THE BOARE-CAVAL PLAN AND THE SANCTIONS
CRISIS OF 1935

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PREFACE

There has been a general tendency on the part of twentieth century European historians to neglect the specific circumstance of the Italian-Ethiopian War. Most writers concentrate on the broader aspects of the consequences which the war had on the League of Nations and touch only lightly on the almost frantic efforts of European diplomats to bring the war to a successful conclusion before it could invalidate the principles of the League.

Although most studies of the Italian-Ethiopian crisis emphasize the role of Great Britain as the major League power and her unwillingness to forcefully accept the responsibility of upholding the League Covenant, few reveal the scope of the reasoning that lay behind the British government's reluctance to defend the independence of Ethiopia.

During the turbulent years in Europe that spawned the great interwar crises, no greater anxiety was exhibited by England than toward Mussolini's adventure in Africa. This study deals primarily with the efforts of Great Britain to bring the Italian-Ethiopian War to a halt through the Hoare-Laval peace plan of December 10, 1935. Based on memoirs, diaries, and public documents, this study is devoted to an examination of the reasons, both internal and external that formulated British foreign policy toward the war. The
manifestation of this policy as exemplified by the Hoare-Laval plan, reveals a unique turning point in England's foreign policy between the two great wars and serves as an excellent example of pre-appeasement British diplomacy.
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CHAPTER I

THE ITALIAN CHALLENGE TO EUROPEAN SECURITY IN 1935

Few wars have been preceded by such a degree of open preparation and such contempt for restraint as the Italo-Ethiopian war that began on October 3, 1935. The unprovoked invasion of Ethiopian territory by the armies of Benito Mussolini climaxed years of aspirations during which the Italian dictator "carried out his rehearsals in a theater with all seats filled and the curtain rolled up." When Marshall Rodolfo Graziani and General Emilio De Bono sent the Italian armies spilling over the frontiers of Ethiopia, they were implementing Mussolini's fascist belief that peace was neither desirable nor possible and that war was man's noblest activity.  

Mussolini's militarism in 1935 brought Italy into direct opposition to the structure and principles of the League of Nations. The League stood for perpetual peace guaranteed by collective security and collective action among its member

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states. Both Italy and Ethiopia, as members of that organization, were sworn to uphold its principles of peace or suffer the consequences. Mussolini, however, was without fear of international leagues and societies. Basing Italian action on historic claims against Ethiopia and on the indifference of Great Britain and France, the Italian leader proceeded with his plans to conquer the kingdom of Ethiopia.

Italy had long anticipated the addition of Ethiopia to her East African possessions of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. In 1889, with the approval of Great Britain, the Italians and the Ethiopian Emperor Menelek had negotiated a treaty which gave Italy the status of protector over Ethiopia. Four years later, in 1893, Menelek became disenchanted with his Italian overlords and repudiated this arrangement. The Italians retaliated with armed intervention, but were defeated at the battle of Adowa on March 1, 1898. This was a major setback to immediate Italian hopes of eventually annexing Ethiopia to her East African empire. Where force of arms had failed, Italy now tried diplomatic alliance and an insidious waiting game. Hard bargaining with the British resulted in the Anglo-Italian Protocol of May 5, 1894, which defined their respective areas of influence in East Africa. The agreement clearly assigned

\[3\] Ibid.

Ethiopia to the Italian sphere, and it was shown as such on officially approved British maps of Africa. While the English recognized Italian expectations toward Ethiopia in 1894, the French were unwilling to cooperate until 1906. France, as well as Italy and Britain, possessed African territory bordering on Ethiopia. The local rivalry and conflict of interest between these three powers were favorable to continued Ethiopian independence, but were also dangerous for all involved. Consequently, they sought to regulate their interests in Ethiopia by agreement. The accord signed on December 13, 1906, in London, began by guaranteeing the independence and integrity of Ethiopia and then enumerated the special areas of interest assigned to the contracting countries. Article Four of the treaty pledged concerted action to safeguard the special interests of Great Britain in the regulation of the waters of the Nile, the French concern for a zone necessary for the construction of a railroad from the port of Djibouti in French Somaliland to Addis Ababa, and the special interests of

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7The headwaters of the Blue Nile rise on Lake Tsana in northwestern Ethiopia.

8This railroad was completed in 1918 and constituted Ethiopia's only outlet to the sea. Richard Greenfield, Ethiopia (New York, 1965), p. 126.
Italy in all of Ethiopia lying west of the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. As the area "west of Addis Ababa" was somewhat indefinite, the Italian colonial office in 1906 could lay claim to approximately half of Ethiopia and because of the treaty, Rome expected the diplomatic support of England and France.

As in the other pre-war imperialistic treaties made between European states, the Ethiopians were not included in the talks leading up to the 1906 agreement. Typically, these treaties ushered in the dismemberment of the country they were designed to preserve. In this respect Ethiopia was fortunate in that World War I intervened and kept her three protectors occupied in Europe. The restoration of peace in 1918, however, brought with it renewed efforts by Italy to win the areas that Italian statesmen felt had been assigned to her by the Anglo-Italian Protocol of 1894 and the Three Power Treaty of 1906.

Italian claims for greater latitude in Ethiopian affairs were further strengthened by the fact that Great Britain and France had promised Italy colonial concessions in East Africa as an inducement to desert Germany and join the Allies in

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For reasons of her own Great Britain was indisposed to lend the support that Italy expected in 1919, and the matter was dropped until December of 1925, when the British government notified the Italians that London was willing to accommodate the suggestions concerning Ethiopia put forth by Italy in November, 1919. It was at this juncture that France again thwarted Italian dreams of possible hegemony in a part of Ethiopia. The French argued that the 1906 Three Power Treaty was still in effect and refused to give their consent to any Anglo-Italian plan which would upset the status quo in Ethiopia. It was usually the French who were the chief obstacle to Italian designs on Ethiopia. Ironically, it was France and Italy who co-sponsored Ethiopian membership in the League in 1923 and the English who opposed it. Aside from this gesture, the only bright spot in the fifty-year relationship between Italy and Ethiopia came on August 2, 1928, when the two countries signed a twenty-year treaty of

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10 Great Britain and France had agreed that in the event of their increasing their colonial territories at the expense of Germany, Italy could claim equitable compensation on the frontiers of her African colonies of Eritrea, Somaliland, and Libya. David Lloyd George, Memoirs of the Peace Conference, 2 vols. (New York, 1934), II, 583.


amity, conciliation, and arbitration. From this date onward, it was only a matter of time until Mussolini felt enough confidence to move militarily against Ethiopia. He did not take into account the League of Nations as a deterrent to aggression. In 1935 Mussolini felt he had the compliance of the only two members of the League who might be able to stop him—Great Britain and France.

Both Britain and France shared in the historical development of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, but the English more so than the French. It had been with British encouragement that Italy began overt military activities against Ethiopia in 1889. Five years later the British government clearly recognized Italian preponderance over Ethiopia by the protocol of 1894, and the Three Power Treaty of 1906 gave at least the western half of Ethiopia up to future Italian control. All that Great Britain asked in return was the recognition of English interests over the headwaters of the Blue Nile on Lake Tsana. British involvement or detachment in the fortunes of Ethiopia centered itself around this lake. The economies of both Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan depended on cotton, and the cotton crop depended upon the mighty Nile River. As early as 1902 the British government instituted schemes for a barrage on Lake Tsana to partially control the water flowing

into the Blue Nile, but the plan was never successfully worked out. In 1919 the Italians offered to help Great Britain obtain a barrage on Lake Tsana and also a motor road between the lake and the Sudanese frontier. In return, Italy asked for British support in an enterprise in which the Italians would build a railroad from the frontiers of Eritrea to the frontier of Italian Somaliland, passing to the west of Addis Ababa. Also, for her support of the English project, Italy would require exclusive economic interest in western Ethiopia and the entire territory crossed by the railway. The English declined this generous offer with the explanation that there was strong objection to any foreign power controlling the headwaters of the Nile River at that time. Nevertheless, Great Britain continued unsuccessfully to press Ethiopia for the Lake Tsana dam concession.

A year after a Conservative Party victory in November, 1924, the British government under Stanley Baldwin, decided that the Italian offer of 1919 was worth reconsidering. On December 14, 1925, Robert Graham, British Ambassador in Rome, wrote to Mussolini explaining the fruitless efforts on the part of Great Britain to obtain a dam on Lake Tsana.

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14 Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CXCVIII (1926), 2648.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
Graham went on to say that upon re-evaluation of the situation, the British foreign office had concluded that the Italian offer of 1919 was compatible with the Three Power Treaty of 1906, and inquired if the Italian government would be willing to open discussion on the basis of the 1919 suggestions.\textsuperscript{18} Thereupon, by British initiative, Anglo-Italian negotiations took place which resulted in an agreement based on the Italian proposals of 1919.\textsuperscript{19}

The Ethiopian government was never consulted during the negotiations and was not informed of the agreement until after it had been concluded.\textsuperscript{20} On June 9, 1926, an Anglo-French communiqué brought the agreement to the attention of the Ethiopian government, which promptly presented the matter to the League of Nations. Haile Selassie, heir to the throne of Ethiopia, indicated to the League Council on June 19 that it was his government's opinion that England and Italy were combining forces to exert pressure on Ethiopia for economic advantages.\textsuperscript{21} Both London and Rome quickly denied this accusation and gave assurances to the League of Nations that

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19}For the entire text of the Anglo-Italian notes on Ethiopia exchanged in December, 1925, and the correspondence arising out of that exchange see League of Nations, \textit{Official Journal}, VII, 1517-1527.
\textsuperscript{20}Great Britain, 5 \textit{Parliamentary Debates} (Commons), CXCVIII, 2643.
the two powers had no such intention in regard to Ethiopia. Austin Chamberlain, British foreign secretary, emphasized, however, that his government did recognize, under certain unmentioned conditions, an exclusive Italian economic influence in the west of Ethiopia. Haile Selassie had made a judicious move on the part of Ethiopia, in exposing the Anglo-Italian agreement to world opinion by bringing it before the League. In England both Parliament and press called the foreign office to account for its negotiation behind the backs of Ethiopia and the League. It would seem, indeed, that the conscience of the world acting through the League of Nations had stopped Anglo-Italian encroachment in Ethiopia. Public opinion in part motivated the open explanations of innocence by the foreign offices of Italy and Great Britain, but by far the greater reason for abandoning the agreement was the protests of France. The proposed Italian railway and English motor road threatened the transportation monopoly in Ethiopia held by the French-owned railroad from Addis Ababa to Djibouti. Under the 1906 treaty French acquiescence was necessary for the success of the Anglo-Italian plan, but it was not forthcoming. The French stand largely

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22 Ibid., 1523-1524.  
23 Ibid., 1524.  
24 Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CXCVIII, 2751.
explains Mussolini's anti-French attitude for the next nine years.25

With the passing of time, the French position adjusted to the changing European situation. With Hitler's rise to power in Germany and the Nazi threat to France came a corresponding rise in Franco-Italian friendship. In January, 1935 the French government reached an agreement with Mussolini concerning Franco-Italian relations. France, fearing the ascent of German power, had every incentive to reach a military understanding with the Italian dictator. The agreement, signed on January 7, 1935, by Mussolini and Pierre Laval, the French foreign minister, contained defensive military provisions formulated for the protection of France and Italy should the Germans invade Austria.26 It was during this meeting in Rome that Mussolini extracted from Laval the new French position regarding Ethiopia. In a series of notes exchanged between Laval and Mussolini the French foreign minister declared that his country was uninterested in Ethiopian affairs.27 Laval and Mussolini reached the agreement without consulting Ethiopia and agreed upon a straight


imperialistic barter. For Italian cooperation against
Germany in Europe, France disengaged herself from the pre-
rogative of opposing Italian encroachments against Ethiopia
under the Three Power Treaty of 1906.

Mussolini, now free from French obstruction to Italy's
East African ambitions, still faced England. As co-signer
of the 1906 agreement, Great Britain had demonstrated in
1919 and 1925 that she still had some concern in Ethiopia.
There existed in 1935, however, several reasons why Mussolini
could believe the English would look the other way in
Ethiopia. At this time the English government was under the
control of the Conservative Party headed by Stanley Baldwin.
Neither Baldwin nor his party had any record of international
responsibility unless some British interest was at stake.
It was Baldwin and his conservative government which had
instituted the 1925 notes on Anglo-Italian interests in
Ethiopia, and had let the naval disarmament conference of
1927 break down because of purely British self-interest. 28
The Locarno Pacts of 1925 had proved Baldwin was not adverse
to negotiating outside the League of Nations and that he did
not fully trust it to keep the peace. In fact, Baldwin pub-
licly stated his belief that the League of Nations was
crippled without the United States, Japan, and Germany. 29

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28 Philip Noel-Baker, "The League of Nations," The Baldwin

29 A. W. Baldwin, My Father: The True Story (London,
1955), p. 221.
By midyear of 1935 Mussolini possessed two additional reasons for assuming British detachment in the event of an Italo-Ethiopian war. The first came when the Italian secret service photographed a report in the British Embassy in Rome revealing the British Chiefs of Staff Committee's opinion that Great Britain had no essential strategic interest in Ethiopia. As long as the headwaters of Lake Tsana were safe, Italian domination of Ethiopia did not worry Great Britain. The second definite English encouragement of Mussolini's African adventure came in April, 1935. If the meeting with Laval in January had satisfied Mussolini of French disinterest in Ethiopia, then the Stresa Conference of April 11-14 convinced him that London would not oppose his war.

On March 16, 1935, Hitler had announced the creation of a conscript army in Germany, and on April 11 the representatives of Italy, France, and Great Britain met in northern Italy at the resort town of Stresa to condemn Germany's unilateral action and to confirm their support of the 1925 Treaty of Locarno. Even though the French and English

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30 For five years prior to World War II the Italian secret service had succeeded in making the British Embassy in Rome a source of official British correspondence for the Italian government. Ian Colvin, Vansittart In Office (London, 1965), p. 59.


delegations contained their respective experts on East African affairs, no mention was made of the already tense situation existing between Italy and Ethiopia. At the meeting Great Britain was represented by her prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald, and the foreign secretary, John Simon. Representing France was her premier, Pierre Flandin, and her foreign minister, Pierre Laval. None of these four men raised any objection when Mussolini proposed that the declaration that their countries would repudiate no treaties which might endanger the peace be limited solely to European peace treaties. Mussolini's request made an exception of the Three Power Treaty of 1906, which pledged the three countries to guarantee the integrity of Ethiopia. By their silence at Stresa on the already obvious designs of Italy on Ethiopia, and by their consent to the phrasing of the final declaration, the English and French virtually assured that the Italians would not postpone their timetable of conquest in Ethiopia.

When the Italo-Ethiopian war finally began in October of 1935, it created an extremely confounding problem in Europe. The problem was that Italy was both part of the anti-German front and the League of Nations. Italian aggression against a fellow League member was going to force European states to take a stand on the League Covenant. Great

\[\text{33} \text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{34} \text{Colvin, Vansittart In Office, p. 61.}\]
Britain and France, as the most powerful and influential League members, would be expected to set the course for the remaining League membership to follow. France had, since January, 1935, possessed a mutual defense agreement with Italy against possible German aggression. A collapse of the pact would leave France without allies in western Europe. Pierre Laval, who became both premier and foreign minister on June 7, 1935, made it clear to the English government that "he was not prepared to do anything that would entail Italy's departure from the League of Nations, nor impair the existing harmony between Italy and France." The attitude of the French government excluded the possibility of dealing with the Italo-Ethiopian war in the League of Nations. Italy's challenge to the theory of collective security in 1935 was not to be met by the entire League membership nor a combination of League members, but by the major European states acting alone according to their own best interests.

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CHAPTER II

THE FORMATIVE MONTHS: THE BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE
AND THE ITALIAN-ETHIOPIAN DISPUTE

The first three-quarters of 1935 proved to be a formative period in the development of the Italian-Ethiopian dispute. It was during this time that Ethiopia attempted to bring the League of Nations between Mussolini's ambitions and Ethiopia's fears. Diplomats in Europe now began witnessing the first efforts of the great powers to ease the strain that Mussolini had thrust upon the League. It was a confusing period, but one that set the theme for the remainder of the year.

On December 5, 1934, an armed clash between Ethiopian and Italian troops occurred at Walwal, a waterhole on the border separating Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland. Each country alleged that the other was at fault in the incident, and when Italy refused to consider the matter under the 1928 Treaty of Friendship between the two nations, Ethiopia reported the incident to the League of Nations on December 14.¹

¹League of Nations, Official Journal, XVI, 274. Ethiopia was acting under Article II, paragraph II, which reads: "It is also declared to be the friendly right of each Member of the League to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstances whatever affecting international relations which threaten to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace rests."
This move did not involve or solicit any action on the League's part. But as it became clear that Italy would not arbitrate the Walwal incident, Ethiopia, on January 3, 1935, invoked Article II of the League Covenant.  

When the League convened eight days later, Ethiopia found not only the Italians, but also the French and English exhibiting a keen desire to avoid the controversy. Both Pierre Laval and John Simon, the foreign ministers of France and Great Britain, pressed the Ethiopian representative, Tede Hawariate, to reconsider and withdraw the invocation of Article II.  The concerted pressures on Hawariate were effective, and he agreed not to press for Council intervention in the dispute, but reserved the right to insert the matter on the agenda during the current session. To the amazement of everyone, this is what Hawariate did on

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2Ibid., p. 252. Paragraph 1 of the article states: "Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations. In case any such emergency should arise the Secretary General shall on the request of any Member of the League forthwith summon a meeting of the Council." Ibid, I, 5-6.  


January 17, and the secretary general of the League, Joseph Avenol, scheduled the matter for discussion on January 19. Before the 19th, however, the Italian government changed its tactics. Anthony Eden, permanent English representative to the League, suggested the Italians agree to arbitration of the Walwal incident under their 1928 Treaty of Friendship with Ethiopia. The Italian delegate, Pompeo Aloisi, made this concession, and the Ethiopians agreed to the postponement of a general discussion of the incident. Although Great Britain promised the Ethiopians its support in the proposed negotiations, it was Italy that gained the advantages at Geneva. By agreeing to arbitrate outside the League, Rome gained a means for protracting negotiations indefinitely. The sympathetic attitude displayed by Britain and France in keeping the dispute out of the League did not go unnoticed by the Italians. French sympathy sprang from the January agreement with Mussolini, but the English attitude was not yet fully known to the Italians.

To further ascertain the British position on Ethiopia, the Italians, on January 29, asked the English foreign office for an exchange of views on the Ethiopian question. Since

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6 Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 196.
8 Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCXCVII (1935), 1904.
9 Ibid., CCV (1935), 24.
the Italian inquiry did not request an immediate reply, Great Britain did not send one. John Simon, as secretary for foreign affairs, was responsible for this decision. Simon believed in the inevitability of Italian aggression against Ethiopia and made it his concern to treat the coming conflict in such a way as to retain the friendship of Italy. By not answering the Italian note Simon neither objected to nor condoned Italy's designs on Ethiopia. The foreign secretary was obviously postponing his choice between Rome and Geneva, while hoping direct negotiations between Italy and Ethiopia might produce a settlement. But English hopes disappeared on February 23, when the ambassador to Italy, Eric Drummond, reported there was no chance of Italy's negotiating a settlement at that time.

Drummond's observations were correct, and the stalling tactics of Italy finally exasperated the Ethiopians to the point of turning once again to the League of Nations. On March 16 the Ethiopian government informed the secretary general that it would request a full scale examination of the Italian-Ethiopian dispute, exclusive of the Walwal

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incident. This was necessitated by Italy's military threat to Ethiopia and by the failure of the Italian government to respond to repeated requests for arbitration. On March 17 Ethiopia invoked Article X and Article XV of the Covenant. Article XV obliged the League Council to consider disputes which were thus far unresolved by the parties to the dispute and likely to lead to war. Ethiopia invoked Article X only to remind the League membership that it was sworn to preserve the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all League members. Another Ethiopian appeal to the secretary general on April 3 finally resulted in a statement by Avenol that he would place Ethiopia's request for a hearing before the Council at its next meeting. The Italian delegate Aloisi, countered the Ethiopian success by stating that diplomatic methods under the Italian-Ethiopian Treaty of 1928 had not been exhausted and that Italy was now prepared to enter into direct negotiation with Ethiopia for the settlement of the dispute. By asserting that the League had no reason to take up the dispute, Italy played the game of stall and evasion that had worked so well in January. But as in January, the success of Italy's tactic

14 League of Nations, Official Journal, XVI, 571.
15 Ibid., p. 572.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 577.
18 Ibid., pp. 577-578.
depended upon the willingness of Britain and France to allow it to work. So far Great Britain had acted in general sympathy with Italian aims, but the situation could easily change. The April meeting of the League would not take place until after the Stresa Conference, and Italy anticipated learning at Stresa whether or not the English had altered their policy of inaction on the Ethiopian question.19

The Stresa Conference between France, Italy, and Great Britain met on April 11, 1935, to exhibit a united western front against the growing German threat. Hitler had announced on March 16 the introduction of universal army conscription in Germany, and since this was a violation of the military restrictions placed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, the three great western powers felt it necessary to discuss this action in conference. The prime minister of Great Britain, Ramsay MacDonald, and the foreign secretary, John Simon, headed the British delegation. Before they departed from London, the two men agreed to confront Mussolini with the question of his aims in Ethiopia.20 Robert Vansittart, permanent under-secretary for foreign affairs, accompanied the delegation and was urged by the ambassador to Italy, Eric Drummond, to mention specifically Great Britain's concern

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20 Ibid., p. 179.
over the turn of events between Italy and Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{21} It seems the English were well prepared to discuss the Italian-Ethiopian dispute, but only if someone else brought the subject up first. Geoffrey Thompson, a foreign office expert on East Africa, was present at Stresa, but had instructions from Simon to discuss only minor issues involving Italo-Ethiopian relations.\textsuperscript{22} When the talks ended on April 14, no mention of Ethiopia had been made to Mussolini either by MacDonald or the French representative, Pierre Laval. The German problem took up the entire three days, and on April 14 the powers concluded the meeting by declaring themselves opposed to any unilateral repudiation of treaties which would endanger the peace of Europe.\textsuperscript{23}

The failure of Great Britain to bring up the Ethiopian question at Stresa stemmed primarily from the reason for the conference. Stresa was called on account of the German threat to Europe, and the immediate British objective was to secure a united front against Germany.\textsuperscript{24} Since Italy was important to that front, England, along with France, was

\begin{itemize}
  \item Thompson, Front-Line Diplomat, p. 96.
  \item Heald, Documents on International Affairs, 1935, I, 82.
  \item Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCV (1935), 26.
\end{itemize}
naturally reluctant to force an issue which might shatter the new solidarity.²⁵

When the Stresa Conference ended, Simon left for Geneva to attend the League meeting to be held on April 15. Although the convening of the League on this date was an extraordinary meeting called to consider the German problem, the Ethiopians had been promised a hearing also. The council heard both the Ethiopian and Italian cases and decided for the Italians, by postponing until May any consideration of Ethiopian claims.²⁶ Once again Italy won delay by asserting that bilateral negotiations were about to begin.²⁷ Britain and France accommodated Italy in agreeing to this delay even though it was quite obvious Italy was dragging her feet. At Stresa Simon had not brought up the Ethiopian question, and the following day at Geneva he was unwilling to see the League take up the issue. Actually, Italy had little to fear, since under the Covenant no action could be taken against any country until war had broken out. But Mussolini wanted all the time he could possibly muster to complete his preparations for the conquest of Ethiopia. For even as May slipped into June, the Italian dictator could only hope that English detachment would continue.

²⁵Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 156.
²⁷Ibid., p. 548.
In June there was a change of government in Great Britain. On June 7, 1935, Stanley Baldwin became prime minister of England for the third time. Samuel Hoare replaced Simon at the foreign office, and Anthony Eden was appointed as special representative to the League of Nations, with cabinet rank. The choice of Hoare as foreign secretary was an odd selection. Hoare had spent the last five years as head of the India Office and had only the vaguest idea of the complexities facing Britain in Europe. The newly appointed foreign secretary was to be guided by the influence of the under-secretary, Robert Vansittart. Vansittart believed that Great Britain would soon have to choose between Italy and the League, and in the face of the German danger, he favored choosing Italy. Almost at once Hoare found himself pressed by advocates of the two opposing views on the Ethiopian question, one group advocating full support for the Covenant, and the other favoring allowing Mussolini to have his way in Ethiopia. Unable to choose between the two, Hoare decided that the safest course would be to pursue both policies at once. Whatever the case, Britain needed the aid and support of France. Two events in June, however,

28 Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 108.
30 Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 137.
31 Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCVII (1935), 342.
were to weaken the possibility of French support in case Britain's dual policy became singular.

The first of these was the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of June 18, 1935, an agreement that meant several things to several countries. For Berlin it was an undeniable political success to have London formally accept a revision upwards in German naval strength, as well as to recognize Germany's right to possess additional armaments. The Italians were mildly upset by the agreement but the French were astonished. Pierre Laval, now both premier and foreign minister, immediately criticized the British government for negotiating the Anglo-German Naval Treaty without the knowledge or consent of France. By her action Britain unilaterally violated an Anglo-French agreement of February 4, 1935, providing that neither country would approach Germany separately concerning rearmament. The naval agreement concluded with Germany seriously weakened whatever solidarity the British might have relied upon with France to stop Mussolini's aggression through the League of Nations.

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32 U. S. Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series C (1933-1937), IV (Washington, 1962), 587-588. (Hereafter cited as D.G.F.P.)


34 Ibid.

35 Eden, Facing the Dictators, pp. 234-235.
Shortly after this blow to Anglo-French relations came another. On June 23, 1935, Anthony Eden travelled to Rome to try to forestall the eventuality of Mussolini attacking Ethiopia. Eden carried with him a plan which he had devised in association with Hoare and Vansittart. In the plan England proposed to cede the port of Zeila in British Somaliland and a corridor of land to this port to Ethiopia. The Ethiopians in turn would make territorial concessions to Italy along their border with Italian Somaliland. Mussolini refused this proposal and demanded that Ethiopia surrender to Italy all territory that had come under Ethiopian domination in the last fifty years. In addition to these areas Mussolini insisted it would also be necessary for the central plateau region of Ethiopia to be controlled by Italy. If these terms were not acceptable, Italy would resort to war and take the entire country. Since the English and Italian proposals were unacceptable to both parties, the talks in Rome terminated on June 24. Some good was accomplished. At least Eden could now inform the British foreign office as to the extent of Italian intransigence. There were also some ill effects arising from the Eden-Mussolini meeting. Not only were the Ethiopians uninformed as to the nature of the specific proposals until July 3, but the French were once again

36 Ibid., pp. 220-221.  
37 Ibid., p. 223.  
left in the dark on Eden's mission to Rome until it was over. 39

French dismay over not being informed of the purpose of Eden's trip was compounded when Laval learned of the specific proposals Eden had made to Mussolini. Had Italy accepted the English scheme to end the dispute, Ethiopia would have gained an access route to the sea and the port of Zeila which would have been disastrous to the French transportation monopoly in Ethiopia. This monopoly provided nine-tenths of the revenue for the colonial budget for French Somaliland. 40 Apparently Eden's trip produced only undesirable results for Great Britain. The French were further exasperated by the plan as presented to the Italians, and neither found it acceptable. Worse still, the entire problem remained unresolved.

By midyear of 1935 Great Britain still faced the problem of finding the will and the means to stop Italian aggression. The latter was easy to find. Italy could neither match British naval power in the Mediterranean nor sustain any action in East Africa without the use of the Suez Canal. A failure in resolve to stop Italy meant only one of two things--either the English did not choose to stop Italy, or else they could not rely on French cooperation. The


remarkable thing is that with the failure of the Eden mission of late June, London now undertook a policy of trying to solve the growing Italian problem in cooperation with the French. 41 This would be a difficult task. Both the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and Eden's visit to Rome had strained Anglo-French relations. In view of Laval's statement on July 2 that he was prepared to do nothing to jeopardize French relations with Italy, England's decision to seek French aid in confronting the problem had come at an inopportune time.

With Anglo-French relations already strained, conditions on the British domestic front further complicated the issue. When Eden returned from Rome on June 27, Lord Robert Cecil released in Great Britain the results of a poll known popularly as the Peace Ballot. The ballot was a survey taken by the League of Nations Union, a non-party organization. Question five on the ballot read:

Do you consider that, if a nation insists on attacking another, the other nations should combine to compel it to stop by
(a) Economic and non-military measures?
(b) If necessary, military measures? 42

Out of nearly 12,000,000 votes cast, question 5(a) received 10,000,000 affirmative votes and 650,000 negative votes for

an assenting majority of 94 per cent. Question 5(b) received 6,784,000 yes votes and 2,351,000 no votes for an affirmative majority of 74 per cent. The ballot indicated clearly that a very large majority of the British electorate was in favor of a strong British stand against aggression within the framework of the League. Even though Stanley Baldwin was skeptical as to the real value of the Peace Ballot, he publicly acknowledged his pleasure at finding so many voters behind him in working to maintain the authority of the League of Nations. Thus far, however, this was not what the British government was doing. English diplomats had been facilitating Mussolini's tactics of evasion in the League since January and had already attempted one settlement to keep the Italian-Ethiopian dispute permanently off the League agenda. The results of the Peace Ballot did not alter Baldwin's doubts about the effectiveness of the League, but now he could feel certain that to expound his beliefs publicly was to invite political extinction.

Baldwin's attitude on munition shipments to Ethiopia further explains England's desire to see the dispute settled quickly outside the League. From May onward Great Britain

43 Ibid., p. 51.
and France refused licenses to export munitions to either Italy or Ethiopia. The reasoning behind this policy was that an Ethiopia without arms would be more likely to come to the conference table. The Anglo-French arms embargo all but crippled the defenses of Ethiopia, but it had no effect on Italy, who manufactured her own arms. French officials informed Haile Selassie that war materials destined for Ethiopia would be held up at the port of Djibouti to give the peacemakers in Europe a chance to avert actual war.

An effort to prevent war was definitely being made, and now with an added reason for haste. When the League met on August 3, the Council declared that it would take up the entire question of the Italian-Ethiopian dispute on September 4 and that meanwhile the signatories to the Three Power Treaty of 1906 would meet to seek a solution to the general problem. France and Great Britain were availing themselves of yet another chance to settle the dispute before it reached the floor at Geneva.

When the three-power meeting convened in Paris on August 14, the English representatives, Anthony Eden and

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50 League of Nations, Official Journal, XVI, 968-969.
Robert Vansittart, immediately attempted to impress on Pierre Laval the importance of the two countries acting together. In the English view, it was absolutely essential to the peace of Europe that Britain and France stand together and cooperate in solving the Italian-Ethiopian problem before it destroyed the League. Laval, probably because of the actions of Great Britain the previous June, would not commit himself to an English alliance. The French premier felt that the threat to the Covenant was now an issue between Italy and England, and France would play the role of mediator. The Italian delegate, Pompeo Aloisi, arrived on August 15 and outlined Rome's stand on a negotiated settlement. The essence of the Italian demands was that Britain and France should recognize the political as well as the economic preponderance of Italy in Ethiopia. Eden rejected this as impossible. On the 16th an Anglo-French plan was presented to Aloisi. It was basically a non-political mandate for Italy over Ethiopia which would respect the independence and sovereignty of the African state and which would be administered under League supervision. Aloisi sent the proposals to Rome, and on

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52 Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War, p. 262.
53 Ibid., p. 263.
54 Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 250.
55 Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War.
the night of August 17 he received a reply from Mussolini which rejected the Anglo-French plan.\footnote{Ibid., p. 266.} Once again negotiations outside the League had failed, and Great Britain found herself facing the problem anew.

With the Paris failure fresh on its mind, the English cabinet met on August 22 to discuss the unresolved problem. Hoare favored keeping in step with the French at all cost and acting only in cooperation with the Quai d'Orsay in dealing with the controversy.\footnote{Templewood, \textit{Nine Troubled Years}, p. 164.} The problem was that French unwillingness to antagonize Italy meant that Great Britain probably would not act at all. Aside from accepting Hoare's advice, the cabinet also decided not to lift the embargo on arms shipments to Italy and Ethiopia, which had been officially instituted on July 25.\footnote{The \textit{Times} (London), August 23, 1935, p. 12.} By this action the English government turned a deaf ear to the pleas of Ethiopia that it was impossible to obtain the means of defending itself as long as the European munitions embargoes remained in effect.\footnote{League of Nations, \textit{Official Journal}, XVI, 1601-1602.} Since Great Britain would be expected to play an important role in the upcoming League meeting which would take up the Italian-Ethiopian dispute, the cabinet instructed the British delegation to the meeting...
to "keep in step with the French and follow closely the procedure laid down in the Covenant." 60

On September 4, 1935, the League of Nations finally took up the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, a question that Haile Selassie's government had been trying to get on the League agenda since December 14, 1934. The Council appointed a Committee of Five, made up of Great Britain, France, Poland, Spain, and Turkey, to examine the problem and to seek a solution. Before the committee issued its final report, Sir Samuel Hoare travelled to Geneva and made a rousing speech on September 11. In his statement the British foreign secretary made what seemed to be a definite stand on the part of his government. He said:

The attitude of His Majesty's Government has always been one of unswerving fidelity to the League and all that it stands for, and the case now before us is no exception, but on the contrary, the continuance of that rule. . . . In conformity with its precise and explicit obligations, the League stands, and my country stands with it, for collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for the steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression. 61

After months of hesitation and aimlessness, it appeared that Great Britain had now decided definitely to stand behind the League. There was a general surge of hope among the League membership that England had declared its intention of

60 Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 255.
stopping Italian aggression. In their enthusiasm, however, many League members overlooked Hoare's qualifying statement that read:

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 ensured solely by the efforts of a few, however powerful they may be. Hoare's statement of the 11th reflected neither more nor less than Great Britain's willingness to support collective action, but her unwillingness to take the lead in such action. Hoare believed that Italy, as well as the other League members, was aware of this condition. In fact, the night preceding his ambiguous speech, Hoare accompanied by Eden, held a conference with Laval in which it was agreed that neither Britain nor France would contemplate any action against Italy which might be construed as military in nature. Aware of British dealings and attitude, Italy could not possibly fear the League of Nations, because it was bound to inaction. The League would not act unless England made the first move, and England would not make the first move except in line with other League members.

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62 Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 262.
63 Heald, Documents on International Affairs, II, 101.
64 Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, pp. 169-170.
65 Angell, The Defense of the Empire, p. 147.
Where Hoare had delivered a vague warning to Mussolini on September 11, on September 13 Laval offered the olive branch to the Italians. At Geneva the French diplomat affirmed the support of Paris for the League, but he left the possibility open for a negotiated settlement. He stated: "I still hope that the Council may shortly be able to carry out its mission of conciliation. The task is doubtlessly a difficult one, but I still do not think it hopeless." Laval's reference was to the compromise plan being worked out by the Committee of Five.

The Committee's final recommendations were handed to the representatives of Italy and Ethiopia on September 18. The proposals gave Ethiopia League assistance in every category of internal development and control. As in the Anglo-French plan of August, the League plan offered Italy a special interest in the economic development of Ethiopia, but political control would be retained by Haile Selassie with international League assistance. This plan did not differ greatly from the plan which Mussolini had rejected in August, but the September plan had a League mandate and came close on the heels of the inspiring speeches of Hoare and Laval. Aloisi urged Mussolini to accept the plan to

66 Heald, Documents on International Affairs, II, 103.
67 For the complete plan formulated by the Committee of Five see League of Nations, Official Journal, XVI, 1621-1624.
avoid the risk of war, but the Italian dictator would not be swayed from his path. The Italian dictator determined to go ahead with the Ethiopian enterprise, regardless of possible compromise solutions. Aloisi received instructions to reject the Committee's recommendations, and on September 22 he informed the Council of Italy's objections to, and final rejection of, the proposed settlement. The following day Hawariate reported that Ethiopia accepted the Committee's recommendations and was willing to open negotiations on the basis of the suggestions it contained. Ethiopian acceptance, however, did not overrule Italian rejection, and the plan to save the League from a crucial test was never implemented.

The failure of the League of Nations to solve the Italian-Ethiopian dispute on September 22, 1935, preceded by only twelve days the actual outbreak of hostilities between the two countries. Before the war erupted on October 3, Great Britain had found it difficult to choose between the only two courses of action open to her. One was to placate Mussolini—to come to terms with him and to do anything to keep the Italians in the League and the balance against

68 Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War, p. 345.
70 League of Nations, Official Journal, XVI, 1624-1625.
71 Ibid., pp. 1625-1627.
Germany. The other course was to adhere to League principles and push Mussolini over. Before the outbreak of hostilities England indicated by her actions that she preferred Italy over the League. Throughout the first three-quarters of 1935 British statesmen afforded Mussolini the support against Ethiopia to which he was entitled by the Three Power Agreement of 1906, the London Agreements of 1915, and the Anglo-Italian Agreement of December, 1925. English support, however, extended only to economic penetration and control as exemplified by the provisions of the one British and two British co-sponsored plans to satisfy the Italians. Now that Mussolini had actually begun the war for complete control of Ethiopia in direct defiance of the League of Nations, the attitude of Great Britain was of course subject to revision. The League, Europe, and indeed, the entire world waited to see what course of action England would now adopt.
CHAPTER III

GREAT BRITAIN FACES THE SANCTIONS CRISIS

The invasion of Ethiopia by Italian forces on October 3, 1935, proved, at least to the French and English, that Mussolini would rather fight for Ethiopia than have it given to him. The Duce could have had all the actual spoils of conquest without resorting to war. Throughout 1935 Paris and London offered concession after concession regarding Italian predominance in Ethiopia. The last effort to placate Rome before war erupted would have given Italy a monopoly on the economic exploitation of Ethiopia. In addition Mussolini would have received security for Italian colonization within Ethiopia, a policed frontier, and League advisors to Addis Ababa, made up predominately of Italians. This attempt made through the League of Nations on September 18, met Mussolini's unequivocal rejection. Had the settlement been acceptable to the Italian dictator, it would have allowed Italian enterprise to develop and control Ethiopia with a minimum of outside supervision. Clearly, Mussolini desired above all else the military conquest of Ethiopia and launched his armies

1League of Nations, Official Journal, XVI, 1621-1624.
against Addis Ababa only three weeks after the last attempt to deter the outbreak of hostilities.

Now that the war had begun, members of the League of Nations faced the responsibility of defending Ethiopia from Italian aggression. At a glance Italy's position was at best precarious. The results of the Peace Ballot in Great Britain revealed that the majority of the English people would support even military measures against an aggressor nation to uphold the League. In France, the Left would eagerly lend its support against the Italian dictator, and Russia would welcome any movement which might facilitate the fall of Communism's oldest and most successful foe in Europe.² Germany, although not a member of the League, was resolved to keep aloof in the showdown between Italy and the powers at Geneva.³ Under these circumstances, Italy was, with the exception of the current government of Laval in France, without allies in Europe and faced the possible combined might of the fifty-eight member states of the League. Cooperation among the League membership, however, required that England, or England in union with France, give leadership and direction at Geneva.

While Great Britain possessed the capability of taking the lead in thwarting the Italian challenge, conditions

²Amery, My Political Life, III, 171-172.
prevailing in England would make such a stand difficult. Among the general public there existed a strong pacifist sentiment coupled with a belief in the League of Nations as the guardian of world peace. This guardianship was such a desirable safeguard that it deserved to be preserved, even at the cost of war. The results of the Peace Ballot revealed this feeling among the vast majority of the British electorate. There existed, however, a substantial gap between public sentiment and the attitude of the British government in facing the crisis that the Italian-Ethiopian war brought to Europe. Stanley Baldwin as prime minister stated in Parliament in March of 1935 that until a time came when the League was universal, Great Britain would remain the sole judge of her best interests in European Affairs. Austin Chamberlain, one of the leading Conservative Party policy makers, felt the League could never pretend to guarantee any nation protection from aggression. Yet Baldwin's government, because of public support for the League, could not press its true convictions upon the British people, and professions of faith in the League became a necessary routine for government officials.

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4 Charles L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940 (Chicago, 1955), p. 422.
5 Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCIC (1935), 47-48.
6 Ibid., p. 73.
7 Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France Between the Two Wars (New York, 1940), p. 323.
What these professions meant was adherence not to the League as such, but rather to the principle of collective security. If and when other League members failed to fulfill their obligations under the Covenant, Great Britain would judge herself free to abandon the League and decide upon an independent policy dictated by her national interests alone.¹⁸ The permanent and outstanding national interest at this time was the avoidance of war. On the day after the invasion of Ethiopia, Mussolini sent a note to both London and Paris assuring the two capitals that if Italy met no outside interference, the war in Africa would remain localized and could only spread to Europe if France and England wished it.⁹ Baldwin quite naturally received this information with satisfaction, since his government did not contemplate war.¹⁰ Unfortunately, British public opinion was set against Mussolini's action in Ethiopia, making it impossible for the English government to take a detached attitude toward the situation. Since it was necessary to adopt a pro-League stance, and because the League was basically a European

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¹⁹ The Times (London), October 5, 1935, p. 11.

¹⁰ Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCV (1935), 151.
institution, Baldwin reviewed British foreign policy toward Europe for 1935 and found it disconcerting.  

At the beginning of 1935 British statesmen foresaw no major difficulties arising out of the general European situation. The primary consideration at Whitehall would be reconciling Germany's demand for equality with the French desire for security.  

At the time the problem did not limit England's latitude in revising the Treaty of Versailles. Both Ramsay MacDonald, prime minister, and John Simon, foreign secretary, wanting to bring Germany back into a concert of European powers, adopted a conciliatory policy toward the question of treaty revision. The English government persuaded Paris to broaden its narrow interpretation of treaty restrictions on Germany, partially because the French had concluded their anti-German military alliance with Italy in January, 1935, and could afford limited conciliation for the sake of English friendship. Accordingly, an Anglo-French communique of February 3, 1935, sanctioned concessions to Berlin.  

Despite the general British feeling that it was

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desirable to come to an understanding with Germany, some officials felt that Germany remained a threat to future peace. Even peace-loving Ramsay MacDonald viewed Hitler's intentions with suspicion. Consequently, the British tendency to favor concessions and redress of German grievances was not pinned entirely upon ideas of equality and fairness. England could afford a policy of conciliation as long as Germany's strength lay below the danger line and as long as the combination of continental powers determined to control German resurgence was intact. After this, the general policy of Great Britain was the maintenance of peace and the avoidance of any new commitments in Europe.

The conditions of early 1935, however, did not remain static. On March 11 Germany formally announced the existence of an air force. Seven days later Hitler stated his decision to form a conscript army of thirty-six divisions, and on March 26 he personally informed Sir John Simon that the German air force was as large as that of England. British detachment based on the assumption of a strengthened but still harmless Germany quickly faded away as the extent of German rearmament daily became more obvious. Simultaneously,

16 Ibid., April 26, 1935, p. 16.
the English began to realize that Italy might desert the anti-German camp by embarking on a war against Ethiopia. The two factors upon which Great Britain had based her German policy at the beginning of the year now lay shattered. Germany's strength was either fast approaching, or had surpassed the danger point, and the possible diversion of Italian troops to Africa would seriously weaken the anti-German coalition.19

In July, 1935 the new British government, headed by Stanley Baldwin, anticipated the difficulty in attempting to deter Italy from attacking Ethiopia.20 This belief did not lessen British efforts to forestall the war before October 3 in the capitals of Europe nor did it lessen the serious consequences of the war when it finally began. Because Italy and Ethiopia were both members of the League of Nations, hostilities between the two states would entail League intervention—intervention that Great Britain was expected to lead, but that France with her valued Italian alliance was not likely to follow. It now came to the attention of British diplomats that a resurgent Germany would soon be viewing a League of Nations preoccupied with a war between two of its members. To make matters worse, conceivably the Italo-Ethiopian war could separate France and England by

reason of the attitude each adopted toward the Italian breach of the League Covenant. The German foreign office knew the French were not willing to fight for Ethiopia in order to uphold the League\textsuperscript{21} and that Great Britain was also unlikely to go to war for Geneva.\textsuperscript{22} Armed with this knowledge, Germany's position was extremely advantageous. Since it was Hitler's policy to try to separate the Western powers, the Italo-Ethiopian war promised to accomplish this end without direct German involvement. Mussolini would either stumble in Africa and weaken himself in Europe, or he would succeed in defying his allies within the League of Nations. Germany would win either way.

While the Germans held aloof from the crisis caused by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, the French and English took a hard, anxious look at Berlin. Baldwin, while he was not sure of immediate German intentions, felt the Germans to be a very real threat.\textsuperscript{23} One of the greatest fears in London was that with German war factories operating at peak production, Hitler might exploit any split between France, Italy, 


\textsuperscript{22}Geyr to Newrath, London, September 16, 1935, Ibid., p. 638.

and Great Britain to the point of war. The French possessed the more specific fear that Germany would take advantage of the situation to reoccupy the demilitarized zone of German territory within the Rhineland. Now Great Britain not only had to cope with her fears of Germany but also with the greater fear of her ally, France. Both of these considerations hindered England's search for a policy toward Italy, and the tendency to treat Mussolini with indulgence became a great temptation.

An additional factor in adopting any policy was the state of England's armed forces. Britain's ability to wage war had decreased every year since 1925, and the navy was at its lowest ebb in forty years. The likelihood of rapid re-armament seemed remote because of the widespread belief that the League could guarantee the peace of Europe and that a war was impossible. Under these circumstances the British public and many of its elected representatives looked with disdain upon additional expenditures to modernize the military forces within Great Britain. When, during the preceding March, the government introduced a bill to update and increase the armed forces, both Labour and Liberal members of

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Parliament opposed the measure on the grounds that modernization of the armed forces was unnecessary.27 As late as May 22 the Labour Party voted against a similar proposal, partly on the basis of a statement by Hitler that he loved peace.28 Regardless of the validity of these attitudes, Baldwin's government faced a dilemma caused by the widespread and sincere belief in the League and in peace. When the expected war between Italy and Ethiopia finally broke out in early October, it brought into focus all the British fears of military weakness and possible political isolation. Whatever course Great Britain decided to take, her immediate actions were determined by events at Geneva.

When the members of the League of Nations reassembled at Geneva on October 5, they immediately took up the reports of war between Italy and Ethiopia. On October 6 a committee was appointed to determine the nation guilty of aggression. This committee reported the following day that the Italian government had resorted to war against Ethiopia in disregard of its obligations under the League Covenant. The Council immediately adopted the committee's report and voted to apply sanctions against Italy.29 Three days later the League

Assembly appointed a coordination committee, representing the fifty nations that had voted to apply sanctions, for the implementation of the sanctions deemed necessary. This committee in turn worked through a smaller sub-committee of eighteen members, which worked out the actual sanctions and submitted them for approval. The committee of eighteen designed four proposals. The first was the immediate suspension of exports of war materials to either Italy or Ethiopia. Second, a proposal to prohibit all loans and credits to the Italian government or Italian firms. Third, the committee recommended stopping all imports whatever from Italy, and fourth, to place an embargo on certain exports to Italy. These four sanctions were scheduled to be implemented on November 18. It was hoped that each member of the League would accept all four proposals to increase their general effectiveness. The fact remained, however, that the sanctions bound only those nations which agreed to them on an individual basis. For example, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and Roumania, refused to accept the third sanction, which

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30 Of the fifty-four states present for the sanctions vote, only Italy voted against the implementation of sanctions and Albania, Austria, and Hungary abstained.


would have prohibited the importation of Italian goods into their countries, while agreeing to adopt the other three. 34

From the first it was evident that the members of the League of Nations did not intend to carry out their full obligations under the League Covenant. Under Article 16 of the League Charter, which had been invoked against Mussolini, each member of the League was to terminate all financial, commercial, and personal intercourse with Italy and prevent such intercourse between Rome and any other state, whether a member of the League or not. 35 This line of action was not taken for good reason. Since the execution of sanctions would cause economic hardship among the sanctionist states themselves, the League had decided as far back as 1921 to carry out sanctions by stages, so as to reach the desired effect with the minimum of loss to the states applying sanctions. 36

Despite the relative mildness of the initial sanctions, the League acted with an uncommon show of determination. The swiftness with which the League moved upset the Italians considerably. Aloisi, the Italian representative to the League, criticized the body for the speed with which sanctions were proposed and adopted. He pointed out, quite correctly,

that the League had taken seventeen months to declare Japan the aggressor nation when her troops invaded Manchuria in 1934 and had spent two years inquiring into the fighting between Bolivia and Paraguay. Yet, in the present situation Italy was condemned and sanctions agreed to within a month.\textsuperscript{37} In addition to declarations of innocence and justification, there began to arise from Rome a barrage of threats as to the consequences of applying sanctions to Italy. Mussolini declared that the Italian people would answer economic sanctions with discipline. To military sanctions the answer would be military measures; to acts of war, the recourse would be acts of war.\textsuperscript{38} In every possible way Italy proclaimed to the world in public and private that sanctions so deemed as acts of war by Italy, would mean war upon the sanctionist states.\textsuperscript{39}

There was no escaping the fact that for sanctions to be effective, enforcement would be necessary, and only Britain and France, as the two strongest League members, had the means of enforcement. Great Britain hesitated even to apply limited sanctions, lest they go too far before they could be safely stopped. Samuel Hoare welcomed the interval between


the condemnation of Italy on October 10 and the date sanctions would go into effect on November 18 to make an eleventh hour attempt at a settlement. An opportunity for the British to initiate a basis for a new settlement try came on November 2 at Geneva. After speeches of loyalty to the League by Hoare and Laval, the Belgian prime minister, Paul Van Zeeland, rose to move that France and Great Britain be entrusted to seek a solution to the Italian-Ethiopian war. This motion, which went unopposed in the Assembly, had been carefully worked out beforehand between Hoare, Laval, and Van Zeeland, and it gave Britain and France a mandate to continue negotiating for a settlement of the war. During this same session Walter Riddell, the Canadian delegate, proposed that the embargo on rubber and tin scheduled to become effective on the eighteenth be extended to other essential materials as soon as possible. The materials would be oil, iron, steel, coal, and coke. Since this proposal was an immediate economic threat to Mussolini, it was decided to table this

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40 Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCV, 32.
41 The Times (London), November 4, 1935, p. 12.
44 Furnia, The Diplomacy of Appeasement, p. 169.
resolution until the individual nations could be canvassed on their willingness to support such a move.45

Meanwhile, before Great Britain began to take action under the November 2 League mandate, a general election was held in Great Britain on November 14. In the election Baldwin desired several things from the British electorate. His government needed fresh support for the sanctionist approach Great Britain was taking at Geneva and also public approval for a policy of moderate rearmament. No doubt the feeling also existed that any criticism which might be incurred over and eventual settlement with Mussolini or a defaulting of British support of the League could be handled better after a general election than before.46 For these reasons, some public and some private, the Conservative Party took a platform for keeping the League as the cornerstone of British foreign policy to the English people.47 In light of the existence of a very strong following for the League among the British electorate, no reasonable English politician could fail to realize the expediency of professing adherence to League doctrine if he wished to remain in office. Baldwin realized that almost 97 per cent of twelve million English

46"Mr. Baldwin's Foreign Policy," The New Statesman and Nation, X (November, 1935), 800-801.
voters had expressed through the Peace Ballot a desire to back the League. The Conservative Party did not overlook this fact when taking their policies to the public,\textsuperscript{48} nor could they dismiss from their minds a movement called the "Council for Peace and Reconstruction." An innovation of Lloyd George, this organization worked through local committees to discredit any candidates who were not firm League supporters.\textsuperscript{49} With an organization such as this, the results of the Peace Ballot, and the general mood of the British electorate, adherence to the League was the only feasible policy.

The only campaign differences between the parties was over the principle of rearmament. The Labour Party, while campaigning on a platform of total commitment to the League, came out strongly against rearmament,\textsuperscript{50} while the Conservatives included in their election platform a program of moderate rearmament not calculated to alarm the public.\textsuperscript{51} Baldwin went all out to reassure the British public that his rearmament program was for the sake of international peace and not for national ends.\textsuperscript{52} He promised wholeheartedly that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCV, 82.}
\item \textit{Amery, My Political Life, III, 168-169.}
\item \textit{Dalton, The Fateful Years, p. 73.}
\item \textit{G. M. Young, Stanley Baldwin (London, 1952), p. 215.}
\item \textit{Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCV, 151-152.}
\end{itemize}
there would be no great amount of rearming and the measures undertaken would only be to fill the gaps in the defenses of the country. The prime minister stated that he was unwilling to be responsible for the government's future conduct, if the weaknesses in Great Britain's military services were not remedied by some modernization. Thus, the Conservative government appealed to those who desired peace and to those who wanted to see England begin preparing herself to better safeguard that peace. The election was an overwhelming victory for Baldwin and his party. Out of 615 possible seats in the House of Commons, the Conservatives returned the substantial majority of 431. Judging by the election results, the British government received its mandate for the dual policy of refitting the nation's armed forces while continuing to support the League of Nations. With the general election over, events at Geneva would soon determine if Baldwin and his party had assumed an election position contrary to their actual intentions.

Thus far at Geneva Great Britain and France led the other sanctionist states along the carefully plotted course of limited and cautiously applied sanctions. The situation became acute, however, when the Council scheduled a vote on Riddell's proposal to extend the exportation embargo list to

53 Ibid., p. 152.
include oil. The vote, set for November 29, caused British fears of war with Italy to soar. Eric Drummond, English ambassador to Rome, telegraphed:

In their present mood, both Mussolini and the Italian people are capable of committing suicide if this seems the only alternative to climbing down. Rome is full of rumors of an impending declaration of war on Great Britain. . . .

British fears were not unfounded. Mussolini had informed the world on more than one occasion that Italy would look on an extension of sanctions to include oil as a hostile act and would react accordingly. If the clash came at all, it would come on Italy's initiative and would occur in the Mediterranean. The English had, as a precautionary move, reinforced their Mediterranean fleet as early as September 13 with two battle cruisers and a destroyer squadron. Great Britain would fight if she were attacked, but this was a calamity that the British government was sworn to avert.

As the possibility of war over the oil sanctions grew stronger each day, it brought to English minds Hitler's warning that collective agreements do not prevent war but

55 Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 262.
58 Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCV, 29.
rather promote its extension. This bit of logic seemed about to be realized. Great Britain had endeavored during most of 1935 to keep the conflict between Rome and Addis Ababa from flaring into war; now the main preoccupation of English diplomats would be to contain the fighting to Africa. England, determined to keep out of war at all cost, had agreed with France as early as September 10 to rule out all military measures against Italy if Mussolini attacked Ethiopia. Nor would the English contemplate a naval blockade or the closure of the Suez Canal to Italian shipping. If Mussolini did not know of these agreements from his ally, Laval, he knew of them by October 21 from public statements by the British government. While Great Britain hoped war with Italy could be avoided, the possibility was too great to refrain from taking basic military precautions lest the contingency of war become a fact. The central problem now became the questionable support of the French.

When Italian threats of military retaliation over the question of adopting the oil sanctions grew in frequency, Great Britain sought the support of the French in case Mussolini did resort to war. In the beginning Laval was

60 Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, pp. 168-169.
evasive and refused to answer concisely British inquiries about French support. On October 9 the French premier reported that the reinforcement of the English fleet in the Mediterranean was an act outside the collective nature of the League and absolved France of common action if it caused war with Italy. Laval again refused on October 15 to reply definitely as to the position France would take if Italy launched an attack upon the British navy in the Mediterranean. Three days later, however, Laval finally gave his country's pledge to aid Great Britain in any possible attack on the British fleet. It was not until November 29 that the French government stiffened its resolve sufficiently to publicly announce that it would support Great Britain. On that date Laval informed Mussolini that an attack upon the British fleet in the Mediterranean would constitute a hostile act against a fellow member of the League and the French would be obliged to join in resisting such an act.

Even with French support assured, there was still the ever present possibility that Mussolini might commit some irrational act in the Mediterranean that would embroil Great Britain in an unwanted war. To help minimize this

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62 Young, Stanley Baldwin, p. 212.
63 Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 281.
64 Heald, Documents on International Affairs, 1935, II, 305-306.
possibility, the British foreign secretary informed Rome that: "Britain in no way desired destruction of Italian prosperity, of Fascism, or of Mussolini's personal position."\textsuperscript{66} The statement was, in effect, a plea to the Italian dictator to refrain from any action that would make British counter-action necessary. Meanwhile, the French were maneuvering for time. Laval informed the sanctions committee he could not be present for the oil vote meeting on November 29 because of governmental engagements in Paris and requested a postponement of the vote until sometime after December 10.\textsuperscript{67} Much to the relief of the British, the committee granted the French request for a postponement. This would allow British diplomats additional time to extricate themselves from the position of having to cast an expected affirmative vote for the oil sanctions and face probable war with the Italians.\textsuperscript{68} As soon as the delay of the oil vote was confirmed, the French and English scheduled a conference between their respective foreign ministers for December 7 in Paris. One last effort was to be made to bring an end to the Italian-Ethiopian war before France and England had to make their stand at Geneva.

\textsuperscript{67}The \textit{Times} (London), November 30, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{68}Great Britain, \textit{5 Parliamentary Debates} (Commons), CCCVII, 345.
CHAPTER IV

THE HOARE-LAVAL PLAN

On the afternoon of December 7, 1935, Sir Samuel Hoare, accompanied by Robert Vansittart, arrived in Paris to conduct talks with Pierre Laval. Their meeting, facilitated by the postponement of the vote at Geneva to extend sanctions to include oil, was scheduled to find some means of settlement for the Italio-Ethiopian war. Unless the English and French could stop the war at this juncture, the continuation of hostilities could only produce undesirable consequences for both countries, especially Great Britain.

Far worse than the eventuality of the destruction of Ethiopia was Britain's fear that by upholding the obligations placed on her by the League of Nations she would be drawn into a war with Italy. Consequently, Hoare carried with him into the Paris meeting two basic principles from which to proceed. Above all was the necessity of working out a settlement that would keep Great Britain out of a war with Italy and at the same time make the oil vote at Geneva unnecessary. Any plan designed at Paris that would be acceptable to both Rome and Addis Ababa would, of course, accommodate both these objectives. The acceptability of any possible peace proposals, however, would have to take second
place to the fact that a new peace attempt would create justification for delaying once again the oil sanctions vote at Geneva. Should the vote be called, it would force England to take her stand before the world organization and also the British public. The general election of November 14, which had swept the Conservative Party back into office, was fought and won on the issues of moderate rearmament and adherence to the League Covenant. An affirmative vote on the petroleum sanctions against Italy meant possible war, but a negative vote meant an abandonment of the League and repudiation of Baldwin's election pledges.

Even before the British foreign minister left for France, an air of defeatism and capitulation surrounded ranking governmental officials. Most realized that under no circumstances would Baldwin's government go to war for Ethiopia. In response to Robert Vansittart's question as to how long it would take to prepare the British public to accept a negotiated settlement of the war instead of increased sanctions on Italy, Rex Leeper, head of the foreign office news department, indicated that he felt it would take at least three weeks. Vansittart informed him that they only had three days. Immediately before Hoare's departure for France, Baldwin's only advice was: "By all means stop in Paris and

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2Colvin, Vansittart in Office, pp. 74-75.
push Laval as far as you can, but on no account get this
country into war." With this single stipulation placed on
him by the prime minister, Hoare embarked for Paris to carry
out Baldwin's instructions.

When Hoare and Vansittart arrived in Paris they were met
by George Clark, the British ambassador, and the three drove
at once to the Quai d'Orsay to meet Laval. They met twice,
first on December 7 from 5:30 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. and then on
December 8 from 10:30 A.M. until 6:30 P.M. During the meet-
ings Laval insisted that the oil sanctions would push
Mussolini into some desperate act and argued that another
effort at settlement was necessary before his government
could support such sanctions. Since the French foreign
minister was in daily contact with Rome, there was little
doubt that the proposals he had in mind were the minimum re-
quired to persuade the Italian dictator to quit the war.
When asked if French aid would be forthcoming in the event
of an attack on the English fleet, Laval's answer was yes;
but he added that French cooperation would depend upon a last
attempt to settle the issue. Laval's contentions were

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3 Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 178.
5 Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 179.
6 Peterson, Both Sides of the Curtain, p. 119.
7 Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 179.
logical, since all previous efforts to end the dispute had failed. He knew what it would take to placate Mussolini and realized that an effort with some chance of success must be undertaken before December 12 to prevent the oil sanctions vote at Geneva. Hoare was receptive to the French suggestions that would hopefully end the war, and on Sunday night, before leaving for a vacation in Switzerland, he and Laval issued a joint statement announcing that they had formulated a basis for the settlement of the Italian-Ethiopian dispute that was mutually satisfactory. Their satisfaction grew out of Laval's certainty that Italy would accept the plan and Hoare's assurance that Ethiopia would accept it. Both were convinced the League would applaud their efforts.

During the conference Laval seemingly held an advantageous position, thus forcing Hoare to concur in drafting the plan. In the meeting it fell within Hoare's prerogative, if he chose to exercise it, to confront the French with two choices. First, the choice of participating in the oil embargo or voting against it at Geneva. Second, the alternative of coming to the aid of England if she were attacked by Italy, or making a definite statement to the contrary. Had Hoare been adamant on these points, it would have been

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8 Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 300.
9 Laval, The Diary of Pierre Laval, p. 17.
France who would have had to choose between her Italian alliance and the League of Nations. This, nevertheless, was not the line taken by Hoare, and he willingly participated in drafting the plan to end the war. The French were gratified that the English government was actually in such close step with them in the matter. Hoare's basic idea to circumvent a clash with Italy and to keep Mussolini out of the German camp had made him extremely tolerant of the French position.  

The plan, as constructed by Hoare and Laval, consisted of two parts. The first proposal was entitled "Exchange of Territories," and the second, "Zone of Economic Expansion and Settlement." The first part of the plan allowed Italy to annex all the territory in Ethiopia which she was occupying up to that date. This included the eastern half of the Tigre province and all of the province of Danakil, both of which lay along a common border with Italian Eritrea in northeastern Ethiopia. In the southeastern area of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie would be asked to cede approximately half of Ogaden province, which would be added directly to Italian Somaliland. In return for these territorial cessions to Italy, Ethiopia would receive an outlet to the sea. This outlet would be formed preferably by Italy's cession of the port of Assab in Italian Eritrea and a strip of territory giving Ethiopia access to this port. In all, Italy would

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receive outright approximately 120,000 square miles of Ethiopian territory in exchange for the port of Assab and a narrow strip of land leading to it.12

In the second proposal for a zone of economic expansion and settlement Italy would enjoy exclusive rights to colonization and exploitation in an area of southern Ethiopia that encompassed another 120,000 square mile area. Within this zone Italy would enjoy exclusive economic rights administered by a privileged company which would assume the ownership of unoccupied territories and a monopoly on the exploitation of mines, forests, and other natural resources. In return for these economic concessions, the Italian trading company would be expected to contribute to the general development of the area and to devote a portion of its revenues for the social benefit of the native population. Political control in the zone would be exercised under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian emperor and by the services of a scheme of assistance drawn up by the League of Nations. Italy would take a predominant, but not an exclusive, share in these services, which would be directed by a principal adviser attached to the Ethiopian government. This adviser could be of Italian nationality and could operate in the capacity of assistant to a chief adviser who would be delegated by the League to assist Haile Selassie in administering the area. It was specified that

12 See map, Appendix, p.
the chief adviser could not be Italian, Ethiopian, English, or French, and his main duty would be to ensure the safety of Italians within the zone and the free development of their enterprises.\footnote{Great Britain, \textit{British and Foreign State Papers}, 1935, CXXXIX, 291-292.} The first part of the plan was in itself not unreasonable. The areas that the Hoare-Laval plan proposed that Ethiopia cede to Italy were practically worthless desert areas already in the hands of Italian troops. The second proposal for the zone of economic expansion, however, gave Italy virtual autonomy over a fertile upland region 600 miles wide and, in some places, 250 miles across.\footnote{\textit{The Times} (London), December 14, 1935, p. 12.}

On Sunday night as Hoare traveled to Switzerland, Maurice Peterson, foreign office expert on East African affairs who had been at the Paris conference, carried the peace proposals back to England. He took with him also a personal plea from Vansittart that the Cabinet in considering the plan should keep in mind the need for closing ranks with France and Italy against Germany.\footnote{Peterson, \textit{Both Sides of the Curtain}, p. 121.} Early Monday morning, December 9, Peterson delivered the plan to Baldwin, who then called the Cabinet to consider the proposals at 6:00 P.M. Almost simultaneously Baldwin learned that a rough outline of the Hoare-Laval draft was published in the Paris newspaper...
Echo de Paris. 16 Now that the plan was public knowledge, it was going to be difficult for the British government to reject it, in view of Hoare's role in the affair.

The leakage of the peace proposals by the French government gave added urgency to the British Cabinet meeting of December 9. Originally, Hoare and Laval had agreed that the proposals were to be kept secret until the parties to the dispute and the League had a chance to review them. 17 Laval, intentionally or otherwise, had now made any secrecy in the matter impossible by allowing the plan to reach the papers. When the Cabinet members assembled, most were astonished to discover the terms that Hoare had negotiated. 18 Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was the minister most opposed to the terms of the plan, even if repudiation of the agreement by the Cabinet meant the resignation of Samuel Hoare. 19 Even Stanley Baldwin and Anthony Eden felt that neither the League nor Ethiopia was likely to accept the provisions of the Hoare-Laval plan, but they were not prepared to reject the plan outright. 20 Failing to reach a decision Monday night, the Cabinet scheduled another meeting for the following day.

17 Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 303.
19 Ibid. 20 Eden, Facing the Dictators, pp. 301-302.
The Cabinet met at noon on December 10 and decided that there was no question of the British government's repudiating the proposals. The Cabinet also decided there would be no priority in the transmission of the plan to the intended parties. Hoare had agreed to a French suggestion that the plan be sent first to Mussolini. If the Duce accepted it, it would then be sent to the League of Nations as already accepted by the belligerent nation. Laval did not want Ethiopia to be informed of the agreement, because he feared Addis Ababa would reject the proposals in order to bring the oil sanctions into play. The British government, reluctant as they were to accepting the proposals that were now public, did not wish to compound the situation by showing favoritism to Italy in the transmission of the plan. Therefore, on the night of December 10, the plan was sent simultaneously to Rome and Addis Ababa.

As a result of the publication of the terms of the Hoare-Laval plan in the French press on December 9, Baldwin faced an inquiring House of Commons the following afternoon. Clement Attlee, leader of the Labour Party in the House, asked Baldwin to elaborate on the details of the Paris proposals.

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21 The Times (London), December 11, 1935, p. 16.
22 Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 181.
23 Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 305.
24 The Times (London), December 11, 1935, p. 16.
The prime minister refused this request on the grounds that the plan had not yet been submitted to Italy, Ethiopia, or the League, and it would be premature to disclose the proposals. Baldwin stated that the reports that had appeared in the Paris press were substantially incorrect and differed considerably from the original proposals. Eden pointed out during the debate that the agreements reached in Paris did not necessarily represent the final view of either the French or the English government. The plan, however, did represent suggestions which in the judgment of the Cabinet might enable Italy and Ethiopia to come together, the sole intention of the proposals. Eden was frank and asked the House of Commons to accept the fact that if the three parties to the dispute—Italy, Ethiopia, and the League—would accept the Hoare-Laval Plan as a basis for settlement, no one in the present British government would renounce it. There was actually little choice. A rejection of the plan would have returned Great Britain to the identical situation they were attempting to avoid—a choice on the oil sanctions vote, which was now only two days away.

Having now made the decision to accept the Hoare-Laval Plan, Great Britain implemented diplomatic action to help ensure the acceptance of Italy and Ethiopia. While the

25 Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCVII, 717.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
proposals which were sent to Rome and Addis Ababa on the night of December 10 were identical, the headings and accompanying notes were not. With the text to Rome was a message stating that if Mussolini's response to the plan was favorable, the French and English governments would take steps to modify the objective of the sanctions committee when it met on December 12.\textsuperscript{28} This message did not accompany the proposals to Addis Ababa. Instead, a note went to the British ambassador in Ethiopia, Sir Sidney Barton, that stated: "You should use your utmost influence to induce the Emperor to give a careful and favorable consideration to these proposals and on no account lightly to reject them."\textsuperscript{29} On December 11 Laval received an indication from the Italian ambassador to France, Signor Cerruti, that Mussolini's reaction to the Anglo-French plan would be favorable, but he needed additional time for study of the proposals.\textsuperscript{30} Obviously, the Italian dictator would not commit himself until he knew the effect the proposals would have on the sanctions question. An immediate reply was not forthcoming from Ethiopian quarters, because Haile Selassie was away from Addis Ababa directing the war.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28}Great Britain, \textit{British and Foreign State Papers, 1935}, CXXXIX, 289-290.

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 294.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{The Times} (London), December 12, 1935, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
Before any definite reactions from either Italy or Ethiopia were obtained, the League of Nations opened its session of December 12. Pierre Laval rose before the Committee of Eighteen and made a speech in which he enumerated the reasons for the recent Anglo-French talks in Paris and informed the committee that the results of these negotiations were now before the heads of state in Italy and Ethiopia. When Laval had finished, Anthony Eden spoke for the British viewpoint. He reminded the committee that on November 2 the Coordination Committee had welcomed the suggestion that Great Britain and France seek a solution to the war. While they had no specific mandate from the Coordination Committee, and while that committee had no power to give a mandate, Britain and France did possess their unanimous good will in the task. What, therefore, the representatives of France and England had been seeking to do in Paris was to work out proposals that might bring Italy and Ethiopia together to end the conflict. Eden went on to say that the proposals put before the combatants were neither definitive nor sacrosanct. They were only suggestions which would hopefully make possible the beginning of negotiations. If the League did not agree with these suggestions, England would make no complaint and, indeed, welcomed any ideas for their improvement. Eden closed with the comment that any final settlement, regardless of its

source, must be acceptable to the League as well as to both the countries engaged in the conflict. Eden's speech was interpreted as an invitation to the League Council to reject the proposed peace terms, which would be communicated to the entire League on December 13. When the English representative finished his speech, the Polish delegate on the Committee of Eighteen, Titus Komarnicki, moved that the oil sanctions vote be deferred until reactions to the Hoare-Laval Plan crystallized. The motion was accepted and Britain and France passed safely through the December 12 meeting without having to vote on the oil embargo.

The following day the Hoare-Laval Plan was formally presented to League members for their consideration. The note introducing the plan stated that the governments of France and England had worked out the proposals based on the deliberations of the Committee of Five the past September 18, which had been accepted by the Ethiopians. In this case, however, the Ethiopians were totally dissatisfied. Aside from the fact that Ethiopia was never invited to, nor informed of the Paris negotiations, as was Mussolini, Ethiopia resented the pressure placed on her by the British note which had

33 Ibid., pp. 296-297.
35 Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 308.
accompanied the Hoare-Laval draft to Addis Ababa urging its acceptance. The English note recommended that the Emperor accept the exchanges of territory between Italy and his country, while Britain and France had signified to Mussolini that they would use their influence at Addis Ababa and Geneva to ensure for Italy the zone of economic control and expansion in southern Ethiopia. The Ethiopian delegate, Wolde Mariam, also expressed his opinion that the conditions framed at Paris had not been inspired by the work of the Committee of Five, as Eden and Laval had alleged. True, Ethiopia had agreed to abide by the September recommendations, but the Paris proposals of December 7 and 8 went far beyond the bounds set by the September settlement. Mariam went as far as to accuse England and France of violating the League Covenant by recommending that a member state cede or exchange its territory under duress. According to Mariam, France and Great Britain could not legally advise a League member to agree to grant economic privileges in a part of its territory as suggested in the Italian zone for economic expansion. These recommendations, he claimed, were in violation of Article X of the Covenant, which bound all members of the League to preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of all members of the

37Great Britain, British and Foreign State Papers, 1935, CXXXIX, 291.
organization. The Ethiopian government did not declare the plan totally unacceptable at this time, but instead, circulated a message asking for a public debate on the proposals. In response, the League Council adopted a resolution to take up the Hoare-Laval Plan again on December 18, thus allowing time for further study and a reaction to the plan.  

Reaction was not long in coming, either at Geneva or in London. Any confidence that the League's members had in France and England as the two leading powers of the organization was badly shaken, when the terms of the Hoare-Laval Plan were made public on December 13. Member states exhibited shock that the terms of the peace effort went so far in offering Italy undue gains and wondered aloud what results the precedent of rewarding the aggressor would have on their future security within the League. Great Britain and France, seemingly the exponents of League determination, had thus far taken the lead in directing the sanctions offensive against Italy. Now, the remaining League states, who were suffering economic losses because of the sanctions program and had no direct interest in the dispute save upholding the League as a guarantee against aggression, saw Britain and

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38 For the full text of the Ethiopian repudiation see League of Nations, *Official Journal*, XVII, 42-47.
France propose an arrangement which gave Italy the territorial benefits of her aggression.\footnote{The Times (London), December 11, 1935, p. 16.}

Meanwhile in England, the condemnation of the Hoare-Laval Plan expressed by the general public reached unprecedented proportion. Baldwin found the press ablaze and his letterbox filled with letters of criticism.\footnote{Young, Stanley Baldwin, p. 217.} The general reaction of public opinion was indignation and shame that the British government had taken a leading role in a plan which rewarded aggression and betrayed the principles of the League of Nations. Many people expressed the opinion that Baldwin had won the November 14 election on an insincere platform calculated only to win votes.\footnote{Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 306.} Not only the form of the proposal came under attack, but also the fact that the plan was not first submitted to the League for a statement of views, but instead was first sent to Rome and Addis Ababa, and that pressure was immediately exerted on Haile Selassie to acquiesce to the plan.\footnote{Hoesch to Newrath, London, December 16, 1935, D.G.F.P., Series C, IV, 921.} Basically, most Englishmen felt the Hoare-Laval Plan was an act of disloyalty to the League. When the terms of that plan reached the public,
Baldwin found his newly returned government on the verge of falling. 45

While the terms of the Hoare-Laval Plan were being considered at Geneva and coming under increasing attack in Great Britain, Sir Samuel Hoare had been playing a passive role in events. The day after he arrived in Switzerland from the Paris conference with Laval, he fell while ice skating and broke his nose in several places. Due to the seriousness of the injury and his general physical condition, he was put to bed and could keep in touch with the political situation only through telephone conversations with Baldwin and by reading the newspapers. When he asked Baldwin if he should return to England because of the growing controversy over the peace suggestions, he was told that the situation was in hand and to continue his convalescence. 46 As it turned out the situation was not in hand, and on his own initiative, Hoare returned to England on December 16. Upon arriving, the foreign secretary learned two discouraging facts. Haile Selassie had declared from the battlefield that Ethiopia was not willing to facilitate any solution to the conflict with Italy based on the Franco-British proposals formed in Paris. 47 Following this information, Hoare was told by Austin Chamberlain that

46 Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 183.
although the Cabinet had at first agreed to accept the plan formulated with Laval, he now doubted if it could uphold that decision in the face of the public outcry.\textsuperscript{48} Chamberlain's prediction came true. On December 17 the Cabinet asked Hoare to announce that his support of the plan had been a mistake and to retract his recommendation of it. Instead, believing that the proposals had been necessary to save Ethiopia and the League, the foreign secretary resigned his post on the afternoon of December 18.\textsuperscript{49} Since at least a third of his fellow Cabinet members were threatening to resign unless the Paris peace plan was not repudiated,\textsuperscript{50} Hoare's resignation assured for the time being that the entire government would not fall.

Meanwhile, Baldwin had instructed Anthony Eden to withdraw British support of the Hoare-Laval Plan at Geneva. Before the League Council on December 18 both Eden and Pierre Laval renounced their respective governments' recommendation and support of the plan.\textsuperscript{51} Coinciding with the retraction of Anglo-French backing of the peace plan, Mussolini, in a speech at Pontica, rejected the proposals as unsuitable.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{48}Templewood, \textit{Nine Troubled Years}, p. 185.
\textsuperscript{49}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50}\textit{Manchester Guardian}, December 19, 1935, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{51}\textit{The Times} (London), December 19, 1935, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{52}Toynbee, \textit{Survey of International Affairs, 1935}, II, 311.
Despite all the criticism which the Hoare-Laval proposal had drawn against its terms and origin, it did have one positive result at Geneva; it at least saved France and Great Britain from having to vote one way or the other on the oil embargo. On December 19 the League Council shelved the Hoare-Laval Plan by stating it would not give an opinion on it at present. The same day the Committee of Eighteen resolved that the oil sanctions question would be taken up at a future date.  

While the League presided over the burial of the Hoare-Laval Plan and oil sanctions in Geneva, in London the British government attempted to explain its role in the affair. Baldwin and Hoare made their explanations before the British House of Commons on December 19. Baldwin readily admitted that acceptance of the plan had been a mistake, an error in judgment. He contended that he had initially accepted the proposals out of duty to an absent colleague. The Labour opposition, spearheaded by Clement Attlee countered Baldwin's frank admissions with the charge that the acceptance of the plan had not sprung from a mistake, but was rather something in which the government had made a definite and calculated decision.  

53 Ibid., pp. 311-312.  
54 Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCVII, 2033.  
55 Ibid., p. 2032.  
of Mussolini, conveyed to Hoare at Paris through Laval and that Baldwin was well aware of this fact when the Cabinet accepted the plan. To Attlee, no other logical explanation existed. Either the government on December 10 had agreed with the peace terms, or they had not. If they did not agree with the terms of the Hoare-Laval Plan at that time, why did they not reject it? If they did concur with the proposals, why was only Samuel Hoare resigning? When the open debate ended, Sir Samuel Hoare rose to make his personal explanation to the House.

Hoare began by relating to Parliament the main issue he had faced in the past few months—the avoidance of an isolated war between Italy and Great Britain. From all sides Hoare had received reports that Italy would regard an oil embargo as a military sanction and would have involved Great Britain in an unwanted war. Yet, the dangers of a continuation of the Italian-Ethiopian war were great enough to make worthwhile any attempt to bring it to a halt. While the proposals framed in Paris were not particularly equitable, they were the only practical basis for a compromise to end the Italian-Ethiopian war without rupturing Anglo-French solidarity. The alternatives were to remain neutral by not pressing the oil sanctions at Geneva and exposing the League as a sham, or face the possibility of war with Italy. Unfortunately,

\[57\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 2026.}\]
the British public were opposed to the first, and the British
government to the second. Hoare granted the fact that assure-
ances from the French government of support against an
Italian attack on Great Britain had been received, but the
manifestation of this support was nowhere to be found. Indeed,
not one League member had moved a single war machine to in-
sure England's not having to face Italy alone, nor were they
willing to do so. It was these considerations that convinced
Hoare that a negotiated compromise was essential.58

Admittedly, Samuel Hoare's endeavor to bring about an
end to the Italian-Ethiopian conflict was not an easy task.
When he arrived in Paris on December 7, he was a tired man
and, in fact, was on his way to a long overdue holiday in
Switzerland. Austin Chamberlain felt that only the foreign
minister's bad health had led him to agree to Laval's sug-
gestions.59 Doubtless this strain did not enhance Hoare's
effectiveness in dealing with Pierre Laval; however, there
were other factors which affected Hoare's decisions.60 There
was the attitude of Vansittart, who accompanied the foreign
secretary and was repeatedly reminding him of the German
threat and of the necessity of keeping Italy in line against
Hitler. Laval's close association with Mussolini and his

59 Hoesch to Newrath, London, December 16, 1935, D.G.F.P.,
Series C, IV, 923.
apparent grasp of the dictator's expectations must have had their influence during the negotiations. Especially urgent was the question of the oil vote scheduled to come before the League in only one week. Not to be forgotten was the possible tendency of Hoare to regard Ethiopia in an imperialistic light as Great Britain had done in the past. Weakened by all these forces, and genuinely fearing a European war, Hoare participated in formulating a plan to end the Italian-Ethiopian war.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Hoare-Laval Plan of December 1935 marked a significant event in British foreign policy between the two world wars. Although conceived in cooperation with France, the basic motives for the conception of the plan lie in a tangle of reasoning that can be traced directly to Great Britain.

During 1935 the English government did not lack reasons for the role it played in the abortive attempt to bring the Italo-Ethiopian war to an end. By far, the most significant explanation for British action was the fear of being drawn into a war with Italy, regardless of the circumstances. Nor did London want the responsibility of enforcing sanctions against Mussolini sponsored by the League of Nations. Accordingly, England cooperated in the sanctions campaign against Italy only to the point where the danger of war necessitated that punitive activity be stopped. Stanley Baldwin had decided in mid-October not to press for additional sanctions against Italy at Geneva, but rather to be satisfied with the relatively mild sanctions already decided upon by the League.

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2 Ibid., pp. 763-764.
To further avert the possibility of war with Italy, the British government informed Rome that England would never consider applying sanctions that in any way could be construed as military in nature and would limit herself solely to economic sanctions. The suggestion that Great Britain might close the Suez Canal to Italian shipping or blockade the seaports on the Italian peninsula were quickly discredited as action that London would never consider. In fact, Mussolini was assured by Sir Samuel Hoare that Great Britain in no way wished to weaken the Fascist regime in Rome, or in any way interfere in the internal affairs of Italy. Great Britain's only desire was to see a strong government in Italy. John Simon, who became secretary of state for home affairs in the June 7 Cabinet realignment, readily admitted that the downfall of Mussolini, because of some British action in the Mediterranean, was something that London would never contemplate. Thus, when the extension of sanctions to include oil made war with Italy an immediate possibility, the British quickly cooperated with the French in a set of proposals to escape this prospect.

3 Neurath to Hoesch, Berlin, October 1, 1935, Ibid., p. 674.


5 Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCVII (1935), 345-346.

Many factors accounted for this position by Baldwin's government. Foremost among the reasoning which lay behind the Hoare-Laval Plan was the lack of military willingness to confront the Italians in a naval war. No doubt Great Britain could have easily defeated the Italian navy in the Mediterranean, because the English fleet was two and a half times that of Italy.\textsuperscript{7} The British Admiralty, however, was reluctant to voice optimism over the chance of meeting the Italian navy within the confining area of the Mediterranean. Naval leaders were also aware of the potential dangers of a resurgent German navy and of the expansion of the Japanese in the Pacific. Sir Ernle Chatfield, chief of the British fleet, felt that if the sanctions policy led to war the English navy would be exposed to hostilities which were at best unattractive.\textsuperscript{8} Lord Monsell, first lord of the admiralty, held the opinion that to pit England's naval strength against Mussolini was committing the English navy to expend men and ships in an enterprise that was of secondary importance to Britain's interest in the North Atlantic and the Far East.\textsuperscript{9} From the Mediterranean Commander in Chief, Charles Forbes, came the report that he only had ammunition enough

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid.
for fifteen minutes of firing.\textsuperscript{10} There were six capital ships on the Mediterranean station, and the German threat in Europe and the Japanese threat in the Far East required that none of these be endangered, except in the vital interest of the British Empire.

Italy could be defeated, but the price would probably be high. Even the loss of a few capital ships would be dangerous if Germany and Japan made an exaggerated estimate of the extent of British losses.\textsuperscript{11} England could not afford to lose ships in solitary action, and the British government, knowing the weaknesses of her armed forces, would not risk an isolated war with Italy. The German and Japanese threats were too real to take the chance.

The British, however, supposedly would be supported by the French if a war broke out with Italy. But this support was questionable from the first. All year Pierre Laval had shown his reluctance to alienate his Italian allies or participate in any action that might sever Franco-Italian relations.\textsuperscript{12} Finally, in November, Laval did make known to London that French support against Italy was assured and informed Mussolini that hostile acts directed toward England

\textsuperscript{10}Vansittart, The Mist Procession, p. 544.
\textsuperscript{11}Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1935, II, 251.
\textsuperscript{12}Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 152.
would be considered hostility against France. Despite the French assurances and declarations, British diplomats held little hope that France would move in defense of the British navy. In the first place, French naval facilities in the Mediterranean were too small to accommodate the larger English ships, thus making it impossible for capital ships to put in for provisions, repair, or possibly, refuge. French naval experts informed the British Admiralty that it would take two weeks to mobilize the French navy for combat; yet the mobilization order was never given throughout the entire crisis. Even if the French were sincere in their promised support, the British navy would fight alone for at least two weeks. Certainly, the fears of the English government about French resolve in case of war were not unfounded and were kept in mind when England chose to support the Hoare-Laval Plan. During the height of the tensions the French ambassador to Germany, Andre Francois-Poncet, made the admission on December 12 that the French government would not go to war with Italy, even if the British were attacked. French hesitancy became added reason for England to evade the responsibility of acting alone to enforce League sanctions and going to war with Italy.

14 Manchester Guardian, December 17, 1935, p. 11.
15 Ibid.
During the negotiations in Paris which produced the Hoare-Laval Plan, the question of Germany was never far from the minds of the British and French representatives. The dilemma which drew Sir Samuel Hoare to Paris was whether or not it was better to defend against the growing German threat by sacrificing Ethiopia to Italy and keeping Mussolini within the anti-German front, or to back Ethiopia and deter Hitler's ambitions through a strong, effective League of Nations. Both courses were unattractive. The first could hardly be realized, because the British public was set against the Italian dictator gaining his ends in Ethiopia at the expense of the League Covenant. The second alternative was definitely out of the question from the British Cabinet's viewpoint. Any attempt to compromise between the two possible courses of action was to invite disastrous results. Yet, unwilling to make a decision, Great Britain adopted a compromise attitude which resulted in the Hoare-Laval Plan.

A compromise was not difficult for Samuel Hoare. He was convinced that the League members would not fight Italy; they were only prepared to see England, or England and France, fight Italy to protect the principles they were all sworn to uphold. Certain the League could not stop Italy except at England's expense, Hoare could hold no hope at all that the

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18 *Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), CCCVII (1935), 2009.
League would be able to stop any future German aggression.\textsuperscript{19} These views were used by Hoare and Vansittart to convince the British Cabinet to accept the Paris plan on December 10.\textsuperscript{20} Indeed, any set of proposals short of war with Italy, to the encouragement of Germany, would have been acceptable.

From the British standpoint, there were two idealistic ways to view the Nazi threat. The Times, under the editorship of Geoffrey Dawson, simply hoped Hitler would leave England alone and turn German energies against Communism on the continent. Opposing this view was the hope that somehow the German generals would keep Hitler subdued if England, France, and Italy could be kept in opposition to Germany.\textsuperscript{21} December, 1935, however, found the British foreign office with no time to entertain idealism. Vansittart apparently convinced his colleagues that the antiquated state of Britain's armed forces made it essential that time be gained in which to update England's military forces.\textsuperscript{22} The government of Stanley Baldwin had been returned to office in November on a platform of moderate rearmament, but clearly needed time to implement such a program. This being the case, it


\textsuperscript{20}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{21}Kingsley Martin, "British Foreign Policy in the Thirties," New Statesman, LXV (April, 1963), 632-634.

\textsuperscript{22}Robert Vansittart, Lessons of My Life (New York, 1943), p. 42.
became imperative to deprive Hitler of an ally in the person of Mussolini and to prevent for as long as possible any German aggression, before England was prepared. Obviously, a war with Italy would be directly counter to England's German policy at this time. To protect that policy, it was necessary for the British government to preserve the anti-German front through the Hoare-Laval proposals.

There was always the chance, of course, that Mussolini might come to terms, and the Paris proposals were based on this possibility. But failing that, the British government realized that it could logically exonerate itself of criticism by falling back on the failure of the League membership to support militarily the oil sanctions. Later, when Baldwin's government did come under severe condemnation for negotiating the Hoare-Laval Plan, this is exactly the line of defense adopted by British officials. Baldwin admitted that he personally did not like the proposals to which the foreign secretary had agreed in Paris, but reminded his critics that the plan was made only to bring the Italo-Ethiopian war to a halt, and to extricate England from isolation against Rome. Logically, Baldwin was on sure footing, but there was an element of deceit. Sir Samuel Hoare would never have been

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23 Ibid.
25 Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCCVII (1935), 2032.
dispatched to Paris to negotiate the dismemberment of Ethiopia had England been resolved to face the Italian challenge, either with or without League assistance. Now that the Paris plan was discredited, however, the absence of League aid became the justification for the plan's conception.  

It is difficult to believe that the British foreign secretary took any position at the Paris negotiations that was not in line with his government's wishes. The problem became that the formulation of the Paris peace proposals reminded many persons of the secret, backroom diplomacy of the nineteenth century, and only the inequality of the peace terms to Ethiopia received any public consideration. What Hoare had done, with the approval of London, was to attempt to preserve the unity of the anti-German front and to keep the League of Nations from collapsing in the face of the Italian-Ethiopian war.

The British public, in condemning the terms to which Haile Selassie was to acquiesce, were laboring under the assumption that the war would last long enough for sanctions to have their effect. Hence, the British people instantly disliked the terms of the plan that the press in Great Britain felt could not be won by Italy in ten years of warfare against

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27 Feiling, The Life of Neville Chamberlain, p. 275.
Ethiopia. General John Virgin, a mercenary, military advisor to the Emperor of Ethiopia, informed the English people that Italy could never win the war and that early Italian successes were due to the fact that the main body of the Ethiopian army had not yet been employed. The British government itself miscalculated the length of the war. Military opinion in most countries felt the war would be lengthy and allow time for sanctions to take their toll of the Italian war effort. It was true that the initial sanctions supported by Great Britain were mild, but given enough time they could assist in obtaining a settlement between Rome and Addis Ababa. Since the oil sanctions were untenable, the Hoare-Laval Plan would either succeed, or it would gain time for Britain to prepare to be better able to cope with the situation.

Had the peace proposals been kept secret, as they were intended, and had they been accepted by Mussolini, Baldwin's government might have attempted to present the plan to the League of Nations as an accomplished fact. Certainly, the pressure applied to Haile Selassie to accept the proposals did nothing to clear England of the charge of practicing

30 *Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, CCCXIII (1936), 1199.
imperialism in dealing with the dispute. In actuality, Great Britain from the onset of the problem had been willing to negotiate with Italy at the expense of Ethiopia and the principles of the League of Nations. The Hoare-Laval Plan was only the final act in a long series of bilateral agreements between Rome and London concerning Ethiopia, stretching back to 1906. Again, the Paris agreements were less a concession to the Italians than was the 1925 Anglo-Italian plan to divide the economic interests of Ethiopia among themselves. In that instance, however, the League was not as important to the English public, nor was the government in 1925 newly returned to office on promises to support the League. The Hoare-Laval Plan, viewed from the actions and tendencies of past British governments, seems not so much different from old line imperialism operating in an age for which it was unsuitable. Consequently, the tendency to fall back on traditional policy in dealing with foreign affairs aided Baldwin's government considerably in its decision to enact and accept the Hoare-Laval Plan.

Great Britain's participation in the Paris plan clearly indicates that London decided to default on its pledge to Geneva; to weigh the Italian-Ethiopian crisis on its own merits; and then narrowly define the vital self-interests of

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31 Ibid., CCCV (1935), 35.  
32 Ibid., CCCVII (1935), 2012.  
33 Furnia, *The Diplomacy of Appeasement*, pp. 146-147.
Great Britain. Publicly, the only possible official line was to profess belief in the League. Baldwin and his colleagues knew that to do otherwise would be to invite political extinction. The tragedy was that the British government did not have the courage to admit its true sentiments to the English people. While the Hoare-Laval Plan was based on logic and reasoning, it was, nevertheless, surrender. Ethiopia, the League, and also English prestige suffered at the hands of the proposals. The wisdom of this surrender, if it was based on the fear of Germany and Italy, is nowhere to be found in succeeding years of Conservative Party rule in England.

The feebleness of British action from the onset of the crisis and the subsequent abandonment of effective resistance to Italy's aggression through League sanctions came mainly from two considerations. The first was to treat the Italo-Ethiopian war on the basis of the existing balance of power and alliance system on the European continent. Secondly, after years of verbal adherence to the League of Nations and to the idea that Great Britain would prevent war by force if necessary, the fallacy of these noble sentiments was finally exposed by the Hoare-Laval proposals. England would do nothing to endanger what she deemed her national interests, unless these interests were in some way directly threatened.

34 Young, Stanley Baldwin, p. 173.
To justify the Anglo-French plan London always fell back on the reasoning that England could not and would not act alone against Italy. Thus, the absence of collective action became the justification for inaction.

Politically, the Hoare-Laval Plan was a failure. Strategically, it was a success. Sir Samuel Hoare, although forced to resign as foreign secretary to save Baldwin's government, had cooperated with Pierre Laval in a set of proposals to keep England at peace. That the plan was subsequently unacceptable to the parties to the dispute and to the League was regrettable, but the conditions that prevailed in both England and Europe made the Hoare-Laval Plan a necessity.
APPENDIX

THE HOARE-LAVAL PROPOSALS

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