but I think we are all agreed that, notwithstanding some of the garbled press reports, we can feel that Britain's fixed objective is peace throughout the world and, if possible, disarmament. It is on this vital foreign policy of Great Britain that Sir Alfred Zimmern will address us.

SIR ALFRED ZIMMERN:—Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen, thank you very much, sir, for the very kind personal reference. It is a great pleasure to find myself in Toronto again, and standing before the Canadian Club.

The subject you have assigned to me is Britain's Foreign Policy, and I can dispose of that in one sentence. It is support of the League of Nations. The question, however, is "What does support of the League of Nations mean, and further: what does the League of Nations mean?"

I cannot speak to you in detail of the happenings in London three or four weeks ago, because I sailed just in the middle of them, but I can sum the situation up by saying

that the British people have shown that their conception of support is that they will support it, even at the risk of war with the covenant-breaking nation.

That is something new and it has brought the League down from the clouds of assertion and hope to something with a solid foundation. It was something Sir Samuel Hoare did not know, and lacking the knowledge he did not dare to adopt a policy that contained even a five per cent. risk of war. He was not certain that to the British people the League did not mean just a hope for tomorrow. The Cabinet knows now, and the result is certainly a great clearing up of the international situation.

What happened three or four weeks ago was the exact reverse of what happened at the Chanak incident. Then the Government seemed to be on the verge of embarking on a new war with Turkey. The country said very strongly, "We don't want to be involved in any war," and the result was a change in the Government of Great Britain. On this occasion public opinion has declared, "We expect you to stand up to the challenge to the League, even at the risk of war." A new and very happy situation.

Let us try to analyse the nature of British public opinion, because I know a good deal more about that than I do about the opinions of the members of the Cabinet. Four elements go to make it up, and though I cannot say in detail that it is made up of 80% of one and 20% of another, I think I can give you the general set up.

The first element involved is a deep emotional belief that the League of Nations is the one great result for good that emerged from the World War, and we are determined not to relapse into the old era of secret treaties and diplomatic bargainings. It is a duty we owe to the fallen, and the sentiment felt by those who lived through the war is embodied for the British people in the personality of Anthony Eden, who has carried to Geneva the spirit of war time idealism. That public opinion has been growing for years, and it extends from the highest in the land through all sections, classes and parties. The conservative party is as firmly pledged to support the League as the Labor opposition and what is left of the Liberal party. There are only

two very small groups—the Die-hards on the right, and a diminutive group on the left—who are not associated with it. It was crystallized in the famous peace ballot, which was remarkable, not so much for the opinions expressed, as for the enormous effort that was put into its organization. Hundreds of workers went round in every district, delivered the questionnaires, and called again to collect them when they were completed. Twelve million signatures were obtained, 97% in favor of the League and 72% in favor of military sanctions if necessary. That was revolutionary, especially on the latter point. It is, however, something that has come to stay, and it is something that is shared by many other countries of Europe.

The second element is purely British. It is the feeling that this so-called war between Italy and Ethiopia is contrary to the rules of fair play, that Mussolini is behaving like a bully, and that it would be wrong to sit by and watch a big bully deal in such a way with a weaker state. That sentiment you will find expressed by ordinary men and women all over England. Even if there were no such thing as the League of Nations there would be an enormously strong sympathy for the Ethiopians in the brutal and wanton attack that has been made upon them.

The third element of public opinion is imperial. This war is taking place in a part of the world where we have very special responsibilities. It is being carried on right across our lines of Imperial communication along the Mediterranean, through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, which has always been looked upon as practically British territory. It is not boastful to say these things, the world has always known them. Though it is true that we have not said very much about it, we have never at any of the disarmament meetings applied the doctrine of parity in naval strength to European waters or to the route to India. There we have always retained a comfortable margin of superiority, because we have special responsibilities in these regions. There is nothing to be ashamed of in these facts, and I am surprised that statesmen have not said so more openly.

There is a fourth element, and it is one of color. This is a war between a white people and a non-white people.

Geneva is much too white. I would like to see a greater sprinkling of color there, for the non-white peoples, who are represented there, are rather on the circumference of things. India is a very important element in the League, as well as in the British Empire, and we ought not to give the least suspicion for the feeling that there is one set of weights and measures for the white peoples and another for the non-white.

The Italians are fond of saying that this is merely a colonial war, a kind of punitive expedition. Let us hope that the era of such colonial wars is ended. There is a very strong public opinion throughout the British Empire on the matter, and you must never forget that only one man in seven of the subjects of His Majesty is a white man. There is a similarly strong feeling in the African territories of France, and one can hardly help feeling that her vacillating policy is involving her in difficulties with her own colonies.

I have said that our people are prepared to support the League, even at the risk of war. Is there any risk of war, and if there is, what is it? I think we can say that as the result of the happenings of the past few weeks there is no risk of a war between Italy and England. That is, there is no risk of a bi-lateral war with Italy on one side, and England opposed to her alone on the other. It is now clear that if there should be an attack by Italy on Great Britain, Italy will find herself opposed by the whole League, and not by Britain alone.

The strategy of the Italians has been to try to drive a wedge between Britain and the League by imputing selfish motives. She has failed and the situation now is that there will be very practical support for Great Britain, if she should be attacked by Italy in carrying out her duties to the Covenant.

What are these states who have promised their support? They are all countries which have seaports on the Mediterranean, and are neighbors, as it were, of British Sea power. You know them all, Greece, Turkey, Jugo-Slavia and France. We are getting together a regional association of members of the league in the Mediterranean area for the protection of the Covenant. For years past there has been a need for

a Mediterranean Locarno, and here, under the stress of circumstances, there has come into existence a regional co-operative arrangement for the maintenance of peace. That is a very interesting and practical measure.

The chief difficulty of the Covenant was to get people living on opposite sides of the world sufficiently interested in each other to come to each other's assistance. With the advent of a regional pact such as this, things have changed; and when the smoke of the present crisis clears away, we shall find that this implementing of the Covenant will have had great significance for the rest of Europe.

We are told that there is not so much risk of a war between Italy and the League as of a general war, and by that I mean a general European war. The Italian dictator has sometimes spoken as though he had only to stamp his foot or wave his hand, to have allies spring up and fight for him. But who is going to choose this moment of Italian difficulties to embark on a European war? Is it the power, that Italy deserted in the time of her need, after so many years of the Triple Alliance? Is it the power that has said that it does not want to be involved in any war against Great Britain? In other words, is it likely that Hitler will seize this particular moment for making use of the new German Military force? I don't wish to pursue these reflections any further, but I think if Fire broke out in Central Europe, it could be very quickly stamped out by united action of the League.

There are five very stabilizing factors in the European situation. The first of these is British public opinion. Europe now knows that the British people take the Covenant very seriously. They realize that we are deeply concerned with breaches of the Covenant anywhere in Europe, and that the power that embarks on such an adventure will have to reckon with us.

Secondly, the neutrality policy of the United States, whatever motives your neighbors to the south may have had for their action, has had the effect of giving the British Navy that elbow room which it needs if the full force of our sea-power is to be applied on behalf of the Covenant. It was fear of the now abandoned doctrine of the freedom of the seas that held us back.

The third influence is the awakened public opinion of the smaller states of Europe. In pre-war days Europe consisted only of the great powers, the so-called "Concert of Europe," and if you have read about the activities of Lord Salisbury, you will see that they left the smaller nations out of their calculations. One of the benefits of the League is that it has brought these smaller peoples to assume responsibilities, and throw their full combined weight into the scales on behalf of the Covenant. Holland, Sweden and Switzerland are very active in their support, and if I had to choose a country to exercise a mandate of Ethiopia under the League, I would choose Sweden.

The fourth element is the coming into existence of another great power. The Little Entente—Czecho-Slovakia, Roumania, and Jugo-Slavia—acts as a unit so far as foreign policy is concerned. Side by side is the Balkan Entente—Jugo-Slavia, Roumania, Turkey and Greece. These four and Czecho-Slovakia are now holding very closely together. They are among the strongest supporters of the League, and they form a *bloc* of power extending from Prague to Angora that is a very important factor in Europe today. These states have hitherto been linked very closely with France, but owing to good leadership in Great Britain and the hesitating policy of France, they are now much closer to Britain than to France.

Fifthly, there is the influence of Russia in the League. The rulers of Russia have said in effect that peace and order in the world are the first things needed, and that economic and social justice must come second. In other words they have said that any change in the economic structure of the world should henceforth be worked out by economic means rather than by revolution. I have nothing to say about the domestic policies of Russia, just as I have nothing to say about the domestic policies of Alberta, but their attitude towards revolutionary socialism has changed.

The coming of Russia into the League, and her links with the Balkan States are very important factors in the interests of Peace, for any adventurer in Central Europe would have to reckon with a new power with Russia behind it, as well as with Great Britain. These so-called satellites

of France are now in their combined strength stronger than France, and Laval very well knows it; and I have no doubt that the Franco-Russian treaty will be re-established.

But is it enough simply to satisfy ourselves that we have got rid of the risk of war? No! There are grievances to be redressed by international action. Italy has grievances, though she has gone the wrong way about to state them. They are not colonial grievances. They are economic grievances. So far as claims to colonial territory are concerned, I would say that the ruler of Italy is a generation behind the times in his understanding of African problems. His demand for colonies is in flagrant contradiction of the mandate article of the Covenant. It would be a crime against the Covenant to give Italy one square mile of Ethiopia so long as she is motivated by selfish designs.

But there is a problem. I don't think that Canadians ought ever to forget that the Italians have approached the League with their economic problem. In 1920 the Italians came before the Assembly and asked the League to make a careful study of the problem of raw materials. There was a scramble for raw materials after the blockade, and Italy came out short. Then everybody wanted them, but now the position is altered, and actually the African colonies are having difficulty in finding markets for their products. But the fact remains that Italy tabled a motion on this question, and it was the Canadian delegation that took the strongest line against it in the Assembly and the matter was adjourned.

I am not throwing all the blame on you, however, because in 1927 there was a proposal for a League Economic conference, and the British delegation took the lead in limiting its scope and carefully keeping out of the deliberations any reference to raw materials. It is a bad thing to try to solve problems by the sword, but is an equally bad thing to rule them out of discussion. You have got to discuss these problems, if you are to maintain the peace of the world.

We have got to be ready to take up these economic problems far more seriously than we have done in the past fifteen years. One of the greatest difficulties of the peace Conference was that President Wilson was so tied to purely political problems that he put on one side a vast mass of inter-

national economic problems that could have been settled satisfactorily at that time.

If the League can win through in this African adventure and peace is preserved in Europe, there will loom up a new task, and one that must be taken up quickly. That task is to bring all these problems up to date, and invite all states to discuss them—and I say all states, because the United States is vitally interested in them—and attempt to come to a decision that will satisfy everybody. Italy is entitled to some consideration, but she is entitled to no more than the other industrial countries without colonies. And we must give satisfaction to other civilized peoples, who have not the war materials necessary to the proper development of their industrial life.

It is all very well, however, to look to tomorrow, but we must first be certain of our principles of today. The first thing of the moment is: that all members of the League should stand together to show that militarism does not pay, and that we have entered upon a new era in which civilization is based on durable and unshakeable foundations.

COLONEL BISHOP, in thanking Sir Alfred, said:—Sir Alfred, I think I am expressing the views of all the members when I say that I do not think that a clearer or more concise case for the League of Nations has ever been put forward in Toronto. After your address the fact that you occupy the Montague Burton Chair of International Relations at Oxford is not hard to understand. We are deeply grateful to you and I hope that at some future time we shall have the pleasure of hearing you further on the problems that confront us.