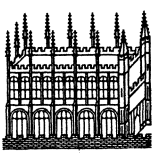
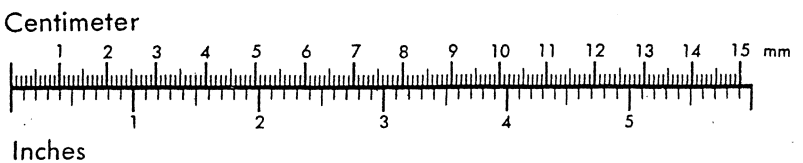
SCANNED BY

OXFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
IMAGING SERVICE

FROM THE COLLECTIONS IN

THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD





Images © Bodleian Library, University of Oxford

602332231M

Anglo-American Relations in the Period of the Chamberlain Premiership May 1937 - May 1940: The Relationship Between Naval Strategy and Foreign Policy.

Malcolm Hayden Murfett, New College.
D.Phil. in History, Trinity Term 1980.

Abstract

This thesis traces the development of Anglo-American naval relations throughout the Chamberlain premiership and the various attempts that were made during this period to extend and broaden the existing level of cooperation in the hope that it might be used for politico-strategic purposes. It deals in some depth with the background to and course of Eden's various initiatives to the Roosevelt Administration in the six months following the July 7th incident of 1937 and explains why his attempts to construct some form of naval partnership with the United States evoked such opposition from within the ranks of the British Government. In this connection, Chamberlain's rather ambivalent role in Anglo-American relations and the contrast between Eden and himself in their use of different methods, style and policy is closely examined in the first half of the thesis. After Eden's resignation and until appeasement became discredited, Anglo-American naval cooperation continued to be of a mainly technical rather than strategic nature. In the last few months of peace, however, the British again looked to the Americans for strategic assistance and tried unsuccessfully to encourage them to deploy their fleet in the Western Pacific in order to counter the threat of the Japanese in the Far East. The thesis goes on to explore the changing naval relationship between Britain and the United States after the outbreak of the Second World War and how it led to greater involvement between them on detailed day-to-day technical matters related to the war in Europe.

Although predominantly a study in the formation of British policy, the thesis has also drawn extensively on the official American records in an attempt to establish that a close link existed between naval strategy and foreign policy in Anglo-American relations during this period.

Anglo-American Relations in the Period of the Chamberlain Premiership May 1937 - May 1940: The Relationship Between Naval Strategy and Foreign Policy.

Malcolm Hayden Murfett, New College.
D.Phil. in History, Trinity Term 1980.

Abstract

Despite the fact that a wealth of literature exists on Anglo-American relations in the late inter-war period, the aspect of the interaction between naval strategy and foreign policy which is the subject of this thesis is not one which has been dealt with in detail so far. In essence, the thesis is concerned with tracing the development of Anglo-American naval relations throughout the Chamberlain premiership and the various attempts that were made during this period to extend and broaden the existing level of cooperation in the hope that it might be used for politico-strategic purposes. Because of the potential benefits which could accrue to British foreign policy as a result of close naval cooperation with the United States, a number of individuals in the British Government were prepared to go to great lengths and take calculated risks to secure the support of the Roosevelt Administration and put their own ideas on strategy into practice. In studying the many official and unofficial approaches that were made to the Americans on the subject of foreign and naval policy, the thesis illustrates the divisions which existed between leading members of the

British Government over the question of a Far Eastern naval strategy and the relative importance of Anglo-American relations, and reveals the lack of a truly consistent and realistic policy on both. In this connection, the somewhat ambivalent role performed by Chamberlain and the enthusiastic part played by Eden in searching for a common naval policy with the United States in the Far East offer an interesting and rewarding contrast in methods, style and policy and is the subject of a good deal of attention in the early chapters.

In the period after Eden's resignation, however, the British Government's attitudes to naval strategy and foreign policy were such that Anglo-American relations underwent a period of reappraisal. They only re-emerged to become once again an important element in British foreign policy once Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler and Mussolini began to falter. Faced with the possibility of a triple alliance of Germany, Italy and Japan being formed against them, and because of their overall military weakness, the British, aided and abetted by the French, attempted to ease their strategic dilemma by encouraging the Americans to deploy their fleet in the Western Pacific in order to counter the threat of the Japanese in the Far East. Although their efforts were unsuccessful, the scale of Britain's strategic problems was reduced at a stroke once the Japanese had become estranged from their Anti-Comintern partners and had announced their neutrality in September 1939. This act directly affected Anglo-American relations and gave them a different focus altogether in the early months of the war.

Although the three year period covered by this thesis is notable for the failures of many diplomatic initiatives, the Chamberlain premiership does witness a considerable advance in basic Anglo-American naval relations. This does not mean that all or even many of the schemes for naval cooperation were successfully implemented, but it does indicate that the two powers were prepared to discuss naval affairs in a way which, given the strength of congressional isolationism, is not without interest. The thesis examines the naval staff conversations which were held in 1938 and 1939 and assesses the significance of these and other schemes for technical and strategic cooperation which were proposed, and explains why most failed to be implemented. In a study of this nature close attention has been paid to the influence of leading figures in the Admiralty and Foreign Office in an effort to demonstrate how their opinions were crucial in shaping policy and the views of their minister. By the same token, the work of the Chiefs of Staff and the range of committees which gave advice to the Government on strategic matters have also been studied in detail and are shown to have been essential in forming policy on Anglo-American relations.

Although this thesis is predominantly concerned with British naval strategy and foreign policy, extensive use has been made of the official American records and in particular those belonging to the U.S. Navy Department and the State Department. In addition,

the records of the Joint Board and the Joint Planning Committee have proved to be of considerable importance in supplying detailed information on war planning and naval policy. Moreover, the reports of the U.S. Naval Attaché in London to the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington have helped to show the extent to which Anglo-American naval cooperation had reached during this period. However, apart from the personal papers of Leahy, Kirk and Yarnell, the leading American naval figures left little documentation relevant to this thesis.

It is a similar story with the Admiralty personnel; Backhouse, Pound, T.S.V. Phillips, Troup and Danckwerts left no personal papers at all, while others like Chatfield, Godfrey, Stanhope, Duff Cooper and Hoare left little of relevance to this enquiry. The absence of this material is regrettable. In practical terms it has meant placing more emphasis and reliance upon the material available in the Admiralty Papers at the Public Record Office. While generally helpful, the Admiralty files are by no means exhaustive and on some topics are clearly too selective, failing to provide adequate documentation and a far from discursive treatment of the subject material. This in turn has meant that the gaps in information which exist in these files have had to be filled from other sources, such as the Foreign Office, Treasury or War Office records, none of which are entirely satisfactory guides to naval thinking in Britain at this time.

The absence of personal papers which would help to shed light on policy making is not only confined to naval personnel. Neither Lindsay nor his Counsellor at the Washington Embassy, Victor Mallet, left any papers which could be of assistance and little is revealed by the records of Cranborne, Halifax, Lothian and Vansittart. Of all the collections, however, that belonging to Lord Avon is perhaps the most disappointing, giving few clues to his attitude on Anglo-American relations and particularly on the question of Far Eastern naval strategy. On the other hand, and as something of a compensation, Chamberlain's papers are reasonably informative, especially his letters to his two sisters Hilda and Ida.

By drawing extensively on the public records to supplement the material available in the private collections this thesis has attempted to fill an important gap caused by the lack of the officially commissioned biographies of Chamberlain and Eden. It is clear that both men performed major roles in the history of Anglo-American relations during this period, although their contribution to the actual development of naval cooperation between the two powers is relatively small. It is perhaps for this reason that historians have failed to examine this topic in the depth it deserves.

Apart from using the various collections of edited documents relating to British and American foreign policy, the President's political addresses and the relevant issues of Hansard, I have also read a large

amount of secondary source material and a number of unpublished theses for background information. While some have proved to be most useful and informative on various aspects of Anglo-American relations and Far Eastern strategy, none has provided a detailed account of the extent to which naval cooperation between Britain and the United States was sought by the British Government during the Chamberlain premiership. Even James Leutze's book Bargaining for Supremacy[1] only provides a sketchy and incomplete picture of the extent of naval cooperation in the period before Churchill took over as Prime Minister.

In preparing this thesis, I decided at an early stage that a chronological as opposed to thematic treatment would be the most appropriate method to use. The three year period has, therefore, been divided into nine main chapters, combining both narrative and analytical aspects of the topic. The importance of the early period in Anglo-American naval relations is reflected in the fact that approximately half the thesis is concerned with the first nine months of Chamberlain's premiership. Thereafter the chapters refer to periods of between six to eight months culminating with Chamberlain's resignation on 10 May 1940.

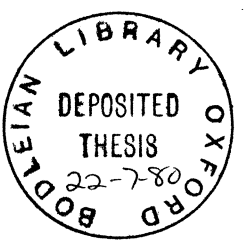
Whatever achievements were made in naval relations between the two countries in the Chamberlain years, however, many other far more potentially important schemes for strategic cooperation were either neglected or declined. In examining the proposals that were made,

[1] James Leutze, Bargaining for Supremacy (Univ. of N. Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1977).

this thesis reveals the factors which lay behind the catalogue of failures and wasted opportunities, all of which arguably give substance to Lindsay's pertinent observation in March 1937 that Anglo-American relations were fool-proof and were only in danger when attempts were made to improve them.[1]

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 247, A2378/38/45, 22 Mar. 1937, FO 371/20651.

Anglo-American Relations in the Period of the Chamberlain Premiership May 1937 - May 1940: The Relationship Between Naval Strategy and Foreign Policy.



Malcolm H. Murfett,
New College,
D.Phil. Thesis in History,
Trinity Term 1980.

To my Mother and to the memory of my late Father.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my gratitude to all those people who have helped me during my research on this thesis. In particular, I should like to thank Mr. Hogg of the Bodleian Library, the Archivist at Churchill College, Cambridge and the staff of the Public Record Office in London for their cooperation. My research in the United States was also made very congenial by the unfailingly helpful and considerate attitude of Sandy Smith, Dean Allard and Bill Emerson and their colleagues at the National Archives, Operational Naval Archives and F.D.R. Library respectively.

I should also like to record my appreciation to the Warden and Fellows of New College for making my years at Oxford so enjoyable and in particular to Professor H.G. Nicholas and Sir Christopher Cox, G.C.M.G., for their help and guidance.

I am well aware, however, that I owe most to my supervisor, Professor Norman H. Gibbs of All Souls College, for devoting such a lot of time and effort to my work. His constructive advice and criticism has been an invaluable source of assistance to me. I could not have wished for a better supervisor.

My special thanks go to my wife Ulrike who not only supported and encouraged me throughout but also made it possible for me to work at home despite the potentially disruptive nature of our small daughter Marianne.

Table of Contents

page

Acknowledgments i

Table of Contents ii

Abbreviations iii

Introduction v

Chapter One: Taking on Britain's Strategic Problems: The Chamberlain Government and the Imperial Conference (May - June 1937) . 1

Chapter Two: Early Initiatives (July - Oct. 1937) .. 29

Chapter Three: Preparing to Take a Firm Stand in the Far East (Nov. - Dec. 1937) 67

Chapter Four: The Aftermath of the Panay Incident (Dec. 1937) 96

Chapter Five: Inconsistency and Disappointment (Jan. - Feb. 1938) 129

Chapter Six: Caution rather than Experimentation (Feb. - Sept. 1938) 170

Chapter Seven: Reasserting the Strategic Value of the United States (Oct. 1938 - March 1939) 204

Chapter Eight: The Last Few Months of Peace (March - Aug. 1939) 249

Chapter Nine : The Changing Face of Anglo-American Relations (Sept. 1939 - May 1940) 320

Conclusion 358

Bibliography 365

Abbreviations

A.C.N.S.	Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff.
Adm	Admiralty
AFC	Anglo-French Staff Conversations
Alusna	Naval Attaché, London.
Cab	Cabinet
CHT	Chatfield
C.I.D.	Committee of Imperial Defence.
Com Nav Eu	Commander of Naval Forces in Europe
C.O.S.	Chiefs of Staff
C.P.	Cabinet Paper
D.B.F.P.	Documents on British Foreign Policy
D.C.N.S.	Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff
D.N.I.	Director of Naval Intelligence
D.O.	Dominions Office
D. of P.	Director of Plans
D. of T.D.	Director of Tactical Division
DP(P)	Defence Plans (Policy) Committee
DRC	Defence Requirements Committee
E(P.D.)	Empire (Principal Delegates)
FO	Foreign Office
FP(36)	Foreign Policy Committee of the Cabinet.
F.R.U.S.	Foreign Relations of the United States
Hansard	Parliamentary Debates
J.B.	Joint Board
N.I.D.	Naval Intelligence Division

Op.Nav.	Chief of Naval Operations.
PAS(S)	Principal Assistant Secretary (Supply)
P.D.	Plans Division.
Prem.	Prime Minister's Office.
PSF	President's Secretary's File.
SAC	Strategic Appreciation Committee
T	Treasury
WO	War Office

Introduction

The United States responded to the growing and substantial threat to world peace posed by Germany, Italy and Japan by bringing their Neutrality Act into law on 1 May 1937. Although it undoubtedly expressed the wish of the American nation as a whole to avoid entanglement in European affairs and involvement in a future war, the neutrality legislation contained certain provisions which the British Government deeply regretted. By placing a total prohibition on arms supplies from the United States, for instance, the Americans were in practice denying to those nations who had not been stockpiling weapons and who were the victims of aggression, the opportunity of making up their deficiencies in arms and war materials from this source. The British also believed that by failing to provide the President with the opportunity of differentiating between the aggressor and its victim the legislation in its existing form helped those nations who wished to resort to aggression and penalised those who sought to maintain peace. In response to a message he had received in February 1937, Chamberlain had written to Henry Morgenthau, the United States Secretary of the Treasury, at the end of March stating the British Government's belief that the greatest contribution the Americans could make to the preservation

of world peace would be for them to amend their neutrality legislation at the earliest opportunity.[1] Bearing in mind the strength of congressional isolationism, however, the chances of securing such an amendment were minimal. Nonetheless, this was an occasion to repeat Britain's dissatisfaction with the legislation and Chamberlain did not waste it.

If little could be done to alter the Neutrality Act, the British Government were clearly anxious to improve other aspects of Anglo-American relations as Chamberlain's letter indicated. He pointed out that his Government would be interested in anything which would help to stabilise the situation in the Far East and safeguard the British against the threat of trouble occurring both there and in Europe simultaneously. Cordell Hull's reply, which the President had approved, was handed to Sir Ronald Lindsay, the British Ambassador in Washington, on 1 June. It offered little hope of constructive cooperation on foreign policy issues and particularly discouraged any speculation about the possibility of arranging a special bilateral or trilateral agreement on the Far East by repeating that such agreements would be contrary to the traditional

[1] For details of the Chamberlain-Morgenthau correspondence see Prem 1/261. It is clear from this file that Eden was responsible for drafting much of the text of the message sent in March 1937 referring to the U.S. neutrality legislation.

policy of the United States.[1] As a restatement of American policy Hull's discursive memo was clearly attuned to the neutrality legislation and implied that Chamberlain's Government would have to do as their predecessors had done and frame their policy on the basis that they could not rely upon the direct assistance, or even necessarily the moral support of the United States to further their objectives. This did not mean, as this thesis will show, that the British merely accepted the inevitable and did not bother to try to change the mind of the Roosevelt Administration on matters of foreign policy. On the contrary, there is abundant evidence to demonstrate that repeated attempts were made by members of the British Government during the period of Chamberlain's premiership to induce the Americans to broaden and extend the existing range of naval cooperation between the two countries in the hope that it might be used for politico-strategic purposes.

While the British accepted that any joint or parallel cooperation with the Americans in Europe was ruled out, the same could not be said of the Far East. This was an area of traditional American interest and involvement and one which, despite their isolationist mentality, could still engage their closest attention. Apart from being responsible for insisting upon the

[1] For the full text of the memo by Department of State to British Embassy, Washington, see Foreign Relations of the United States (Dept. of State, Vol.1937, i, 1954), pp.102-106.

abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1922, the United States had attempted within the framework of the Washington Treaties to regulate matters throughout the Pacific region and control the extent of naval disarmament. Subsequently in 1930 at the London Naval Conference and again in 1936 they had assumed a principal role with the British in laying down the qualitative and quantitative restrictions for new naval construction upon the major sea-based powers. Their plans for ensuring stability within the Far East had, however, been disrupted and endangered by the action of the Japanese in seizing Manchuria, followed by their withdrawal from and then rejection of the terms of the London Naval Treaty of 1936. In addition, the growing military assertiveness of the Japanese, their willingness to form an Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany and the current poor state of Sino-Japanese relations supplied evidence for the belief that it would not be too long before the Far East was plunged once again into a state of crisis.[1]

Whatever complications unrest in the Pacific would

[1] In 1928 a joint army and navy war plan was devised for use against the Japanese. Codenamed Orange it assumed that a war would be precipitated by a Japanese attack on American possessions and interests in the Far East, as for example in Guam and the Philippines. The Orange plan anticipated that the U.S. Fleet would be able to maintain command of the Eastern Pacific and permit them to hold the line from Alaska-Hawaii-Panama with the fleet operating westward from Pearl Harbor.
National Archives, Washington, D.C., Joint Board File 325, Serial 280.

cause for American foreign policy, it was the British who would be the hardest hit. If the Japanese chose to embark upon hostilities in the Far East, the British would be obliged to defend their possessions in the area and this would almost certainly entail the despatch of a capital ship fleet from Home or Mediterranean waters to Singapore. Since this could not be done without incurring grave risk to their position in Europe, the British were to look to the United States increasingly in the following months for assistance in easing their naval burden and strategic dilemma.

It is with the search for a common naval policy in the Far East that this thesis is largely concerned. In exploring the efforts made by leading members of the British Government to construct a naval partnership with the Americans, the question of the extent to which naval strategy could be said to have affected foreign policy is closely examined. In studying the impact of key personalities upon policy making, special attention will naturally be paid to the role performed throughout the period by the Prime Minister. Chamberlain began his premiership on 28 May 1937 at a time when Anglo-American relations were at their most productive and potentially rewarding for many years.[1] This thesis will show just

[1] Despite the improvement on economic and naval questions, it should not be forgotten that the United States Navy still possessed a war plan for use against the British. It had been devised in the 1920's on the basis that war could develop from fierce competition between them for overseas trade. In 1936 the plan, though largely obsolete, was retained as the planners (cont.)

what use his Government were able to make of the start they had been given by Baldwin's Administration and why their efforts to obtain a more comprehensive agreement on naval and foreign policy with the United States failed so regularly until war came and entirely changed the focus and direction of the relationship. Ambassador Lindsay had warned the British Government in March 1937 that they should adopt a realistic attitude at all times in their dealings with the Americans and avoid making the mistake of either becoming over-enthusiastic or responding in an aloof and standoffish manner.[1] This thesis will attempt to show the extent to which the leading members of Chamberlain's Cabinet paid attention to this advice and why it was so often ignored.

(cont.)
felt it still had some credence. It was only in March 1938 that it was finally scrapped.
National Archives, Joint Army and Navy War Plan Red, Rg.No.407, A6 docs.428-431, Boxes 116-117.

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 247, A 2378/38/45, 22 Mar. 1937, FO 371/20651.

Chapter One: Taking on Britain's Strategic Problems: The Chamberlain Government and the Imperial Conference (May - June 1937)

Being a maritime nation with world-wide interests and territorial obligations, Britain had relied extensively in the past upon the strength of her navy to support her foreign policy. In the immediate post-war period, however, the old two power standard upon which the naval arm of the services had been formerly based was no longer maintained and instead, and largely as the result of the Washington Treaty, the British had publicly adopted a one power standard in 1925. Once the honeymoon of the Locarno period had been rudely shattered and the international situation had grown more threatening, the British had come to the conclusion in 1932 that a safer naval standard was necessary. Apart from the menacing presence of Japan in the Far East, the British were forced by the rebuilding of the French and Italian Navies to consider providing an increased level of cover against the possibility of a future threat to their interests being posed in two naval theatres simultaneously. It was proposed, therefore, that the navy should be of sufficient size to enable a 'deterrent force' to be retained in European waters to prevent its vital home terminal areas being commanded by the strongest European naval power, while adopting a defensive position in the Far East at the same time.

Within three years the situation in Europe had become

such that the Defence Requirements Sub Committee, seeing danger in working to the 1932 level, were to recommend a new standard of naval strength. This was defined as enabling the British to place a fleet in the Far East fully adequate to act on the defensive and to serve as a strong deterrent against any threat to their interests in that part of the globe, while maintaining in all circumstances in Home waters a force able to meet the requirements of a war with Germany at the same time. Despite the fact that the Sub Committee had emphasised the difficulty of conducting naval warfare against highly efficient enemies in two widely separated theatres, the British Government had not seen fit to approve the adoption of the new standard.

Although an increased rate of naval rearmament had been agreed upon, and the building programmes for 1936 and 1937 approximated to that of the new standard, the Admiralty recognised that this would not continue to be sufficient in the future unless the Government gave its approval to the new standard. In a paper prepared in April 1937 the Admiralty pointed out the dire consequences which would follow the non-implementation of this standard.

> When the capital ships now building in Europe are completed, it would not be possible, on our existing standard of naval strength, to safeguard the Empire in the Far East if already engaged in war in Europe; even with Germany limited to 35 per cent of our own strength, we could never take the risk of despatching to the Far East a sufficient fleet to act as a deterrent to Japanese aggression. The Defence Requirements Sub-Committee stated, moreover, that "it would be suicidal folly to blind our eyes to the possibility of a simultaneous, or practically

simultaneous, threat on both fronts."[1]

In other words, the Admiralty were suggesting that the foundation of Britain's system of imperial defence, which was based on the ability to send the main fleet to any particular area, was threatened unless a substantially increased rate of naval construction was approved by the Government to enable the navy to fulfil its commitments and tasks throughout the world. After examining the strategical problems involved by the acceptance of the new standard, the Admiralty had concluded that the navy would need to be increased significantly. This would entail building appreciably more cruisers, destroyers and submarines, apart from adding 5 new capital ships to the existing force of 15 and almost trebling the number of operational aircraft carriers.[2] Dramatic though these figures were, the Naval Staff warned that the political formula used by the Defence Requirements Sub Committee had taken no account of a possibly hostile Italy. If an allowance had to be made for Italy becoming a potential enemy in addition to Germany and Japan, Britain's naval strength would need either to be still further increased or supplemented by a naval combination with another power.[3]

1 Admiralty Memorandum "A New Standard of Naval Strength", 26 April 1937, DP(P)3, para.10, Cab 16/182.

2 DP(P)3, para.21, Cab 16/182.

3 At the 295th meeting of the C.I.D. on 1 July 1937, Eden suggested that Italy could not be regarded as a reliable friend and must for an indefinite period be regarded as a possible enemy. This recommendation was formally approved by the C.I.D. at its next meeting on 5 July. For the minutes of both C.I.D. meetings see Cab 2/6.

Apart from the staggering cost involved in building, equipping and maintaining the new standard fleet, it would take several years before the navy could reach the required level of security adduced by the Admiralty. Before this could be achieved, however, the disparity between Britain's naval needs and her actual forces would grow larger in the short term. This point had been made clear by the Chiefs of Staff in their Review of Imperial Defence issued only two months before. In portraying a stark and forlorn picture of Britain's ability to carry out her duties of defending the Commonwealth from external threats, the Chiefs of Staff earned the wrath of those who, like Chamberlain, thought it expedient not to form too pessimistic a conclusion, as it could lead to trouble with the dominions whose representatives would be coming to London for the Imperial Conference due to begin in May.[1] In their much criticised report, the Chiefs of Staff pointed out that of Britain's total of fifteen capital ships three would be undergoing modernisation until the middle of 1939.[2] This meant that if hostilities occurred in the Far East during this interim period the British would only be able to send a fleet to Singapore approximately equal to that of Japan. Although only possessing 9 capital ships Japan's naval position vis-a-vis Britain would be improved by operating relatively close to her home resources. This

[1] C.I.D. 288th meeting, Secret, 11 Feb. 1937, Cab 2/6(2).
[2] COS 560, Review of Imperial Defence, para. 56, 22 Feb. 1937, Cab 24/268.

was assessed by the Naval Staff as being worth an equivalent of two capital ships, since at an average moment the British could not rely on less than two ships being absent. Moreover, the Admiralty considered that in order to accomplish its defensive and deterrent role successfully the British capital ship force should be of such strength that Japan's chances of obtaining victory in a fleet action would be so slight that she would not seek one. It was believed that such a condition would be achieved if at its average moment the British force was numerically inferior by only one capital ship to that of the full quota of Japanese battleships, i.e., 8 to 9. Assuming that the British were forced to send such a fleet out to the east, the Singapore base itself, delayed by the cancellations and limitations of previous Administrations, would not be completed and ready for active service until early 1938.[1] Even then its limited capacity was such that it was debatable whether it could handle large repairs as would be necessary if a number of ships were damaged in action. In fact, when an allowance of two capital ships was made for these restricted repair facilities, it was evident that instead of having to supply eight capital ships the British would need to have a total of ten in the Far East to perform their specific functions adequately.

[1] Although it would be opened in February 1938, it was estimated that the Singapore base would not be fully operational for over a year. The Chiefs of Staff had suggested 1 April 1939 as a likely date but this was subsequently revised and a further delay was anticipated.

By the same token, it was regarded as being essential to establish at all times an absolute superiority of at least three capital ships over the new German Navy. Consequently, in 1939 when the Germans were expected to have the equivalent of five capital ships in active service, the British would need to retain at least eight capital ships in Home waters. Complications arose, however, because of the tonnage clause in the 1935 Naval Agreement which gave Germany permission to build up to six capital ships when the British force was fifteen. This would in turn mean that the British would need to keep nine capital ships in Home waters and have another ten reserved for action, if necessary, in the Far East. But a total of nineteen capital ships would allow the Germans to build a seventh ship themselves and so, according to the Admiralty, a force of twenty was needed by Britain for a unilateral defence of her interests in both Home waters and the Far East.[1]

Despite the fact that its mere existence would not solve many of the problems associated with an active policy east of Suez, the value of the Singapore base was evident. Without it, the nearest first class naval base to the Far East which the British could use was at Malta in the Mediterranean. Whatever its shortcomings were, the Singapore base could be reinforced during an emergency and so help to prevent the fall of the island to a sea-

[1] Appendix to Enclosure, DP(P)3, paras.6-12, Cab 16/182.

borne attack from the Japanese. It was considered that its capture would enable the Japanese to cut the trading links of the Commonwealth and expose both the Indian sub-continent and the Australasian dominions to attack and future threat of invasion. Without a large British force based permanently in the area, however, the problem of defending Singapore was made much more complicated. Moreover, in the absence of the fleet, the effectiveness of establishing a deterrent to Japan from embarking upon a southward offensive was also considerably reduced. Apart from the possibility of receiving aid from the dominions, the British had few other options which they could take up. An alliance with France, for example, would neither ease her naval problems in the Far East, nor necessarily lead to a reduction in her naval strength in Home waters. Instead the value of such an alliance would be that of serving as a deterrent to Italian ambitions in the Mediterranean. As far as rendering practical assistance in the Far East was concerned, an agreement with the United States under which they would increase their capital ship fleet in the area would have been invaluable to Britain by taking the pressure of her. It could have led directly to a reduction in the strength of the British Fleet that would need to be sent to the Far East and its mere presence could have been a most useful deterrent to any further bouts of unprovoked aggression on behalf of the Japanese. Although the Chiefs of Staff thought this possibility so unlikely that they did not even mention it in their review, Eden was to go to great lengths in the

next few months in order to obtain the consent of the Americans to a more active role and presence in the Far East. It was clear that for him the strategic argument was the most important consideration and was worth the effort and the rebuffs his overtures would receive, if in the end he could obtain such an agreement. Attractive though the idea of American support undoubtedly was, few felt that it was remotely possible. Most military and naval experts agreed with the politicians, diplomats and civil servants that it was unrealistic to expect such aid at this time.

For these reasons the possibility of a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was mentioned and canvassed actively as the most effective alternative to sending the fleet to the Far East in time of trouble. Its principal attraction lay in obviating the need to send the fleet in the first instance. It would be hoped that such an agreement with the Japanese would restrain them from their worst excesses and certainly prevent any threat to British interests from being realised. In preparing their paper for the Defence Plans (Policy) Sub Committee the Naval Staff had come to the conclusion that only a revival of this alliance would justify the British in relating the size of their navy to their European responsibilities. In other words, the new standard fleet would not be necessary if the alliance existed. Citing the words of Sir Edward Grey in a Commons speech in 1912, the Admiralty paper stated:

> When you get further afield into other parts of the world it is a very different matter; then foreign policy and naval strategy do and must depend upon each other to a large extent. Take the question of the Far East. Of course, the relation between the Japanese Alliance and naval strategy is a most intimate one. I should like to say this about the Japanese Alliance . . . In the last few years, while we have been in office . . . the Japanese Alliance has worked nothing but good.[1]

Nonetheless, the Admiralty saw little chance of securing such an alliance. They thought that the most that could be expected was some form of "gentleman's agreement" analogous to that recently concluded with Italy, but which would not justify anything approaching the reductions in naval strength that might result from an alliance, since it could never be relied upon to withstand the stress of war in Europe. They believed that the temptation would be too great for the Japanese to resist and result in their exploiting the war in Europe to further their ends in the Far East at Britain's expense.[2] What strategic merits an Anglo-Japanese Alliance could be said to have had, however, were offset to a large extent by other considerations as Sir Alexander Cadogan, the Deputy Under Secretary of State, pointed out in a minute on 6 May 1937.

> It maybe that in no circumstances could we count on any assistance from the U.S. But by an alliance with Japan we should forfeit all chance of it, and it seems to me that that has to be weighed in the balance against the chances of securing the assistance or at least the neutrality of a very undependable ally in Japan.[3]

[1] Sir Edward Grey's speech in House of Commons, 10 July 1912, Hansard, Vol.40, pp.1991-1992, in DP(P)3, para.33, Cab 16/182.

[2] DP(P)3, para.34, Cab 16/182.

[3] Minute by Sir Alexander Cadogan, A5459/6/45, 6 May 1937, FO 371/20649.

In the absence of such an alliance, and with little imminent likelihood of American assistance in the Pacific, the possibility of sending a capital ship fleet out east remained a most important feature of British policy. According to the Chiefs of Staff the security of the United Kingdom and of Singapore would be the keystones on which the survival of the British Commonwealth would depend. As such no anxieties or risks connected with British interests in the Mediterranean could be allowed to interfere with the despatch of a fleet to the Far East.[1] Chatfield was to point out in committee on 1 June that he believed even if the Mediterranean position was lost it could be recovered, whereas if the British lost their position in the Pacific it was doubtful whether it could ever be recovered. He repeated that the basis of British strategy lay in the establishment of their fleet at Singapore at the earliest possible moment after the outbreak of hostilities and it was, therefore, of paramount importance that the Singapore base should be available on the arrival of the fleet.[2]

Vital though the defence of Singapore would be to Britain, her ability to send a large number of vessels to the Far East under all circumstances was already the subject of much discussion. In his notes for a speech he

[1] COS Review, C.I.D. 1305B (Revise), paras.79-81, 22 Feb. 1937, (also COS 560) Cab 4/25.

[2] COS 209th meeting, 1 June 1937, Cab 53/7.

was to deliver in Cabinet on this issue, Sir Samuel Hoare, the First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote of the role he expected to play in the forthcoming Imperial Conference scheduled for May 1937.

> I suggest that on no account should I say anything that would imply that we shall not have a fleet capable of action in the East as well as in the west, but that I should emphasise the almost intolerable strain that such a fleet imposes upon us, point out that for the present we are almost entirely occupied with replacement, and leave them under the impression that any New Standard must inevitably depend on their fuller and further co-operation (e.g. more cruisers and destroyers).[1]

Hoare was implying that though Britain might feel the need for a new standard fleet she could scarcely afford the capital outlay necessary for the construction, supply and maintenance programme which it would entail. This was one of the main reasons why the Admiralty had welcomed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and had done so much to persuade the Americans and Japanese particularly to agree on the need for restraint in naval building and acceptance of the revised London Treaty of 1936. Japan's unwillingness to accept this Treaty's provisions and any limitations on her naval strength could not be ignored by the British and plans for keeping pace with the rate of construction achieved by the Japanese had thus been formulated. The Admiralty had suggested that the existing DRC standard fleet did not go far enough in providing a navy

[1] Cambridge University Library, (Templewood Papers), Notes for Cabinet Speech, Mar.-Apr. 1937, IX 2.

necessary to undertake its heavy responsibilities in two oceans simultaneously. However, the need for financial restraint was such that the Treasury were to complain that the Admiralty's recommendations would prove to be too expensive to implement over the next few years. It was not only the Treasury who had doubts about British naval policy. Hoare's papers reveal that Sir Thomas Inskip, the Minister for Coordination of Defence and Chairman of the Committee of Imperial Defence, believed that Britain was manifestly incapable of maintaining her position in the Far East.[1] Malcolm MacDonald, the Secretary of the Dominions, has admitted subsequently that the majority of his ministerial colleagues felt similarly.[2] Nevertheless, the official line to be taken at the Imperial Conference as recommended by the Defence Plans (Policy) Sub Committee at its second meeting on 11 May was not to adopt a negative attitude and say it was impossible for the navy to implement British policy in the Far East, as this would almost inevitably lead to the dominions abandoning the idea of imperial defence and concentrating on local defence measures. By the same token it was thought to be equally wrong to let the dominions think that there was no question of Britain's ability to defend her interests in the Far East, irrespective of their cooperation, since that would also lead

[1] Templewood Papers, IX 3.
[2] Interview with Malcolm MacDonald, London, 10 Oct. 1978.

to their contenting themselves with local defence measures. In fact, as Hoare had outlined in his notes, the dominions should be left guessing as to what measures the British would take in an emergency.[1] Unsatisfactory though this compromise may have been, it reflected the real concern felt in Government circles about making any definite commitment to future action. Malcolm MacDonald has actually admitted that the reservations held by ministers were so strong that any promise made to the dominions about coming to their assistance was a disingenuous expedient to reassure them while buying time to find some more satisfactory alternative policy.[2] In essence, this boiled down to two possibilities, either an alliance with Japan or an agreement with the United States, both of which seemed a long way from being realised at this time.

It was with this difficult and rather devious brief that the British opened the Imperial Conference on 14 May. Five days later in a long speech reviewing world events and British policy since 1930, Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, reported to the first meeting of the principal delegates that whatever her relations with the rest of the world might be, Britain's relations with the USA had never been better and closer than at the present time.[3] If such optimism seemed misplaced, so did his

[1] Templewood Papers, Notes for Cab.Speech, IX 2.
[2] Interview with Malcolm MacDonald, London, 10 Oct. 1978.
[3] E(P.D.) (37) 1st meeting, 19 May 1937, Cab 32/128.

contention that there was no doubt that the United States were ready to work in agreement with Britain and in ways which would be agreeable to them. It is possible that Eden was referring to a discussion he had had with Norman Davis and Sir Alexander Cadogan at the Foreign Office in April 1937 when Davis had raised the question of the neutralisation of the Pacific, which he had said was a favourite project of Roosevelt's. Davis had suggested that the United States were willing to neutralise the Philippines and Guam and hoped the same treatment might be extended to the Dutch East Indies and Hong Kong. From what Davis had said it appeared that Roosevelt hoped Japan would come into this scheme which included the abolition of fortifications.[1] While it was not a distortion of the truth to say that Anglo-American relations were on a much better footing than they had been for some years, Eden's statement does seem to have exaggerated or misinterpreted the extent of American willingness to embark upon a working agreement with Britain. By mentioning the possibility of cooperation in a speech devoted to foreign policy, Eden had implied a degree of involvement which exceeded American intentions as would be outlined in Hull's letter of 1 June.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that there was a rather enigmatic quality to American policy at this time and that a contributory cause of its complexity lay in the necessity of drawing a distinction between what the

[1] Memo of meeting between Norman Davis, Eden and Cadogan at Foreign Office in April 1937, included in Annual Report on Japan in 1937, F2286/2286/23, para.135, FO 371/22190.

President might like to do and what he would be allowed to do. Because of the wide gulf which appeared to divide the two, ample opportunity existed for a misunderstanding of U.S. policy. But the British were not alone in occasionally being guilty of wishful thinking in their relations with the United States. Lyons, the Australian Prime Minister, also had some direct experience of Roosevelt's personal commitment to action in the Far East. In advocating a non-aggression pact in the Pacific, at their meeting on 22 May, Lyons disclosed that he had earlier mentioned the possibility to President Roosevelt who had said he would be quite ready to enter into an agreement with Japan or any other country to ensure the preservation of peace in the Pacific. Lyons revealed that the President had told him that if serious trouble arose in the Pacific the United States would be prepared to make common cause with the members of the Commonwealth concerned.[1] Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, also added that Roosevelt had spoken to him of his desire to see the fortifications of the Pacific islands dismantled as a means of furthering the cause of peace in the Pacific.[2] It was left to Eden to comment that there was of course a considerable difference between an expression of opinion by Roosevelt in private conversations and the entering into by him as President of the United States of undertakings

[1] E(P.D.) (37) 4th meeting, 22 May 1937, Cab 32/128.
[2] ibid.

and commitments in a formal document. This seemed a particularly pertinent observation when one considers that Mackenzie King had earlier mentioned that as a result of the arms embargo the USA would definitely be closed in future as a source both of supply of arms and money for the purposes of war.[1]

Despite his words of warning about reading too much into what the President had said, Eden was not unsympathetic to the idea of a regional pact as Lyons had described. Indeed if it could be arranged and be allowed to succeed, the plan would dramatically improve Britain's defence position by removing the necessity of gearing her naval strength to the contingency of action in two oceans simultaneously. Moreover, it certainly had more attractions than the New Zealand Prime Minister's suggestion that there ought to be a Commonwealth foreign and defence policy. While there was a value in exhorting the member nations to sink or swim together, the idea was likely to offend those dominions who jealously guarded their right to decide their own policy and who would not, therefore, be willing to give up their independence for the sake of establishing a common front with Britain. Apart from the difficulty of gaining the necessary acceptance of the member nations, the effectiveness of the common policy would ultimately and predominantly rest upon the strength of the British Navy that would be required to support it.

[1] E(P.D.) (37) 3rd meeting, 21 May 1937, Cab 32/128.

When Sir Samuel Hoare addressed the seventh meeting of the principal delegates on 26 May he reminded them of Sir Archdale Parkhill's statement that the backbone of the defence of the Commonwealth was essentially naval. Hoare recalled that in recent months doubts had been publicly expressed as to Britain's ability in the face of her European commitments to despatch a fleet to the Far East, if Japan decided to embark upon hostilities against her possessions and interests in the area. Outlining the consequences for the dominions should the British Fleet not be on hand to control a break-out of the Japanese Navy, Hoare confirmed the view that Britain believed the existence of the Commonwealth rested on her ability to send the fleet to the Far East if the need arose. He indicated that whether the British Government could put their intentions into practice would depend to some extent upon the capital ship situation, as this was seen as the ultimate factor in naval strength.

> At the present moment we are satisfied that our naval strength would allow us to despatch an adequate fleet to the Far East whilst retaining sufficient strength in Home Waters to cover our European commitments. Looking ahead we appreciate that there will be a period, from the Spring of 1938 to the Summer of 1939, when we could only retain forces in Home Waters barely adequate to meet the naval forces of Germany and must rely on being assisted by the French Navy. We could still send to the Far East a Fleet, but it would be, from a purely material point of view, slightly inferior to the full Japanese naval strength. By the adoption of a defensive policy and, relying on the superior fighting qualities of the British race, this Fleet should achieve its object of assuring the Dominions from serious aggression.[1]

[1] E(P.D.) (37) 7th meeting, 26 May 1937, Cab 32/128.

For the short term at least, therefore, Hoare had reaffirmed the commitment to sending a fleet out east. His plan to keep the dominions guessing as to British policy in the future was only operative in the longer term. He estimated that after 1940 the despatch of a fleet to the Far East would be a hazardous undertaking unless the British battleship strength was increased above fifteen ships. At the same time the problem of maintaining the necessary standard of naval strength beyond 1940 would call for effort and expenditure of unprecedented magnitude.[1] He also intimated that the colossal burden of naval rearmament was too much for Britain to carry alone and went on to call for a dominion contribution such as providing the money for one capital ship. Though making it obvious he thought the safety of the Commonwealth would depend on increased naval support from the dominions, Hoare significantly did not mention the possibility of gaining any assistance from the United States.

Eden's earlier statement about the improvement in Anglo-American relations was echoed by Chamberlain in a speech at the conference on 27 May. After dwelling on the benefits to be derived from a commercial agreement with the United States, Chamberlain said he believed that there was at present a far greater opportunity than ever before in his lifetime of drawing them into sympathetic cooperation towards securing the things Britain cared for most. He felt that if the U.S. Government drew nearer to the

[1] ibid.

countries of the Commonwealth it would have a steadying influence and a deterrent effect in Europe.[1]

When the Pacific pact was discussed again on 2 June the Prime Minister recalled a conversation he had had with Sir Ronald Lindsay before the last presidential election which had encouraged him to hope that the United States would not recoil from such a pact as they did from European entanglements. He also spoke of his fear that despite an encouraging tendency to become less aggressive, Japan still possessed the ability to use a troubled situation in Europe to take steps to Britain's disadvantage in the Far East. He remarked that at present the British would be quite unable to counter such a step and that it was impossible to say where things would stop.[2] This disclosure of Britain's current inability to defend her possessions in two oceans simultaneously contrasted sharply with that reassurance given to the conference by Hoare a week before. Since Chamberlain was not in the habit of saying things he did not mean one can only assume he was taking deliberate steps to correct the impression which Hoare had given of Britain's capacity and willingness to defend her Pacific dominions in the short term.

Chamberlain's point was endorsed by the Chiefs of Staff Sub Committee who had prepared the latest Far East

[1] E(P.D.) (37) 8th meeting, 27 May 1937, Cab 32/128.
[2] E(P.D.) (37) 11th meeting, 2 June 1937, Cab 32/128.

Appreciation, a copy of which had been passed to the Australian, New Zealand and Indian representatives at the conference. In paragraph 112 of their Appreciation the Chiefs of Staff pointed out that if war broke out with Japan when Britain, allied with France, was already at war with Germany, the fleet that could be sent could only be decided in the light of conditions at the time.

> We cannot accurately forecast the delay which might occur before we could despatch a fleet to the Far East, since it must depend on the naval and political situation at the time. If Japan undertakes deliberate operations against Singapore, unless we have been able to reinforce the garrison and to raise the reserve supplies beyond 60 days, a situation may occur in which we shall have to risk seriously prejudicing our naval operations against Germany in order to despatch a fleet to the Far East in time to relieve Singapore.[1]

Frank though this admission was, it stopped short of saying that the Far Eastern commitment was strategically inadvisable under certain circumstances. It did not question the need to send the fleet to Singapore but merely raised the issue of its strength, i.e., how many capital ships, aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers and submarines would be making the six week journey from their home bases. By deliberately omitting any estimate of the likely size of the force, the Chiefs succeeded admirably in their task of making the dominions guess what the outcome would be. Whatever the composition of the fleet to be based at Singapore in an emergency, it was to perform a defensive role and hope to defeat the Japanese ultimately by the exercise of

[1] COS 596, Far East Appreciation 1937, 14 June 1937, DP(P)5, para. 112, Cab 16/182.

economic pressure. Assuming the United States would remain neutral, and because of the difficulties and dangers of conducting a war in the Far East, the Chiefs of Staff recommended that no effort should be spared by Britain to re-establish good relations with Japan so as to avoid or lessen the chances of a war between them.[1]

Both the Review of Imperial Defence and the Far East Appreciation painted a black and sobering picture of the difficulties facing Britain in defending her Pacific dominions from the threat of a Japanese attack. A proposal such as the Regional Non-Aggression Pact, therefore, had much to recommend it providing the United States, Russia, China and Japan agreed to become members. But given the fact that the Japanese thought that negotiations for such a pact were premature, it was not surprising that the Technical Committee, set up by the Imperial Conference to consider the scheme, reported pessimistically on the difficulties of arranging it.[2]

While Eden felt able to reassure the delegates on 8 June that the trend towards an improvement in the Far East and a relaxation of tension in the Pacific was being helped by recent Japanese diplomacy, their reaction to the idea of a pact argued forcibly against placing too much optimism in their gestures. Welcome though any improvement would be to the dominions, their concern about the apparent

1 DP(P)5, paras.128-129, Cab 16/182.

2 Report of Technical Committee, E(37)33, referred to by Eden at E(P.D.) (37) 15th meeting, 8 June 1937, Cab 32/128.

contradictions in British policy towards dealing with the problems of the Far East had increased. This more than compensated for arguable gains made as a result of a more pacific attitude on the part of the Japanese. Admittedly, the British had agreed upon sending out a fleet to Singapore at the earliest possible moment after the outbreak of hostilities against Japan. But the guarantee of naval reinforcement given by them was not unconditional, as Chamberlain had implied, and they appeared to reserve the right, if embarrassed by war or threat of it in Europe, to act according to the requirements of the situation. What this would mean for the dominions, of course, was obscure and deliberately so.

Although the Imperial Conference may have been successful in developing the spirit of kinship, as Malcolm MacDonald suggested in Cabinet it did, the results as far as naval and foreign policy were concerned were less outstanding. What fresh initiatives had been made in an attempt to devise an effective safeguard for the Pacific dominions proved ultimately to be unsuccessful; the Pacific Pact came to nothing, ruined by suspicion and unwillingness to cooperate, the more amiable attitude of the Japanese was soon to be the subject of radical change, and despite earlier statements to the contrary the Americans seemed just as far away from active assistance in the Far East as they had been for several years. All of this meant that unless some alternative could be found, Britain would remain solely responsible for defending the Pacific dominions, with a navy shorn of at least three capital

ships for approximately fifteen months and in a situation where it was possible she could be simultaneously embarrassed by action or threat of it in Home waters, the Mediterranean and the Far East by Germany, Italy and Japan.

Despite the discouraging signs of American unwillingness to cooperate with Britain in the Far East, Eden was not disposed to rule out the possibility completely, although he admitted their desire to reduce commitments was evident. His reluctance to accept Hull's thesis as setting the limited parameters of United States foreign policy for the future was not merely the product of what can be described as a stubborn optimism. Apart from a desire to lure the Americans away from their introspective isolationism, Eden was well aware of the potential strategic value for Britain of an active rather than inert U.S. foreign policy. With a capital ship fleet of fifteen at their disposal, the Americans could be of enormous assistance to the British in the Far East, if they agreed to at least help in policing the area in time of trouble. In theory this would enable the British to reduce the number of ships they would have to send to the Far East and so allow perhaps as many as three or four capital ships to be redeployed in European or Home waters. If an American commitment to this type of assistance was out of the question, as the evidence suggested, it did not necessarily mean that this would hold good for the future, particularly if the Japanese became more threatening and began interfering with U.S. interests in the region. In a sense Britain had nothing to lose by trying

to persuade the American Government to involve themselves more in foreign affairs. If these efforts were unsuccessful little would be lost, since Britain would still be responsible for looking after her own interests throughout the world, whereas an acceptance by the Roosevelt Administration to assist in maintaining the status quo would undoubtedly be of enormous importance. Eden's dogged refusal to be dissuaded from achieving an Anglo-American accord on the Far East was not, therefore, totally unexpected. It is my contention that such an accord would have been part of a comprehensive plan involving the French to improve the security of the democracies and be a strong counterpoise to the activities of the Germans, Italians and Japanese.

Whatever grand strategy Eden may have been thinking of in the long term, Hull's disappointing essay on American policy indicated that the most he could reasonably expect to achieve in the short term was an economic agreement and even that still needed a good deal of negotiating. Despite this drawback, it is evident that Eden may well have been hoping for the chance of visiting the United States in the not too distant future to put Britain's case more effectively. The idea had been floated for the first time during a conversation he had had with Norman Davis in April, and he was keen to go if an official invitation was extended to him by the Roosevelt Administration. It is debatable, of course, whether his visit could have done much to have altered the flood tide of isolationism, but he was never given the chance. Instead

Norman Davis suggested to the President that the offer of a visit should first be made to the Prime Minister.[1] This invitation managed to embarrass Anglo-American relations at a sensitive time and suggest further inconsistency and provide more ammunition for those within the Government who regarded the United States with disfavour. But if Davis's intervention was tactless, inaccurate and undiplomatic, Chamberlain's chilling reply left the President in no doubt what the Prime Minister thought of the invitation.[2]

Writing on 8 July the Prime Minister asked for a postponement of the visit because he did not think the time would be ripe for such a meeting. He set out his principal objection in unmistakable terms.

> Nothing would be more disastrous than that a conference which would inevitably attract the utmost publicity should fail to produce commensurate results and I do not see at the present moment how we could expect to achieve the purpose we have in view.3

Although he felt justified in rejecting the opportunity of meeting Roosevelt, in doing so the Prime Minister undoubtedly tossed aside an opportunity to explain British policy and aspirations personally and seek the establishment of a much improved basis for Anglo-American relations.[4] This

[1] For further details on the visit of Davis and the invitation controversy see FO 371/20660-20662 and Prem 1/261.

[2] N. Chamberlain to Norman Davis, 8 July 1937, Prem 1/261.

[3] ibid.

[4] For further details on Roosevelt's role in this matter see F.D.R. Library, Hyde Park, New York, (President F.D. Roosevelt's Papers), PSF Box 46.

seems to me to be a rather unfortunate, if characteristic, error of Chamberlain's. No matter how strong and valid his objections may have been, by delivering such an unenthusiastic answer and by deferring action on the invitation the Prime Minister could not fail to have given a poor impression of the current state of Anglo-American relations. Since it appeared unlikely that he would be going on a visit to the United States, unless some dramatic event took place which would improve the chances of a successful conclusion to the proposed talks, it might have been preferable for him to have suggested that Eden, or perhaps a minor Government figure, might go to the USA as Runciman had done to discuss current problems.

While Chamberlain's unresponsive answer seems to me to have been both extremely unhelpful and regrettable, the Admiralty were reaching a similarly unimaginative decision over the question of technical exchange of information with the U.S. Navy Department. Lindsay, who I believe is one of the few personalities to emerge from this period of Anglo-American relations with any degree of credit, had recommended in March 1937 that it was just as important for the British to obtain the goodwill of the American General Staff as it was to receive their information. He thought that this goodwill could be fostered by exchanges and discussions providing neither were overdone. He was also of the opinion that it would probably be of crucial importance if Britain was at war in the future. Despite support for these views from the Foreign Office who had informed the Admiralty Board of

their wish to respond to any advances made by the United States authorities in the future, the Admiralty had done little to promote closer naval collaboration.[1]

Even after a fruitful discussion on 4 June between Captain Russell Willson, the U.S. Naval Attaché, and the Director of Naval Intelligence, J.A.G. Troup, on the need for closer cooperation between the two navies, the exchange of technical information was impeded by a decision taken in the previous year affecting their right to pass on this material.[2] Unless this decision was set aside, therefore, the Admiralty could not participate in any arrangement which would be specifically directed against a third power, thus ruling out the possibility of exchanging information and intelligence on Japanese naval construction which was one of the subjects in which the Americans were most interested. Preferential treatment for the USA was also ruled out by the same decision, partly because of the difficulty of refusing similar privileges to other friendly countries and partly for reasons of secrecy.

It was clear that an improvement in any significant aspect of Anglo-American relations could be achieved only by a mutual willingness to dismantle and remove some of the obstacles which were strewn in the way of a closer understanding between the two powers. Despite the encouraging signs of progress being made in developing economic

[1] Minute by J.A.G. Troup (D.N.I.), M03421/37, 9 June 1937, Adm 116/4302.

[2] Note on conversation with Captain Willson on 4 June 1937 by J.A.G. Troup, and minute by Lawson of M. Branch, 23 June 1937, M03421/37, Adm 116/4302.

ties with one another, relations between Britain and the United States on improving naval cooperation and foreign policy seemed destined to mark time or crawl forward at a much slower rate. It would take a major event to bring about any speedier transformation, but this was not long in coming.

Chapter Two: Early Initiatives (July - October 1937)

Barely three weeks after the Imperial Conference had ended a new phase in the Far Eastern crisis began. During the night of 7 July shooting broke out between Chinese and Japanese troops drawn up along the Yungting Ho river bank near Marco Polo Bridge at Loukiachao outside Peking.[1] Each side blamed the other for causing the dispute which was to have far more profound implications than those traditionally associated with a small border skirmish. What has since become known as the July 7th Incident was to lead to the outbreak of an undeclared war between China and Japan and to the extension and then consolidation of the Japanese military position in China. By their actions in striving to gain military, economic and political domination over China, the Japanese were destined to pose a considerable threat to western hopes for an overall balance of power in the Far East.[2]

The British reacted to the first news of the outbreak of hostilities in China by making representations to the Japanese Government in Tokyo and Eden saw Ambassador Yoshida in London in the forlorn hope that the incident

[1] Library of Congress, (Admiral Yarnell's Papers), Box 13, p. 8.

[2] F.R.U.S. 1937, Vol. III, Johnson to Sec. of State, No. 1377, 17 Aug. 1937, pp.432-437.

might yet subside without developing into a major international crisis.[1] Within a few days, however, it had become evident that the situation in North Eastern China was critical. Since the British regarded an unchecked Japanese expansion in the Far East as unthinkable, a plan for bringing about a return to the status quo ante had to be devised. Apart from the fact that any plan designed to limit Japanese involvement in China was bound to carry an element of risk for those making the proposal, its success or failure would probably ultimately depend upon the degree of persuasion or force that could be exerted by those nations opposed to the Japanese invasion.

Despite his previous record of support for the League of Nations, Eden chose on this occasion to approach the United States for direct assistance. While he did not abandon the League machinery entirely, he was well aware of its critical shortcomings. The past failures and ineffectiveness of the League had lowered its prestige in the eyes of the world and made states less inclined to use it for the purposes for which it was originally intended. Rather than place much, if any, reliance upon the League members to bring about a restoration of the status quo ante in China, and not wishing to take independent action, if this could be avoided, Eden regarded a working relationship with the Americans as being vital

[1] Avon, Facing the Dictators, p. 531.

to his plans.[1] It is not difficult to see why he did so. The USA had large interests in the Far East and were also Japan's most important trading partner. Consequently, if any country could influence the Japanese to moderate their policies the United States were the most likely of all to succeed. As potentially the most powerful military and industrial nation in the world, the USA could not be lightly dismissed or treated with impunity by the Japanese. Eden's choice, therefore, was logical. Its chief drawback and major weakness lay in the need to persuade the Americans to do as he wished. This was to prove far more difficult than even he might have imagined.

He began by cabling Ambassador Lindsay asking for the views of the Roosevelt Administration on the new situation in China and whether they were considering taking any action in the crisis, such as the possibility of a joint démarche with Britain.[2] Lindsay discovered that the State Department had no wish to implement this type of cooperation. Apart from the criticism they could expect from the isolationists, joint action was likely to increase the possibility of the United States becoming entangled in a formal relationship with the British, which could have grave repercussions for their foreign policy, if conditions deteriorated in the Far East. As this was contrary to Hull's conception of traditional

[1] Avon, op.cit., p.546 and pp.614-615.
[2] Eden to Lindsay, No. 224, 12 July 1937, FO 436/1.

American policy, Eden's proposal was hardly likely to succeed. Eden remained undeterred by Hull's opposition to a joint undertaking with Britain, however, and cabled Lindsay on 20 July outlining a proposal for bilateral mediation in the Sino-Japanese dispute.[1] His plan envisaged an approach being made to both the Chinese and Japanese Governments asking for all further movement of their troops to be suspended and for them to await Anglo-American proposals designed to end the existing deadlock. His confidence in a joint initiative was certainly boosted by his conversation with Ambassador Bingham, who had gone so far as to raise the prospect of a joint trade embargo against Japan with the object of bringing about a complete cessation of trade with her. He had told the Foreign Secretary that unless something was done, trade with China would end and the Japanese would take over both British and American interests in the Far East. For this reason Bingham had suggested that this was an issue on which the United States could provide a greater measure of cooperation than would be possible in Europe.[2] Lindsay's reply quickly disabused Eden of the likelihood of such a possibility occurring in the near future. On the contrary, while agreeing with the desirability for cooperation, the State Department's contention was that efforts to avert further hostilities should be conducted

[1] Eden to Lindsay, No. 239, 20 July 1937, FO 436/1.
[2] University of Birmingham, (Avon Papers), Eden to Lindsay, 21 July 1937, US/37/17.

on parallel rather than on joint lines.[1] This was not altogether unwelcome news for Chamberlain. While sharing the opinion that joint representations were likely to prove more effective than individual protests in halting the Japanese invasion of China, his main concern was that a major war should not result from the Sino-Japanese conflict. It was for this reason that he hoped Ambassador Bingham's proposal would go no further.

> It smacks very much of sanctions; it will certainly strongly antagonise Japan and might so damage our relations with them as to cost us millions in defensive measures in the Far East. Our proposal is not open to these objections.[2]

As yet, the Foreign Secretary had not ventured to propose a strategic commitment to bolster western representations in the Far East. But on the same day that the British Cabinet met and discussed the worsening Far Eastern crisis, Eden despatched a further enquiry to Lindsay in which he asked whether the Americans would now agree that the time had come for making joint rather than parallel representations. This latest call for cooperation also found little favour with the State Department who referred it back to the Foreign Office for clarification.[3]

1 Lindsay to Eden, No. 196, 21 July 1937, FO 436/1. For details of Hull's objections to Eden's plan see C. Hull, Memoirs, Vol. 1, (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1948), p.538.

2 Avon Papers, minute by N. Chamberlain, 21 July 1937, FE37/2. See also Cab. meeting 32(37), 28 July 1937, Cab 23/89.

3 F.R.U.S., 1937: Vol. III, pp.289-290.

This meant, in effect, that it suffered a fate similar to those of the previous two appeals which Eden had already submitted to the Americans. By this stage the United States Government had come to regard recent British policy in China in a rather poor light. Ambassador Grew in Tokyo was one of the sternest critics and referred to attempts by the British to deal with the Japanese as being both naive and inept.[1] As the Americans were evidently not disposed to entertain the possibility of a joint venture with the British in the Far East, the question of cooperation was shelved for the time being.

Within three weeks, however, the Japanese penetration of Chinese territory had brought them to the international city of Shanghai, where both the British and the Americans retained sizable interests.[2] On 18 August, Eden despatched a further proposal to the Americans calling for the withdrawal of both Chinese and Japanese troops from the city. Hull rejected this idea on the basis that the Japanese had reacted unfavourably to the suggestion and were not interested in participating in such a withdrawal.[3] What

1 W.H. Heinrichs, jun., American Ambassador (Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1966), p.243.

2 Ickes records that the Sino-Japanese dispute and particularly the crisis at Shanghai had been discussed at a Cabinet meeting on 13 August. After discovering that 1,050 American marines were nearest the point of danger, the President wanted to know why they were there instead of the British. He was told that the British were smart!
H.L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, Vol.II, The Inside Struggle 1936-1939 (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1955), pp.192-193.

3 F.R.U.S. 1937: Vol. III, pp.444-445, 449-450.

seemed such a ready acceptance of a fait accompli was hardly the answer the British wished to receive. It also implied that unless the Japanese were willing to make a voluntary, unilateral withdrawal, the Americans were certainly not prepared to force them to do so. Should this be the case, and if non-confrontation with the Japanese was going to remain a keystone of American policy in the Far East, this would have serious repercussions for the safeguarding of Britain's interests and for her overall strategic policy in this area.

Hull was well aware of the fact that the strength of isolationism in both Congress and the country would almost certainly preclude the forging of any Far Eastern pact with Britain. He therefore took the opportunity provided by this latest call for joint action both to reiterate the separate and independent stance of the American Government on these questions and to warn the British Government against making constant demands for cooperation which the United States would be unable to fulfil. Actually, this firm rebuke merely confirmed what the British already knew about American attitudes on these matters. Hull had informed Chamberlain earlier in the summer that the United States had no intention of becoming involved in schemes of security for the Far East, an approach which he considered to be quite contrary to the American national interest.[1]

[1] Hull to Chamberlain, 1 June 1937, Prem 1/261.

Admiral Leahy, the United States Chief of Naval Operations, did not subscribe to this particular thesis. Writing of the situation in China he stated:

> If it were possible to obtain an equitable agreement with Great Britain to share the effort and the expense, this appears to be a wonderful opportunity to force Japan to observe Treaty agreements, and to depart from the mainland of Asia, which would insure western trade supremacy in the Orient for another century.[1]

Apart from the possibility of a different interpretation of the term "equitable agreement" this was basically the position adopted by Eden in dealing with this problem. Leahy never spelt out quite what he meant by this phrase, but had his view prevailed in American policy an accomodation with the British would probably have been forthcoming. And he was by no means alone in believing that a tougher course could be pursued in the Far East. Admiral Yarnell, Commander of the American Asiatic Fleet, though not wanting war with the Japanese, still believed that some action was necessary to redress the balance of advantage in the Pacific. He urged the sending of four cruisers to supplement his existing naval force off the Chinese coast.[2] He did so ostensibly to facilitate the withdrawal of American civilians from China, should this necessity arise. Clearly, the presence of American warships in the China Seas would exercise an influence upon the Japanese, but the vital question of whether they would restrain or inflame them

[1] Library of Congress, (Admiral W.D. Leahy's Papers and Diary), Diary entry for 24 August 1937, p.104.

[2] Leahy Diary, entry for 29 August 1937, pp.106-107.

was impossible to predict. Dr. Stanley Hornbeck, the State Department's Far Eastern Advisor, agreed with Leahy and Yarnell that a small detachment of cruisers should be sent; he believed two were sufficient.[1] At a conference of State Department officials, however, this idea was rejected on the basis that it could have an irritating effect on some of the belligerents.[2]

While the major powers discussed what to do, nothing was in fact done to stop the situation in China from deteriorating still further. On 26 August, Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, the British Ambassador to China, was badly injured when his car, clearly marked with a large Union Jack, was strafed by Japanese aircraft.[3] Events such as this seemed to demonstrate a want of propriety on the part of the Japanese and did much to convince the Foreign Office that some action ought to be taken to arrest the slide into anarchy in the Far East. Whereas Eden was in favour of withdrawing Craigie from Japan, Chamberlain preferred the less extreme measure of sending the Japanese Government a sharp note about the deliberate

1 ibid.

2 According to the Leahy Diary, Hull was anxious for the C.N.O. to discuss the sending of cruisers to the Far East with the President. Leahy admits that by 31 August he was in favour of sending them and that Hull and the President were against.
Leahy Diary, p.108.

3 Churchill College, Cambridge, (H. Knatchbull-Hugessen Papers and Diary), Diary 1937, 1/11, Correspondence 2/61-80.

wounding of Hugessen.[1] He had no wish to bring Craigie home from Tokyo because this would seriously reduce the opportunity for contact with Konoye's Government at a time when the need for peaceful negotiations was of paramount importance. Apart from wishing to avoid anything that might worsen Anglo-Japanese relations, Chamberlain's relatively moderate response was dictated to a certain extent by the belief that the Americans were unlikely to take an active role in the Far East even if the situation continued to deteriorate. In a letter to his sister Hilda on 29 August, Chamberlain commented that in his opinion the Americans still had a long way to go before they could become helpful partners of the British in world affairs.

> I tried to get them to come in on China & Japan but they were too frightened of their own people though I believe if they had been willing to play there was an off chance of stopping hostilities. Now this stupid and outrageous attack has occurred upon our Ambassador and it is to be hoped that the Japs will accept without demur the very reasonable and moderate demands we are making upon them.[2]

Although it was by now obvious that the State Department was not eager to collaborate with the British, the Foreign Office nonetheless persevered, despatching yet a further request to Washington on 31 August asking for cooperation in keeping the Japanese from interfering with Anglo-American shipping. Victor Mallet raised the matter with Hornbeck at the State Department.[3] Hornbeck thought

[1] Avon Papers, Eden to Chamberlain, 9 Sept. 1937, FE/37/7.
[2] N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Hilda, 29 Aug. 1937, NC 18/1/1018.
[3] Mallet to Orde, F6303/9/10, 31 Aug. 1937, FO 371/20955.

that it was a mistake to let the Japanese think that Britain was particularly interested in their shipping measures in view of the fact that any enquiries might only serve to stimulate them to further activity. Moreover, it could compromise them if the Japanese provided an authoritative statement about their proposed shipping measures which was unacceptable to London. In his letter to Orde at the Foreign Office Mallet, the Counsellor at the British Embassy in Washington, sought to explain the reasons why a lack of accord existed in Anglo-American relations over Far Eastern matters.

> The real difference between our points of view seems to be that we think that by enquiries and notes and requests for explanations we may be doing something to control the Japanese, more especially if we can get the Americans to act with us. The Americans think that no amount of gestures or even threats are likely to move the Japanese just at present and that even if the Japanese Foreign Office were to be impressed by our efforts it would have no effect upon the military authorities.

He concluded:

> American public opinion is so strongly non-interventionist that the State Department are terrified of being dragged out of their depth or even of wetting the tips of their toes. They don't like joint action for several reasons, one of which I think is that they are afraid of criticism here that they are being dragged along by us.[1]

As expected, the Americans, who were particularly anxious to avoid a dispute with the Japanese over shipping, rejected the British initiative.

[1] ibid.

Nonetheless, Eden continued to attach the greatest importance to Anglo-American relations at this time believing that it was impossible to exaggerate their significance to world peace.[1] By September, however, a number of his officials in the Foreign Office, such as Thyne Henderson, Ronald and Cadogan, were as one in echoing Sir John Pratt's advice that, as far as the Far East was concerned, the British Government had little option but to take the hint and in future not rely upon or expect the United States to assist them in dealing with the Japanese.[2] Sir Robert Craigie, the British Ambassador to Japan, agreed that the British ought to act independently of the Americans. In a despatch to the Foreign Office on 6 September he noted:

> . . . I have been struck by the flow of press telegrams originating allegedly in Washington the general burden of which is that while Great Britain is constantly trying to arrange for joint Anglo-American cooperation at Japan's expense, the United States Government are firmly rejecting all such overtures. Impression conveyed is that Japan's real enemy is Great Britain with whom United States is refusing to cooperate except in joint action with which other interested powers are also associated. . . . I cannot help feeling that this turn of affairs is not altogether unwelcome to the United States Government.[3]

Referring to Hull's statement reemphasising the American stand in avoiding joint action with any foreign power in the current Far Eastern situation, Craigie concluded:

---

[1] For this reason he thought it vital to meet Hull on the question of arranging an Anglo-American Trade Agreement. Avon Papers, Eden to Baruch, 1 Sept. 1937, FO/37/20.

[2] Minute by Sir J. Pratt, F 6030/9/10, 3 Sept. 1937; and minutes F 6303/9/10 by Thyne Henderson, 10 Sept. 1937, Ronald, 11 Sept. 1937, and Cadogan, 13 Sept. 1937, FO 371/20955.

[3] Craigie to Foreign Office, No.354, F6169/9/10, 6 Sept. 1937, FO 371/20955.

> While not underestimating enormous value of cooperation with United States whenever this can be made a reality I venture to think that any further initiative on our part to secure such cooperation will in present circumstances tend to diminish influence which we can exercise here on our own without any corresponding advantage to our relations with United States.[1]

On the same day that Craigie sent his despatch to London the Japanese announced a blockade of Chinese shipping from Sanhaikwan on the Manchurian border to Swatow in the south. Although the Japanese claimed that they would stop and search only Chinese ships they reserved the right to verify the identity of all vessels. This latest move was enough for the British Cabinet to set up a special sub-committee to look into the question of sending two capital ships to the Far East as a reinforcement for the British naval forces in the area.[2]

By the time the Chief of the Naval Staff's paper on this subject was discussed by the Committee on British Shipping in the Far East, the Roosevelt Administration had already announced that no United States Government owned ships would be permitted to carry munitions either to China or to Japan and that other American vessels would do so at their own peril. It was an action which Sir Alexander Cadogan, Deputy Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, contemptuously referred to as a poor performance and a warning--if such were needed--of what to expect from the Americans in the future.[3] On 19

[1] Craigie to Foreign Office, No. 354, F 6169/9/10, 6 Sept. 1937, FO 371/20955.

[2] Cabinet Conclusions, Cab 34(37), 8 Sept. 1937, Cab 23/89.

[3] Minute by Cadogan on Mallet to Foreign Office, F 6557/130/10, 15 Sept. 1937, FO 371/20977.

September, only five days after the announcement in Washington, the Japanese gave notice that after 0800 hours on 21 September all foreign nationals in Nanking were in danger of being bombed. This was no idle boast because the first Japanese raids began on 22 September.[1]

A day later Chatfield's paper was brought before the Cabinet sub-committee. His findings are extremely important and the essential paragraphs will be quoted in extenso. In his opinion the attitude of the Japanese towards British would be swayed only by their views of the ability of the British to despatch a fleet to the Far East capable of defeating the Japanese Fleet in battle.

> Just so long as the Japanese believe that we are not tied by our European commitments to a point at which we are unable to send such a fleet to the Far East, so long may we anticipate that Japan will hesitate before pressing any quarrel that may arise between us to the point of war. The moment that, in their opinion, we become so tied, the reverse might obtain. It is from this, the broadest angle, that the proposal to despatch a reinforcement of two capital ships to the Far East must be judged. From this angle the division of our limited force of capital ships between Eastern and Western hemispheres, far from acting as a deterrent to the Japanese, might even present a temptation to Japan in offering them at least a possibility of defeating the divided British forces in detail. It is true that at one time it was the intention, on the completion of the Singapore base, to station our battlecruiser force in the Far East based on Singapore. This intention was, however, abandoned, partly for political reasons and partly owing to the disadvantage now adduced, i.e. the division of a small capital ship force. Moreover, the stationing of the Battlecruiser Squadron at Singapore was never intended as a deterrent to Japanese aggression in the China Seas; the object was to add to the security of the Singapore base and

[1] M.H. Brice, The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident 1937-41 (Ian Allen, London, 1973), pp. 46-47.

> the prevention of raids on our shipping in the Indian Ocean.
> Pursuing the argument to its logical conclusion, therefore, it becomes clear that if a reinforcement of capital ships is to be sent to the Far East, such a reinforcement must be in sufficient strength to defeat the full strength of the Japanese Navy.[1]

Chatfield pointed out that the various factors upon which the despatch of a fleet to the Far East depended had been fully examined by the Chief of Staffs' Committee in the Far Eastern Appreciation of 1937. In the light of this paper, the First Sea Lord believed that a reinforcement of only two capital ships should not be despatched to the Far East, if the situation in the Mediterranean remained the same, or in the event of a new situation arising there with the discontinuance of piracy as a result of the agreement passed at the Nyon Conference. Chatfield noted that although the work on the Singapore base had not yet been completed, the Chiefs of Staffs' Committee in their earlier paper had made it clear that in the event of war the fleet must be despatched to the Far East irrespective of the state of the development of this base. In short, therefore, Chatfield's main conclusion was that it was an unprofitable and risky gesture for Britain to send two capital ships to the Far East. A minute on his paper put it succintly: "To be of any use, a full battle fleet, capable of engaging the Japanese Navy on terms, would have to be sent."[2]

[1] Memo by Chatfield, 'Reinforcement of British Naval Forces in the Far East', 23 Sept. 1937. This was prepared for the Cabinet Sub Committee on British Shipping in the Far East, F.E.S. 37(4), Cab 27/634.

[2] Minute by Chaplin, F8559/G, 28 Oct. 1937, FO 371/20979.

Despite the fact that any agreement on joint action in the Pacific would involve the British Navy, the Admiralty appears thus far to have played a minimal role in assisting the Foreign Office to promote a closer union with the United States. In fact, it could be construed from the lack of material on this subject in the Admiralty Papers that they had played no role at all. In reality, there was little that they could do, other than to warn the Foreign Office about the complex strategic and logistic difficulties in mounting any Far Eastern offensive, either alone or in collaboration with the Americans. Although the Foreign Office had not actually committed the Admiralty to action in the Far East, with their appeals to the Americans for assistance, the lack of consultation between these two vitally important Government departments seems to suggest a breakdown in communication of quite serious proportions. What at first sight appears incomprehensible is however explicable if several factors are taken into consideration. Firstly, the Foreign Office were well acquainted with the Far Eastern Appreciation of 1937 which had revealed that the British strategy in the Far East had initially to be defensive and that they would have to rely primarily upon the exercise of economic pressure to enable them ultimately to defeat the Japanese.[1] Secondly, since it was known that the Admiralty concurred with the views expressed by

[1] COS 596, DP(P)5, para.128, 14 June 1937, Cab 16/182.

the Service Chiefs, and because of the necessity for secrecy, the Foreign Office could legitimately keep the negotiations to themselves. Moreover, the Foreign Office had not, as yet, asked the Americans for anything other than their active diplomatic assistance in mediating between the two Asiatic powers in the quest for peace. Furthermore, the contemplation of hasty action that could set the Japanese against the British was something that the Foreign Office also wished to avoid. So it could be said that the continuity of interest was preserved between both branches of the Government and that, therefore, it was not essential that the Admiralty be kept intimately informed of the latest steps taken by the Foreign Office in the matter, providing they would be consulted in the event of any decisive action being contemplated. Despite these factors, the absence at this stage of specific and close cooperation between the Foreign Office and the Admiralty is still odd and does suggest that in pursuing a unilateral line hitherto, Eden and his permanent officials had been prepared to go some way beyond that of the other departments and of the British Government.

A watershed in both the Far Eastern crisis itself and the handling of it by the western powers had, however, already been reached by the time that Chatfield's paper was being discussed in committee. With the bombing of Nanking on 22 September the Japanese signalled their intention of increasing the tempo of their Chinese campaign. Since the Japanese had totally disregarded the quiet diplomacy of the western powers and had rejected

individual appeals from them to refrain from intensifying their activities on the Chinese mainland, a distinct hardening of attitude took place on the part of some of the British policy makers. In fact, this latest act of aggression prompted Cadogan to suggest to Eden that the only way to bring effective pressure to bear in the crisis would be for the Americans to agree to the use of joint economic measures against Japan.[1]

A joint trade embargo or the imposition of some form of sanctions policy was, however, an extreme step to suggest, particularly in the light of Cadogan's own recent sharp critique of American policy in China and Chatfield's recommendations about naval reinforcements in the Far East. Even assuming, in the unlikely event of the United States agreeing to such a scheme, that sanctions were imposed, the policy itself had a number of serious disadvantages. Japan's major trading partner was the United States. Therefore, any decision to place an embargo on both exports to and imports from Japan would obviously need American approval and participation for it to be successful. But such participation would prove costly in economic terms, because in striking at the heart of the Japanese economy the effects would also be felt in a less than vibrant American economy. In order for the embargo to be more immediately effective a number of other countries would also have to agree to participate in cutting off

[1] Memo by Cadogan, F 7014/9/10, 23 Sept. 1937, FO 371/20956.

their trading links with Japan. Furthermore, once the embargo had begun an efficient system of enforcement would have to be implemented to prevent the breaking of these sanctions. This would probably take the form of a naval blockade. Apart from the complex logistic difficulties of attempting to blockade the Japanese in their own waters without having a base closer to the coast of Japan than Singapore, the measure would almost certainly expose the countries involved to grave risk of war or retaliation. In fighting to preserve her trading links with the rest of the world, and by bringing her modern navy into action, Japan could undoubtedly inflict heavy casualties upon the blockading task force. It was clear that the provision of naval units for enforcement duties would be difficult enough for the participating countries in any case, but none could withstand the loss of any of their warships without incurring very severe strategic consequences for themselves. If these were not considered sufficient drawbacks, the insuperable obstacle to any sanctions policy would be the refusal of the United States to cooperate. Should this occur, the policy would be fatally compromised; because it was unthinkable at this time that the British would run the risk of grossly offending the Americans by blocking their trade with Japan. Moreover, a trade embargo imposed by only Britain would be ineffective in the first instance and only lead to a worsening of Anglo-Japanese relations and likely interference with British interests not only in China but elsewhere in the Far East. A sanctions policy, therefore, would appear to

have so many limiting factors and far too many serious consequences for it to be regarded as a viable system of persuasion. Cadogan's suggestion may have been borne out of a sense of frustration with the shortcomings of ordinary diplomacy, but it was hardly likely to appeal to the Americans who had rejected all previous calls by the British Government for joint diplomatic action in the Far East. Above all, it was unrealistic to expect the American business community to agree in a time of recession, retrenchment and unemployment to forego the advantages of trade with Japan.[1] But even if the Americans were compensated for the loss of their Japanese trade, the isolationist opposition to any proposal for sanctions was bound to be enormous.

Despite the practical disadvantages of implementing such a policy, Eden was still prepared to support Cadogan's proposal. In doing so, he ignored the advice of the Chiefs of Staff that the Government's best interests would be served by reducing their international liabilities and scale of overseas involvement. He did so partly because he thought the Chiefs of Staff took too pessimistic a view of Britain's strategic capability in relation to other powers and partly because of the potential benefits that might accrue from the action he had contemplated. Although much in favour of a faster and more comprehensive rearma-

[1] Unless new markets could be found to offset the suspension of trading with Japan, a trade embargo would cut exports, worsen the balance of payments and increase the already massive number of unemployed in the U.S.A.

ment, Eden still felt that Britain's fighting strength was sufficient to allow her to deal with international problems at source.[1] His policy suggests he believed that only by matching aggression with measured and controlled force could the Japanese be prevented from extending their influence within China and threatening the fabric of peace elsewhere in the Far East. Once having come to this conclusion, Eden was not to be deflected from his course by those who did not hold similar views to his own. His behaviour and belief in what might loosely be termed 'gunboat diplomacy' resembles that of Lord Palmerston in the nineteenth century.

One of the contributory factors which may have been responsible for Eden's insistence on the need for the western nations to stand up to the Japanese and not allow them to achieve military aggrandizement in the Far East was his belief that the power of the Japanese Navy was greatly exaggerated. This was a feeling shared to some extent by the Admiralty and the Chiefs of Staff who assessed the Japanese Fleet as being only 80% as efficient as that of the British Navy.[2] As a strict operating comparison, this estimate of Japan's relative efficiency is less convincing than if it had been devised on the basis that in an Anglo-Japanese war both fleets

1 Avon Papers, Eden to Chamberlain, 9 Sept. 1937, FP/37/11.

2 The Chiefs of Staff still worked on this arbitrary assessment as late as June 1939 as can be seen from their paper COS 931, 'Situation in the Far East', DP(P)61, para.10, 24 June 1939, Cab 16/183a.

would be operating in a battle area favourable to the British, such as in the vicinity of Singapore. In this case, providing the base was completed and ready to accept units of the British capital ship fleet, the Japanese would be at a comparative disadvantage because they would be fighting a long way from their own major naval bases. If such an event occurred, the Japanese would have to contend with the basic problems of entering a battle with extended supply lines in addition to the obvious refuelling, repair and logistic difficulties. What advantages the British or joint fleets would have in fighting the Japanese in the waters close to Singapore would reduce proportionately, however, the closer the scene of battle was to Japan. In the case of the latter the most effective way of offsetting this disadvantage would be for the British Fleet to be reinforced by the United States Navy, so forming a joint force with a decisive superiority in naval strength over that of their Japanese opponents. Such a margin of numerical supremacy was required because it was estimated that a fleet lost up to 40% of its effectiveness when fighting a long distance from its home naval bases. If Eden could succeed in obtaining the permission of the Roosevelt Administration for the movement of the fleet, or at least some of its battle strength, to Singapore, it would enable him to take an even stronger line in resisting the Japanese in the future. This was to become of great importance later in the year after international negotiations had failed to improve matters in the Far East, or restrain the Japanese

from committing further acts of extremism.

Another factor lay in the spectacular success of the Nyon Conference, which Eden attributed to Britain, France and the Mediterranean countries taking a firm line with the European dictatorships. There can be little doubt that he wished to reemploy these methods against the Japanese, if given the opportunity. Therefore, upon his return from Switzerland in mid-September he decided to take a more active role in the Far Eastern situation. He agreed with Cadogan that some way had to be found of bringing the war in China to an end. Even so, he was well aware of the difficulty he faced in trying to enlist American support for an active policy. In a letter to Earl de la Warr on 28 September 1937 Eden disclosed that unless and until the United States changed their policy, the European situation precluded the British from attempting any unilateral action in the Far East.[1] He followed this by stating at a Cabinet meeting on 29 September that though he had kept in touch with the State Department there was no more sign of any anxiety on their part for joint action than there had been when the Cabinet had met previously. He also admitted he had been advised that any approach on Britain's part would embarrass the Roosevelt Government and perhaps interfere with the good relations which had been established between them in recent months.[2] Having said that he did

[1] Avon Papers, Eden to Earl De La Warr, 28 Sept. 1937, FE/37/9.

[2] Cabinet meeting Cab 35(37), 29 Sept. 1937, Cab 23/89.

not rule out approaching the United States in the last resort, Eden decided not to wait for an emergency to develop but to press ahead immediately with another attempt at seeking joint Anglo-American intervention in the Far East. On this occasion he was to use Cadogan's suggestion for a trade embargo against Japan. In his draft telegram to Washington, Eden explained the reason for his proposal by stating that there was a strong feeling, not only in Britain, that effective international action should be taken to bring pressure to bear on the Japanese. In his autobiography, Eden records that he recognized that the British could not ask the Americans about their attitude without informing them of their own. Therefore, his telegram had made it clear that the British Government would be ready to consider any action likely to shorten the Sino-Japanese war, if they were convinced of its effectiveness.[1] Eden discussed his draft telegram with Vansittart before leaving for a long weekend in Yorkshire. After his departure, Vansittart took the draft to the Prime Minister and Chamberlain rewrote the final paragraph to the effect that the British Government were not convinced that this type of action would be effective but they would be ready to examine the question with the Americans, if they thought it was worthwhile. In his diary entry for 2 October, Oliver Harvey records Eden's great annoyance at this amendment, which he regarded as

[1] Avon, op.cit., p.534.

an invitation to the United States to reject the idea and one which they would seize upon in order to say it was the British who did not think action would be effective.

> He was in no way appeased when told that these were the ipsissima verba of the P.M. and complained that he should have been told at once of such change. We rang up Washington but found that action had been taken yesterday so that it was impossible to cancel it. He therefore decided to send a second telegram instructing Mallet to go again to State Department under pretext of impressing them with urgency for an early reply and to say that 'whether or not action would be effective was obviously a matter for examination and we should be very glad to join in such examination with U.S. Government if they felt able to do so.' In other words, to emphasise that the British attitude was an open and unprejudiced one on the subject and that we really were anxious to examine possibilities with the U.S.
> The truth is that here again there is a divergence between A.E. and P.M. as latter is strongly opposed to any sort of economic boycott in the Far East even with U.S.A. A.E., on the other hand, would welcome joint action with U.S.A.[1]

If Eden thought that an economic boycott would be an effective instrument of Government policy, the Admiralty certainly did not share his opinion. Alarmed by reports of economic sanctions, the Admiralty contacted the Foreign Office warning them that economic measures would not restrain the Japanese and that the Americans could not be counted upon to assist the British militarily if the Japanese retaliated. They also pointed out that a conflict in East Asia would tempt Germany and Italy to take action in Europe and that the British were incapable of fighting three major powers simultaneously. As far as the Admiralty

[1] The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey, 1937-1940, ed. J. Harvey (Collins, London, 1970), pp.48-49.

were concerned, the Foreign Office should consider the possibility of sanctions only if the United States gave definite assurances to the British in advance that they would be willing to provide full military support for the measure.[1] This letter, outlining the dangers inherent in organising an effective sanctions policy, appears to have made a deep impression upon the Foreign Office and exposed a fundamental difference of opinion between some of its most influential members. Charles Orde, for example, was one of many who hoped that the Americans would find compelling reasons for rejecting the call for sanctions and so avoiding the risk of becoming engaged in a war with Japan.[2] It was not so much the advocacy of a tougher policy towards the Japanese that was to cause these schisms within the Foreign Office. It was more the specific methods chosen to exert pressure upon them that was to become the focus of inter-departmental discontent and set the Foreign Secretary increasingly at variance with the majority of his Cabinet colleagues.[3]

Eden's call for economic measures against Japan appears to have confused the American Government as much as it may have worried some members of the British. This can be gauged from the apparent discrepancy between the State Department's response and the message that the

[1] Admiralty to Foreign Office, M.05282/37, F 7372/6799/10, 4 Oct. 1937, FO 371/21014.
[2] Minute by C. Orde, F 7372/6799/10, 5 Oct. 1937, FO 371/21014.
[3] Harvey, Diaries, pp.50-51, p.56.

President proclaimed at Chicago on 5 October in the course of his famous Quarantine Speech. Roosevelt's message appeared to be a strident call for action on the part of peace-loving nations. In his address, he complained:

> The peace, the freedom and the security of ninety percent of the population of the world is being jeopardised by the remaining ten percent who are threatening a breakdown of all international order and law. . . . It seems to be unfortunately true that the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease.[1]

Although he stated his determination to avoid involvement in war, Roosevelt pointed out that the United States could not have complete protection in a world in which confidence and security had broken down. In particular, he stressed that the peace loving nations would have to express their views in such a way as to deter those countries who might otherwise be tempted to violate agreements and the rights of others.

Unfortunately, Roosevelt's liking for analogy cast a veil of ambiguity over the most important part of his speech.[2] Whatever the President's intentions may have

[1] The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, ed. S.I. Rosenman (Macmillan & Co., Vol.1937, 1941), p. 410.

[2] Harold Ickes appears to have been the source of the quarantine analogy used by Roosevelt in his speech at Chicago. Ickes, Diary, p.222.
Although Roosevelt may have wished to use the speech to test public opinion on the issue, he may not have fully realised all the implications of his quaint analogy. In fact, the President told Norman Davis that he wished to find some phrase which conveyed a certain impression without implying hostility against Japan. Therefore, he (cont.)

been, the reaction of public and media opinion both within the United States and throughout the rest of the world was immediate.[1] While the speech was welcomed by the British popular press, it drew less than enthusiastic comments from members of the Government and departmental officials. Apart from the inexplicit nature of the speech, Chamberlain regarded the analogy used by Roosevelt as being particularly inapposite, since, as he explained, patients suffering from epidemic diseases did not usually go about fully armed.[2] At the Admiralty, Chatfield expressed concern, believing that the speech would do more harm than good by encouraging the anti-Japanese enthusiasts. Even within the Foreign Office, senior civil servants, such as Holman, Orde, and Orme Sargent professed

---

(cont.)
neither wanted to use the word 'sanctions', nor any other words which might seem to indicate that hostile action was a possibility. 'Quarantine' was, he explained, the best word he could find.
Clive to Foreign Office (from Malcolm MacDonald), No. 83, 22 Nov. 1937, Cab 43(37) Cab 23/90A.

1 In Germany and Japan the speech was violently denounced but it drew favourable comment in Britain, France and even in Russia. In the United States the press response was variable. While those newspapers that were traditionally isolationist in sentiment condemned it out of hand, the other members of the national press received it fairly sympathetically, and such leading journals as the Washington Post and the New York Times warmly endorsed the views expressed by the President. For further details see Mallet to Eden, No. 28, A 7544/448/45, FO 414/274.

2 N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Hilda, 9 Oct. 1937, NC 18/1/1023.

to see little substance in the President's statements.[1]

Eden, on the other hand, naturally welcomed Roosevelt's speech because, for all its ambiguity, it seemed to express the President's willingness to consider closer American involvement in world affairs, a situation which the British Foreign Secretary had been hoping to secure for several months. Its timing was also fortuitous. On the day following Roosevelt's speech Eden informed the Cabinet that the League of Nations was likely to pass a resolution containing an indication, without actually naming her that Japan had committed an act of aggression. The second part would contain a suggestion for summoning a meeting of the signatories of the Nine Power Treaty of 1922. He felt that this would allow the Americans the opportunity to provide as much cooperation as possible, which, in the light of the President's speech, meant probable participation in an international conference to be convened on the subject of China.[2]

After some discussion the Cabinet decided to ask the United States what was meant by the speech. This rather cautious approach was in line with what Chamberlain had recommended. He told the Cabinet that he could not imagine

[1] Holman thought that there was still not much chance of securing active American cooperation in the Far East and no possibility of obtaining an initiative from the United States. Orde agreed with The Times that Roosevelt was merely defining an attitude and not a programme, and Orme Sargent saw it as a ballon d'essai intended to test the temper of American public opinion, especially in the Middle West where isolationism remained strong. For their minutes on this subject see FO 371/20667.

[2] Cab.meeting 36(37), 6 Oct. 1937, Cab 23/89.

anything more suicidal than to pick a quarrel with Japan at a time when the European situation had become so serious. "If this country were to become involved in the Far East the temptation to the Dictator States to take action, whether in Eastern Europe or in Spain, might be irresistible."[1] Although questioning the American commitment to economic sanctions, Chamberlain did not underrate the importance of Roosevelt's statement as a warning to the dictator powers that there was a point beyond which the United States would not permit them to go. On the whole, however, the Prime Minister felt that the President had rather embarrassed the situation.[2]

Chamberlain's reticence appeared justified, when, at a press conference held a few hours later on 6 October, Roosevelt sought to dispel the idea that his quarantine speech contained implicit suggestions for collaboration with other nations, which, if implemented, would repudiate the existing United States neutrality legislation. He argued that, if anything, the quest for peace he had envisaged was compatible with and even an expansion of the laws of neutrality. When asked whether that meant economic sanctions, the President replied: "No, not necessarily. Look, 'sanctions' is a terrible word to use. They are out of the window." In rejecting the likelihood of a conference of the peace loving nations, Roosevelt stated his belief that conferences were also out of the window,

1 ibid.
2 ibid.

adding: "You never get anywhere with a conference." And as to the question of whether a quarantine was a sanction, he simply answered "No".[1] These replies showed the degree to which the President had retreated from the aggressive stance that he appeared to be taking in his highly opinionated speech at Chicago. His speech writer Samuel Rosenman recalled afterwards that the hostile reaction of the American public and those who condemned it as sabre rattling and war mongering caused this rapid and fundamental change of policy. Although his speech was to get support from some quarters within the United States, there is not much doubt that the President was bitterly disappointed with the general response. His sense of disillusionment may be gauged from a remark he made to Rosenman at the time: "It's a terrible thing to look over your shoulder when you are trying to lead--and to find no one there."[2] But whether the President's speech was an attempt to educate the public to appreciate the limitations of isolationism or not, the fact was that within a day of his momentous announcement, for reasons of political expediency, he had withdrawn his remarks. His quarantine analogy apparently no longer held good and even an international conference seemed a remote contingency.

Despite the President's assurance that a quarantine was not a sanction, the reaction of the Service Ministries

[1] Rosenman, The Public Papers of F.D.R., Vol. 1937, 400th Press Conference, 6 Oct. 1937, pp.422-425.

[2] S.I. Rosenman, Working with Roosevelt (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1952), p.162.

in the United Kingdom remained cautious and apprehensive. This feeling of uneasiness reflected both a lack of confidence in American intentions in the Far East and a realisation of their own military deficiencies. Chatfield had already voiced his belief that, if there was any trouble in the Far East resulting from a joint policy with the United States, the Americans would stand aside. He opposed sanctions and stated his conviction that the British had enough problems in Europe without looking for more in the Far East.[1] He was supported by the General Staff who were also disturbed about the possible drift of events in China, most specifically those in Shanghai and Hong Kong.[2] This fear of war, inspired by the possible use of sanctions by the western powers, remained even though the League of Nations was seeking a peaceful solution to the dispute.

Chamberlain evidently shared this feeling of unease. In a letter to his sister Hilda, the Prime Minister mentioned that the opposition parties in Britain had interpreted the speech as meaning that the U.S.A. would put economic sanctions on Japan if Britain would do the same. He contrasted this with Lindsay's conversations in Washington which revealed that the Roosevelt Administration had a fear of encouraging a trade boycott and were anxious to to know what the British were proposing to do. This con-

[1] National Maritime Museum, (Chatfield Papers), Correspondence with Sir Roger Backhouse, 8 Oct. 1937, CHT/4/1.
[2] Cab.meeting 36(37), 6 Oct. 1937, Cab 23/89.

firmed his impression that the Quarantine Speech was merely a ballon d'essai and that the President had no immediate intention of doing anything that was not perfectly safe.

> Now in the present state of European affairs with the two dictators in a thoroughly nasty temper we simply cannot afford to quarrel with Japan and I very much fear therefore that after a lot of bally ho o the Americans will somehow fade out & leave us to carry all the blame & the odium. It is not a pleasant prospect, but I am setting my mind now to see how we can avoid it and I think some straight speaking to U.S.A. (in private) before they go any further will be necessary. It is particularly exasperating that when I asked U.S.A. to make a joint démarche at the very beginning of the dispute they refused. At that time before the Japs were involved it might have stopped the whole thing. Now they jump in, without saying a word to us beforehand, without knowing what they mean to do. We were carrying on some quiet talks with the Japs which might or might not have come to something but of course these are now wrecked and I fear one effect of Roosevelt's speech may be to cause the Germans & Italians to draw much closer to the Japs.[1]

He admitted, however, that the psychological effect of the sudden abandonment of America's attitude of complete detachment could be useful in deterring the totalitarian powers from increasing their territorial strength at the expense of the democracies. For this reason Chamberlain had thought it prudent not to commit himself to anything while giving the appearance of believing that Roosevelt meant much more by his proposal than may have been justified. Chamberlain's pragmatism soon had its rewards.

Despite reacting sharply to what he saw as British

[1] N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Hilda, 9 Oct. 1937, NC 18/1/1023.

intrigue in urging the Dutch to call a conference of the signatories to the Nine Power Treaty, and having publicly expressed his reservations about what it could be expected to achieve, Roosevelt broadcast an endorsement of the conference in a radio address on 12 October.[1] In announcing the news that he would be sending a delegation to Brussels, the President stated that the purpose of the conference would be seek by agreement among the signatory powers an effective solution to the existing situation in China. Having received presidential confirmation of American participation in the forthcoming conference, the Prime Minister, at the Cabinet meeting on 13 October, spoke of the value of reaching an understanding with the United States on the line to be taken by the two powers at the meeting in Brussels. In discussing the possibility of invoking sanctions against Japan, Chamberlain rehearsed the disadvantages of the scheme; he argued with the Service Ministers that it would be an action likely to endanger British interests elsewhere in the Far East and repeated his assertion that it would be unsafe to allow the fleet to sail half way around the world to deal with the Japanese while the situation in Europe remained as it

[1] Ickes, Diary, pp.228-229.
Rosenman, The Public Papers of F.D.R., Vol. 1937, Fireside Chat, 12 Oct. 1937, p.437.
As a result of the United States obligations to China under the Washington Treaties, the President had little option other than to accept the invitation to the Brussels Conference. It would have been undiplomatic to have turned down such a request even though he doubted the value of the conference and its likely outcome.

was at this time. Chamberlain concluded that the British could not afford to be involved in sanctions unless they received a guarantee from the United States that the latter would be prepared to face up to all the consequences which might befall those nations with large interests in the Far East. Supported by other ministers this view prevailed in the Cabinet and it was left to the Foreign Secretary to register a mildly dissenting opinion stressing the need to avoid giving the Americans the opportunity of saying that they could have cleared up the situation in China but for the unwillingness on the part of the British.[1]

In drawing up a message for the Americans, Eden attempted to steer a middle course between his own views and those of the majority of his Cabinet colleagues. In effect, this involved stressing the disadvantages of sanctions while giving support to other measures intended to bring about a peaceful resolution of the China Incident. His concern over appearing to lag behind the Americans was quite unjustified. Because, important though the Assembly's call had been in persuading the Roosevelt Administration to shift their position and agree to send a U.S. delegation to the Brussels Conference, the possibility of finding an effective solution to the Far Eastern problem was slight. In fact, even before his message was received, Roosevelt had taken occasion to warn the British Government that he could neither be expected to be

[1] Cab.meeting 37(37), 13 Oct. 1937, Cab 23/89.

an exponent of their foreign policy nor someone who could march ahead of American public opinion. Informing Wickham Steed that the British must resist the temptation to try and push him to the front or to thrust leadership upon him, Roosevelt recalled that his position on China was not essentially different from the "good neighbour" policy he had adopted in the past in dealing with the South and Central American states.[1] As it was most unlikely that the Americans would provide a guarantee of military support to the other signatory powers, the possibility of invoking or applying sanctions was remote.[2]

Eden, however, remained unimpressed by the diplomatic alternatives to sanctions. In a note to Hull on 19 October he reemphasised his conviction that moral condemnation would be as ineffective as doing nothing. Hull did not dispute the point. But, as Roosevelt told Norman Davis, the purpose of the conference was conciliation and since American public opinion was still against involvement overseas, the question of whether sanctions would prove effective or not was merely academic.[3]

[1] Wickham Steed to Vansittart, 13 Oct. 1937, FO 371/20663. Eden to Lindsay, No.30, A 7748/228/45, FO 414/274.

[2] In a diary entry for 9 Oct. 1937, Ickes records that at a recent Cabinet meeting Swanson had said that the Navy Staff felt that if the Americans wanted to chastise Japan this was the time to do it. The President is alleged to have replied: "Claude, I am a pacifist." Ickes, Diary, p.226.

[3] At a meeting between Norman Davis and Roosevelt on 19 October 1937 the President stressed that the United States should neither be pushed out in front as the leader in, or suggestor of, future action nor merely be seen as a tail to the British kite. F.D.R. Library, (President F.D. Roosevelt's Papers), note on meeting between Davis and the President, PSF Box 88.

The Prime Minister expressed this mood accurately in the Cabinet meeting of 20 October by concluding:

> It was clear now that the Government of the United States of America had no intention of taking any decisive action in the Far East. The original apprehensions of the Cabinet lest they should urge sanctions without undertaking responsibility for the consequences, or alternatively, lay the blame on us for not applying sanctions, had not developed.[1]

Chamberlain's policy of restraint had been vindicated by the reluctance of the Americans to commit themselves in advance. His shrewd pragmatic approach had proved to be more realistic than Eden's futile attempts to grasp at the elusive form of Anglo-American cooperation which he desired. Malcolm MacDonald recalls that Dominion reaction was as one in adamantly opposing the threat of sanctions against Japan.[2] Their response was motivated by the desire for self-preservation, as was Chamberlain's. They had no desire to see war break out in the Far East in response to the imposition of sanctions by the western nations, because such a conflict was almost certain to involve them at a time when they could least afford to be engaged in hostilities. Their messages urging a cautious approach at the conference merely confirmed the line favoured by the Cabinet in limiting the role of the United Kingdom to one of basing its policy at Brussels on the course followed by that of the American delegation. After Eden had given such an undertaking to Parliament,

[1] Cab.meeting 38(37), 20 Oct. 1937, Cab 23/89.

[2] Conversation with Malcolm MacDonald in London, 10 Oct. 1978.

it appeared he would have to accept that his power to make bold, independent policy decisions had been severely restricted. If his parliamentary colleagues expected him to adopt a restrained and moderate role at the conference, however, they were destined to be deceived because both Eden and Norman Davis, the head of the American delegation, were prepared to exceed their instructions. It soon became apparent what this meant in practice.

Chapter Three: Preparing to Take a Firm Stand in the Far East (Nov. - Dec. 1937)

Arriving in Brussels on 2 November the Foreign Secretary met Davis later that morning and learnt that Roosevelt hoped to be able to make use of the conference to educate the American public to accept the realities of the international situation. According to Davis, Roosevelt felt that unless the Japanese were tackled soon they would begin by mopping up British possessions in the Far East and follow that by taking those belonging to the Dutch. In the absence of other western powers in the region, the Americans would have to confront the Japanese alone, if they were to prevent a further expansion of their military domination of the Far East. Davis explained that the President hoped public opinion in the United States would react, if the conference failed because of Japanese obstruction, and that this would then enable him to do something more.[1] For his part, Eden remarked that he shared the President's concern over the Far East and thought the only effective way of dispelling the threats from the Japanese would be for the British and Americans to stand together on the issue. He denied that the United States would have to bear the brunt of any retaliatory

[1] Clive to Foreign Office, No.76, 2 Nov. 1937, FO 371/21016. Harvey, Diaries, pp.54-55.

action from the Japanese and informed Davis that while the bulk of her fleet would have to remain in European waters, Britain could and would send some ships to her base at Singapore. Apart from expressing Britain's determination to base her policy on that followed by the United States at the conference, Eden also emphasised the point that if diplomatic efforts failed to improve matters in the Far East, Britain would be willing to join fully in putting direct pressure on Japan.[1]

On the face of it, Eden's offer to send British ships to the Far East ignored the current policy of the Cabinet, his undertaking to Parliament, and dominion apprehensions about suggesting anything that might provoke the Japanese into taking action. Moreover, as he knew that the Prime Minister had already indicated his opposition to any plan entailing the despatching of ships to the Far East, Eden's attitude seems quite extraordinary. Nonetheless, it is doubtful whether he was as Machiavellian as his statement to Davis seemed to imply. In fact, it may be seen as being more of a diplomatic ploy designed to elicit information from his American counterpart than anything else. By informing Davis about the lengths to which the British would be prepared to go in supporting an active policy in the Far East, Eden may have been hoping to encourage the Americans to go further themselves than they otherwise might have been prepared

[1] National Archives, (Department of State Papers), Davis to Hull, No. 10, 2 Nov. 1937, 793.94 Conf/776.

to do if they felt the British were unwilling to take action with them in resolving the Sino-Japanese dispute.

On the American side, the suggestion that the President had something more to offer, was a clear indication that Davis at least was prepared to consider and discuss adopting a more vigorous policy towards the Japanese than had formerly been the case. Although the idea of taking tougher economic measures against Japan may not in itself have been inconsistent with Roosevelt's views on what was required, it is much less certain whether the President actually meant Davis to imply this to Eden. Indeed he had gone so far as to warn Davis on 19 October of the limitations of American policy and had stressed that the United States were unwilling to become involved in any scheme for joint action in the Far East with the League of Nations.[1]

Despite having been forewarned about the dangers of either taking the initiative at the conference or of being merely an unwilling accomplice of the British, Norman Davis still seemed fully prepared to exceed his brief. His indiscretions tended both to raise momentarily the hopes and aspirations of those seeking some form of Anglo-American cooperation and of creating the illusion of an effective solution to the Far Eastern question. If sanctions were impermissible, as both governments had suggested they were, Davis chose to ignore the fact and

[1] F.D.R. Papers, PSF Box 88.

talked openly to Eden about the need for an economic boycott, if everything else failed to bring about a peaceful settlement. On 5 November he declared:

> I'll tell you, we won't put on any of these sanctions, We will just refuse to buy Japanese goods, that's what we'll do. We won't refuse to allow our ships to take their goods, or our goods to go to them - we will just refuse to buy.[1]

When Eden, who was back in London to report on the progress of the conference, told Chamberlain about Davis's proposal, the Prime Minister, alarmed by the news, rejected the plan on the basis that it was nothing more than an ill-disguised attempt at sanctions which he refused to impose.[2] While Eden may not have been an enthusiastic supporter of the plan, he certainly did not want to upset the Americans by appearing to be indifferent to their designs. After all, he had been trying for several months to obtain their agreement on joint action and he did not want to do anything now which could jeopardise this much sought after cooperation. He persuaded Chamberlain to agree that Davis should not be informed of his opposition at least for the time being. It was not much more than an attempt by the Foreign Secretary to play for time in the hope that some other respectable scheme could be found.

Armed with this rather unsatisfactory agreement not to divulge the true extent of Chamberlain's dislike for economic measures against Japan, Eden returned to

1 Avon, Facing the Dictators, p.538.
2 Avon, op.cit., p.539.

Brussels. Once there he conveniently overlooked the Cabinet's resistance to active involvement in the Far East and promptly embarked upon a series of meetings with Davis in which he pressed for more tangible evidence of American willingness to involve themselves in this area. His suggestion that the British would be willing to send ships to the Far East to mount a naval demonstration with the Americans seems to have been borne out of a growing sense of frustration with the pathetically inconclusive nature of the Brussels Conference. What early promise there may have been for this international gathering had been quickly and effectively extinguished by the refusal of the Japanese Government to either attend its sessions or recognise its decisions and by the obstructive tactics employed by the Italians, whose sole aim appeared to be to cause the maximum dislocation possible. To make matters worse the other delegations appeared very unwilling to commit themselves to any action at all. As a result, any opportunity there may have been for constructive discussions with a view to ensuring a peaceful and equitable settlement of the China Incident was irredeemably lost. While it may be easy to understand and appreciate Eden's concern in searching for an effective deterrent against Japanese aggression, he clearly went too far both in promising more than his ministerial colleagues would agree to and pledging Britain to do more than she could reasonably have been expected to do. Even if he had been able to carry the British Cabinet with him on this issue he had virtually no chance of being able to persuade the

Roosevelt Administration to agree to such a threatening gesture. Not even the U.S. Navy Department were prepared to go that far.[1] Since neither Government seemed likely to accept the plan, let alone implement it, the possibility of Eden either using it as a trial balloon or as an attempt to 'educate' both sides to appreciate the existence of an alternative solution to sanctions cannot be ruled out. But it is also evident that he still hoped that joint Anglo-American cooperation could be achieved providing both countries agreed to share the risks involved.[2]

If Eden can be accused of exceeding or ignoring his instructions, the same criticism can be made of Davis.[3] The fact that both diverged from the prescribed policy laid down by others when this conflicted with their own ideas on the best line to adopt is hardly surprising given the self-confidence each had in his own abilities. Although well versed in the arts of diplomacy both remained mindful of its shortcomings and conscious of

1 For an insight into U.S. Navy Department thinking on this issue see Yarnell Papers, Yarnell to Leahy, 15 Oct. 1937 and Leahy's reply of 10 Nov. 1937, Box 4.

2 Avon Papers, Eden to George VI, undated, FE/37/10.

3 Welles informed Lindsay on 12 November that Davis had obviously gone too far in suggesting that the U.S. Government might suspend trading operations with the Japanese or that they might even refuse to recognise their territorial conquests. He said that the most that could be expected from Brussels was the creation of a standing committee to examine future possibilities. For further details see Avon, op. cit., pp. 539 - 540.

the need to support paper decrees by action if necessary. In the past both had been allowed to exercise a persuasive influence upon matters of policy and both had come to relish this degree of independence. Davis, as a roving envoy for Roosevelt, had enjoyed his role as an international arbiter and diplomat, while Eden remained grateful for the virtual free hand he had been given to deal with foreign affairs by an uninterested Baldwin. Eden, though responsive to the need for support from his Prime Minister, certainly came to resent any encroachment upon what he saw as his own sphere by Chamberlain and others equally inexperienced in the realm of foreign affairs.[1] He was not used to it and did not like sharing his duties or dividing his power with the Prime Minister. His growing disaffection with this aspect of his ministerial responsibility becomes evident from this time onwards. Chamberlain could not be regarded as someone who would rubber stamp Eden's handling of foreign policy.[2] He came increasingly to interpose a different approach to that of the Foreign Secretary; sometimes to countermand Eden's instructions and at others deciding upon a course of action without reference to or consent from his colleague.

[1] Conversation with Malcolm MacDonald, 10 Oct. 1978.

[2] This had been evident for some time. For instance, in writing to his sister Ida on 8 August 1937 Chamberlain had noted:

> As Ch. of Ex. I could hardly have moved a pebble: now I have only to raise a finger and the whole face of Europe is changed!

N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Ida, 8 Aug. 1937, NC 18/1/1015.

As a working partnership, therefore, this relationship left much to be desired. Eden did not sympathise with Chamberlain's policy towards the dictatorships and Chamberlain felt little warmth for his Foreign Secretary's overtures to the Americans. Neither felt that the other's policy was truly realistic and each remained convinced of the correctness of his own. While both continued the search for an instrument capable of realising their grand design or master strategy, policies which appear now as being mutually exclusive, Chamberlain and Eden came to display a far from united front. It was this attitude of self-belief more than anything else which came to dictate the way each performed his tasks.

In the meantime, however, the decision of the Italians, disclosed earlier in November, to join the Anti-Comintern Pact underlined the worsening situation in Europe and the problems for the British in dealing with a changing and unfavourable balance of power. Although the decision itself did not come as a surprise and only confirmed what the British had suspected for some time, it was the potentialities of the tripartite pact which caused considerable concern. For instance, if the Italians could assist the Germans in bringing about a Nationalist victory in Spain by sending troops and material to Franco's forces, the repercussions for British foreign policy would be immense. An establishment of a fascist regime in Spain, friendly to Germany and Italy, would be a severe handicap to British naval

strategy. Situated at the vitally important western end of the Mediterranean, Spain would be ideally placed to hamper, disrupt and seriously affect shipping in the western basin, if she so desired. Despite its formidable natural defences, Gibraltar could hardly be expected to survive for long should the Spaniards decide to attack the colony. By overrunning Gibraltar, capturing its vital gun emplacements, and skilfully using any naval forces placed at their disposal by the Italians and Germans, the Spaniards could effectively command the Straits and bottle up the British and French Fleets.

Fortunately for the British, however, the strategic situation in the Eastern Mediterranean did not appear as grim as it seemed west of Malta, and the COS remained confident of Britain's ability to survive and win a war against Italy.[1] However, none of the Service Chiefs doubted the capacity of the Italians to create serious trouble in the Middle East and North Africa. Their nuisance value was high and it was this that Eden hoped to diminish by adopting a firmer policy in the Mediterranean. In his opinion, a more vigorous policy there might soon enable the British to present a stronger front to Japan. The major flaw in Eden's argument, however, rested in his advocacy of a tough line with Mussolini, for in adopting a strong policy he risked antagonising the Duce and exacerbating the already

[1] For a fuller examination of this subject see L.R. Pratt, East of Malta, West of Suez (Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1975), pp.106-134.

potentially explosive situation in the Mediterranean. Moreover, by increasing the tension in the Mediterranean in this way, the British would need the French Navy more than ever in an attempt to provide an effective counter to the Italian Fleet. Consequently, everything would hinge on whether the French Government were prepared to maintain their vigilant stance in the Mediterranean virtually on their own, while the bulk of the British Navy were engaged in the Far East. Though he may have been confident of the eventual outcome, Eden could not be certain that the French would consent to take on this onerous task. Should the French Government show a disinclination to supervise affairs in the Mediterranean, Eden's plan to deal in force with the Japanese would be fatally compromised; for it would be inconceivable to send off more than three quarters of the fleet to a destination some ten thousand miles and at least six weeks steaming time away from an acutely vulnerable home base.

The nature of the strategic problem confronting the British was revealed by the Chiefs of Staff in a report circulated on 12 November comparing the projected military strength at the Government's disposal on 1 January 1938 with that of certain other nations. In their assessment, the outstanding feature was the increasing probability that a war begun in either Europe, the Mediterranean or the Far East might extend to one or both of the other two areas. This report appeared to endorse and justify the policy of appeasement with which the

Prime Minister was becoming closely associated.[1] In supporting the Chamberlain line it seemed to be arguing against, or at least discouraging, the Eden philosophy of carrying the struggle to the aggressor.

> Without overlooking the assistance which we should hope to obtain from France, and possibly other allies, we cannot foresee the time when our defence forces will be strong enough to safeguard our territory, trade and vital interests against Germany, Italy and Japan simultaneously. We cannot, therefore, exaggerate the importance, from the point of view of Imperial defence, of any political or international action that can be taken to reduce the numbers of our potential enemies and to gain the support of potential allies.[2]

A few days later the Cabinet turned its attention to another report which also seemed to stress the need for caution when dealing with the dictatorships.[3] Nearly two months had elapsed since Chatfield had provided the Cabinet Sub-Committee on British Shipping in the Far East with his views on the possible reinforcement of British naval forces in this area. In rejecting the idea of despatching two capital ships to the Far East, the Cabinet agreed with Chatfield that the plan would be counter-productive, since it would certainly not deter the Japanese and it could provide them with an excuse to attack the two British battleships. On the other hand, Chatfield had recognised that sending a larger, more adequate force, such as eight or nine capital ships, to the South China Seas was also dangerous. Not only was

1 CP 296(37), para.42, 12 Nov. 1937, Cab 24/273.
2 ibid.
3 Cab. meeting 42(37), 19 Nov. 1937, Cab 23/89.

there a possibility that the British Fleet might not succeed in subduing the Japanese Navy, but also the drastic reduction in British naval forces in both Home and Mediterranean waters would be such as to render them wholly incapable of defending the British Isles against a sudden and pre-emptive attack from any of her European rivals. Such a sorry predicament exposed the deficiencies of working to the existing D.R.C. standard of naval strength.

It also made Chamberlain even more reluctant to issue any threats to the Japanese or engage in any active policy in the Far East.[1] But once the Brussels Conference had been finally abandoned as a total failure, the issue of considering what ought to constitute Britain's Far Eastern policy could not be long delayed. At a meeting of the Cabinet on 24 November Eden reported that the situation in the Far East was deteriorating, particularly from the point of view of British interests, and he cited the current difficulties concerning the Chinese maritime customs at Tientsin and Shanghai. It was not surprising, therefore, given his consistent support for a joint démarche with the United States, and in the light of the obvious failure of the Brussels Conference to find, let alone agree upon, a satisfactory resolution of the Sino-Japanese War, that the Foreign Secretary used this occasion to underline his belief in Anglo-American

[1] N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Hilda, 21 Nov. 1937, NC 18/1/1029.

cooperation as being ultimately the most effective vehicle for bringing an improvement in Far Eastern affairs. Eden informed the Cabinet that he thought the time might come when the Government would have to approach the United States Government and ask if they would send ships to the Far East, if the British would do the same. He did so because he felt that the situation in the Far East would continue to deteriorate unless something in the form of a naval demonstration in force was finally resorted to in a concerted attempt to bring the Japanese to order.[1]

In drawing the Cabinet discussion to a conclusion, the Prime Minister agreed it was clear that the British could not put forceful pressure on the Japanese without the cooperation of the United States. While he had no objection to an approach being made to them, he felt sure that the reply would be that American interests were not sufficient to justify the despatch of ships and that American public opinion was not much concerned.[2]

As a result of the Cabinet's decision to agree to an approach being made to the United States Government, a draft telegram was prepared within the Foreign Office for eventual transmission to Ambassador Lindsay at Washington. Unlike some of the earlier

[1] Cab.meeting 43(37), 24 Nov. 1937, Cab 23/89.
[2] ibid.

Foreign Office initiatives, on this occasion, the Admiralty were kept fully informed about the terms of the offer. In fact, on 26 November Eden's private secretary, Oliver Harvey, sent a copy of the draft to H.V. Markham, the Principal Private Secretary to the First Lord of the Admiralty, asking for Duff Cooper's opinion of it to be relayed to the Foreign Office within a few hours.[1] On the same day Cadogan met the First Sea Lord and discussed the contents of the draft telegram which had been prepared for despatch to Washington. In a minute, dated 26 November, Cadogan recalls that Chatfield was not quite sure how far the Cabinet in reaching their conclusions on 24 November had realised that a considerable operation was entailed:

> In the first place, even assuming American cooperation, it would be unsound to send out a comparatively small fleet which in cooperation with an American naval force would be equal to the Japanese. Before ever the two forces joined, the Japanese might be able to deal in detail with one or other or both. It was therefore necessary to contemplate sending a force that would almost be able to cope single-handed with the Japanese fleet. That necessitated mobilisation. Admiral Chatfield made it clear that of course he was prepared to do whatever was required, but he was not sure that the Cabinet had fully realised the implications.[2]

On the question of United States cooperation with Britain in the Far East, Chatfield laid considerable emphasis on the risk attached to making an offer to the Americans, the knowledge of which, if leaked by them, would expose

[1] Harvey to Markham, 26 Nov. 1937, F10024/220/10G, FO 371/20959.

[2] Cadogan minute, F10024/220/10G, 26 Nov. 1937, FO 371/20959.

the British to the unbridled fury of the Japanese. He hoped, therefore, that it might be possible to reword the telegram in such a way as to make it a sounding of the American Government as to their views, rather than as an indication that the British were prepared to do something provided the Americans would follow. Cadogan disclosed that the telegram was re-drafted in order to make this latter point clear.[1]

Chatfield's concern was justified, because it was evident from Cadogan's recent conversation with Stanley K. Hornbeck, the Political Advisor to the State Department's Far Eastern Section, that under existing circumstances the British must not expect any action against, or pressure upon Japan by the United States Government. Hornbeck had apparently confided in Cadogan telling him that as things stood the President would be quite unable to order the American Fleet west of Hawaii. For his part, Cadogan concluded that if the British showed the Americans that they were prepared to send a fleet to the Far East, this might enable the United States Government to depart from the attitude which Dr. Hornbeck had indicated, even though he personally very much doubted it.[2]

It is apparent from the Foreign Office papers that Eden did not prepare the telegram which was sent as No. 561 of 27 November to Ambassador Lindsay. On the contrary, he neither drafted the original nor was involved in the

[1] Cadogan minute, F10024/220/10G, 26 Nov. 1937, FO 371/20959.
[2] ibid.

second and final drafting stage. He approved its content, which was written in the first instance by Cadogan and amended by the Permanent Under-Secretary and Chatfield on 26 November. Cadogan's original draft was marked 'Personal and Secret' and was prepared for Ambassador Lindsay with copies intended for Peking, Tokyo, and the British Embassy Offices at Shanghai.

> His Majesty's Government have reached the conclusion that the Japanese Government are unlikely to be effectively deterred by mere representations from damaging seriously the international interests represented by the Chinese customs. Moreover general Japanese attitude shows signs of increasing disregard for rights of third parties or even for the normal courtesies of international life. In the circumstances His Majesty's Government would seriously consider increasing their naval forces in the Far East with the object of demonstrating to the Japanese Government that they are prepared in the last resort to support these representations by a display of force, provided that the United States Government are willing to take similar action. Please therefore enquire of the United States Government whether they would despatch a suitable number of capital ships, say to the neighbourhood of Manila, on the understanding that His Majesty's Government would simultaneously move an agreed number of their capital ships to Singapore.[1]

After the discussion between Chatfield and Cadogan, the telegram's final paragraph was recast into the following form and despatched as No. 561 to Ambassador Lindsay:

> Please therefore inform the United States Government that if they are ready to consider such action, we should be willing to enter into Staff conversations with the United States authorities with a view to consider appropriate and adequate combined steps.[2]

[1] Draft telegram Foreign Office to Lindsay, Nov. 1937, F10024/220/10G, FO 371/20959.

[2] Eden to Lindsay, No. 561, F10024/220/10G, 27 Nov. 1937, FO 371/20959.

Another draft was prepared for despatch to Sir Eric Phipps in Paris, but this was suspended on the Foreign Secretary's instructions. Although no explanation is given for Eden's decision not to send this particular message at this time, the draft, which had been marked for circulation to the Admiralty, is interesting because it not only requests the Ambassador to inform the French Government of the gist of the Foreign Secretary's telegram to Washington, it also contained the following statement:

> While H.M.G. appreciate that the French Government may not be in a position substantially to increase their naval establishment in the Far East, they would appreciate it if they could, in the event of agreement by the United States Government to the measures proposed, demonstrate their sympathy by a token reinforcement.[1]

Lindsay's reply, contained in telegram 433 of 27 November, reports that he had disclosed the substance of the Foreign Office telegram to Sumner Welles, the American Under-Secretary of State. Although Welles had agreed to convey Lindsay's message to the President, he had concluded their discussion by revealing that the State Department held the impression that, owing to the European situation, the British Government were unable to concentrate very great naval forces in the Far East. In the Foreign Office minute covering this despatch, N.B. Ronald and C.M. Orde responded to Lindsay's telegram by initialling the following statement:

[1] Draft telegram Foreign Office to Sir Eric Phipps, F10024/220/10G, FO 371/20959.

> This is not so discouraging as it might have been. It appears from Sir A. Cadogan's minute in F 10024/G that, if it came to moving ships to the Far East the Admiralty would want to send a large force and not merely a token one; so the Americans' apprehensions that they might have to hold the baby are not well founded.[1]

Nevertheless, since Lindsay had been given no supplementary information about the proposed size of the British naval contribution, he had been unable to provide Welles at their meeting on 27 November with any details concerning its quantitative or qualitative format.

On the following day Leahy conferred with Hull and a decision was reached between them to allow the Chief of Naval Operations to have a completely informal, unofficial talk with the British Naval Attaché in Washington on the possibility of a naval demonstration in Asiatic waters by the European Powers. On 29 November Leahy met Captain Bradley for this purpose, but the British Naval Attaché had no information to offer the C.N.O. on the prospects of any naval démarche by the interested European nations.[2] What was seen as the inability of the British to be specific about their naval plans in the Far East hardly encouraged the Americans to be more forthcoming themselves. Their reticence exemplified by Cordell Hull's attitude in his interview with Ambassador Lindsay on 29 November was, therefore, only to be expected, as was the news which reached the Foreign Office on 30 November of the

[1] Minutes by Chaplin, Ronald and Orde, F10138/G, FO 371/20959.

[2] Leahy Diary, entry for 29 Nov. 1937, p.140.

Secretary's decision to decline, at least for the time being, the British offer of joint staff discussions on naval policy.[1] A minute on Lindsay's telegram No. 437 put it succinctly:

> The fact that the U.S. Govt. are not prepared to agree to Staff talks whose effect might be as unfortunate on American public opinion as it would be salutary on the Japanese military - does not, of course, mean that if we indicated willingness to send a naval force to the Far East, the Americans might not be prepared to take similar action.[2]

Cadogan's marginalia "But we can't gamble on that" and his minute of 30 November confirmed that it was not very surprising that the Americans had been scared off by the British proposal. Sir Robert Vansittart, the Permanent Under-Secretary, appeared somewhat relieved that they had been. He minuted on 30 November:

> The Americans are declining, & it is perhaps just as well that they should do so. To embark on a venture of the magnitude stipulated - I have no doubt rightly - by Lord Chatfield, would be highly dangerous in the present moods of Italy and Germany and in the absence of any agreement with them.[3]

On the day Lindsay met Hull to discuss the British proposal for naval conversations, Cadogan had met Lord Chatfield once again, on Eden's instructions, to discuss the question of sending the fleet to the Far East. Eden's desire to become fully acquainted with leading Admiralty

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 437, 29 Nov. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.
[2] Minute, 1 Dec. 1937, F10254/G, FO 371/20960.
[3] Minute by Vansittart, F10138/G, 30 Nov. 1937, FO 371/20960.

opinion about his department's initiatives to the Americans on the Far Eastern question is particularly enlightening since the Admiralty papers do not reveal such close contact and intimacy. Cadogan's interview with the First Sea Lord and his lengthy memorandum of their meeting is instructive in this regard.

> On the assumption that the United States Government would not be willing to cooperate with us, Lord Chatfield said that we should have to send practically all our available naval forces to Singapore. He personally would prefer to send the battle-cruisers with the capital ships, but probably he would not be allowed to do so as these would be required to remain in home waters to deal with the "Deutschlands" in case of Germany giving trouble.[1]

Cadogan wrote that Chatfield was emphatic on the point that if the capital ships were to be sent to the Far East they would have to be accompanied by a considerable force of various types for which it would be necessary to denude both the Mediterranean and other stations. He believed that in this case every commissioned ship would have to be sent from these areas. Cadogan's memo also emphasised Chatfield's point that even if such a fleet were sent to the Far East it would have to act there on the defensive. While it might be effective in deterring the Japanese from making any attack upon British territory, he felt that it would not be effective in compelling the Japanese to do as the British wished in Shanghai, because it would not be able to undertake any

[1] Cadogan memorandum on suggested despatch of naval forces to the Far East, 29 Nov. 1937, F10284/G, FO 371/20960.

offensive operations off the China coast. Instead, it would have to remain based on Singapore and attempt, if necessary, to defend Hong Kong. His complaints about the ineffectiveness of a defensive strategy in controlling the Japanese in China were undoubtedly valid; for the Admiralty's plans for the despatch of *their* fleet to the Far East had not assumed that a large scale offensive against the Japanese could be mounted off the Chinese coast by the Royal Navy alone. After all, the Far Eastern naval undertaking had been given as a commitment to defend British possessions in the Far East and prevent the Japanese from carrying out any attack upon the Australasian dominions. It had not been seen as an opportunity for exercising pressure upon the Japanese to moderate their policies in China. Indeed at the time of the Imperial Conference the Japanese had yet to carry out their full scale invasion of Chinese territory. This only came after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 7 July. Although Chatfield admitted that the fleet's presence in Far Eastern waters could do something to bring economic pressure to bear upon Japan, he felt that the full effect of it could not be realised for one or two years. He acknowledged, however, that the situation would be different if the British were assured of American support. In this case, provided the level of American naval assistance was sufficient, it might be possible for the British, while retaining some ships in Home waters, to send a force to the Far East where it might be able to take action in conjunction with the United States Fleet. Nonetheless,

if Britain was forced to engage in a unilateral naval demonstration, the First Sea Lord was adamant in repeating that it would be useless and might even be dangerous for the Government to send anything less than a fleet composed of almost all their existing commissioned ships.[1]

In the face of these comments Cadogan underlined the importance of reaching an early decision at Cabinet level on the question of what policy Britain was going to adopt in dealing with the Japanese. He believed that it would be fatal to take any threatening action which would not in the long run be effective, as that could only provoke the Japanese and make them impossible to deal with. He also felt that if the British could not face the risks involved in taking effective action, they should not use any threatening language or take up any strong attitude which was based on an assumption that a display of naval strength could be arranged. While the situation might possibly be changed by the reply which the United States Government would give, he thought that until such an answer was received the British Government should be careful of what they said to the Japanese and the manner in which it might be said. Nevertheless, Cadogan suspected that the British might have to endure some encroachment by the Japanese upon their privileges and prestige in China, though they might be able to reduce this interference by diplomatic means.[2]

[1] Cadogan memorandum on suggested despatch of naval forces to the Far East, 29 Nov. 1937, F10284/G, FO 371/20960.
[2] ibid.

Ambassador Lindsay's telegram of 1 December sought to explain the American refusal to cooperate with the British by pointing out that public opinion was still isolationist in temperament and therefore hostile to any overseas adventure. Lindsay even doubted whether the State Department seriously contemplated the possibility of considering naval staff conversations at a later date. Despite this latest rejection, however, Lindsay discerned a growing intimacy in Anglo-American relations, although he warned the Foreign Office that it must still be considered as a "delicate plant which will be blasted by the first breath of publicity."[1]

On the following day, at a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, Chamberlain and Eden disagreed once more on the general strategy which Britain should pursue in her foreign policy. Eden felt that it was very important to maintain a close and confident relationship with the French Government and to coordinate efforts between them.

> It is of almost equal importance so to conduct our relations with the U.S. Government that the latter shall raise as few obstacles as possible, in case of grave emergency, either to the use of our naval power in exercise of economic pressure or, in spite of present neutrality legislation, to the grant of financial accomodation and the supply of munitions to this country and her allies from the United States. To go further, it must always be our constant aim in peacetime to increase as far as possible the likelihood of the U.S. giving us armed support in case of war.[2]

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 443, 1 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

[2] C.I.D. 303rd meeting, 2 Dec. 1937, Cab 2/8.

Eden went on to say that he thought it was a mistake to try to detach any one member of the tripartite pact by offers of support or acquiescence in the fulfilment of their objectives. "The aims of all three," he stated, "are in varying degrees inimical to British interests and a surrender to one might well be the signal for further concerted action on the part of all three powers."[1] Chamberlain disputed Eden's analysis and stated his belief that it would be a great mistake to count too much upon the assistance of France and the United States in the event of war. While conceding that the French Army was good he felt that its air force was deplorable. Although the United States were an immensely powerful nation, Chamberlain believed that it was impossible to rely upon them. While agreeing that they would probably enter a war on Britain's side eventually, he thought that they would only come in when it was too late to change things.[2] Alarmed by the prospect of a three front war and having no confidence in the United States' ability to help the British, Chamberlain much preferred a policy designed to reduce the number of Britain's potential enemies. Such a policy had been recommended by the Chiefs of Staff and was to become increasingly associated with the Prime Minister's attempts to appease the dictatorships.

[1] C.I.D. 303rd meeting, 2 Dec. 1937, Cab 2/8.
[2] ibid.

A day later, on 3 December, Eden met the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires and discussed at some length the international situation generally and the Far East in particular. He was informed by the Chargé that the Japanese intention of marching through the International Settlement would be bound to have a considerable effect on American opinion. Upon hearing this welcome news, Eden repeated that the British would at all times be ready to examine with the United States Government the possibility of joint action in the future. Eden's record of his conversation with Mr. Herschel Johnson reflects this continuing commitment to joint action in the Far East. Eden told Johnson that the present situation in China would probably grow worse, unless and until it was possible for effective action to be taken by other interested powers not involved in the warfare. His contention was that such a course was clearly impossible unless all the powers could share the risks between them. While the British Government were willing to discuss the possibility of moving warships to the Far East, they could not take action alone. Eden records that Johnson appeared to be in no way taken aback by what he had said and that the Chargé had undertaken to report their discussion by private letter to his Government.[1]

Shortly threreafter another minor incident of provocation took place which prompted the Foreign Office to

[1] Draft telegram by Eden for Lindsay, 6 Dec. 1937, F10651/G, FO 371/20960.

despatch a further and more explicit message to the Americans calling for assistance in the Far East. On 5 December, two British steamers, the Tuckuo and Tatung, were bombed by Japanese aircraft at Wuhu; the former being completely gutted and the latter beached full of water. Although the Japanese Admiral responsible replied with a message of regret for the incident, the Foreign Secretary used this latest incident as a pretext for sending a further message to the United States Government urging them to join with the British in bringing an end to the excesses of the Japanese military in China.

Eden's telegram No. 582 of 6 December 1937, marked 'No distribution', was drafted by Cadogan, approved by Vansittart who noted: "I think this is what the S. of S. wanted", and signed by the Foreign Secretary. As a message it was clear and reflected the current thinking of both the Foreign Office and the Admiralty on this question.

> Capital ship situation in Europe would at present admit of despatch to Far East of a fleet of British capital ships not inferior to Japanese. They would, however, have to be accompanied by a force of cruisers, destroyers, etc.,to provide which we should have seriously to denude all our other stations. Even though such a fleet were to be despatched to Singapore, it would have to act there more or less on the defensive and it could not easily engage in any action that would bring direct pressure to bear on Japan. Its despatch would moreover expose us to risk of complications nearer home owing to depletion of our home forces. Decision to send it could therefore only be taken after most serious consideration and in circumstances where our vital interests seemed to require it.[1]

[1] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 582, 6 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

Drawing largely on the main points of Cadogan's memo, the telegram claimed that the problem would be very different if the United States were willing to send a capital ship fleet out to the Far East. It was pointed out that naval staff conversations had primarily been suggested in the hope of determining the size of fleet each government could afford to send and how any future cooperation between them could be effected. Despite the need for caution in promising to undertake future action, the Foreign Office telegram did contain the following statement of intent:

> If the United States Government were prepared to despatch an adequate fleet, I should be prepared to recommend to His Majesty's Government that they should send a proportionate force to act in conjunction with them, and I have good reason to believe that they would seriously consider it.[1]

In this sentence the word 'recommend' is crucial, for the Foreign Secretary had no authority to do anything more than merely propose future action without obtaining the necessary Cabinet sanction for such a plan. Moreover, he was fully acquainted with Admiralty opinion, as expressed by Chatfield in particular, and he recognised the marked reluctance of his senior colleagues to engage the navy in a course of action which could have serious strategic repercussions for Britain in both the short and the long term. Such problems as these meant that the Foreign Office draft could not commit the British

[1] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 582, 6 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

Government in advance and the terms of the wire followed the advice which the First Sea Lord had given to Cadogan at their meeting on 29 November.

While the Japanese action against the two British steamers was seen by the Foreign Office as a further violation of the spirit of international relations, the State Department's position remained what it had been on 30 November, when Lindsay had pointed out that while the United States had no confidence in Japanese moderation they did not take quite so pessimistic a view of Japanese intentions as did the British. Nonetheless at a Cabinet meeting on 10 December, Ickes alleges that Hull came out in favour of a strong navy, on the basis that this was the only way for the United States to be treated with proper respect by the dictatorships; and Roosevelt informed his colleagues that he intended asking for two battleships in his regular message to Congress and then, for the psychological effect, later to send in a special message asking for a third one. Hull apparently agreed with the President's plan and both thought that it would have a good result.[1]

But even though the Roosevelt Administration were prepared to increase their navy substantially to counter the growing power of the dictatorships, direct action in the Far East, as envisaged by the British, was a totally different proposition. Chamberlain was undoubtedly

[1] Ickes, Diary, entry for 12 Dec. 1937, pp.268-269.

correct in drawing the conclusion at a Cabinet meeting on 8 December that it would be a rash man who would base his calculations on receiving help from the United States.[1] Within a week, however, an event would occur which was to affect American interests in the Far East and put this scepticism to the test.

[1] Cab.meeting 46(37), 8 Dec. 1937, Cab 23/90A.

Chapter Four: The Aftermath of the Panay Incident (Dec. 1937)

When the Japanese bombed and sank the U.S.S. Panay and shelled the British vessels S.S. Ladybird and S.S. Bee in the Yangtse basin on 12 December, the Far Eastern crisis entered its most critical phase yet. Having spent the weekend away from London, Eden first learnt of this latest incident from scanty reports which appeared in the national press on 13 December.[1] Arriving in London later that morning, Eden read the telegrams which had been received from Craigie and Lindsay confirming that the attacks had taken place and describing the circumstances as far as they knew of them from the incomplete reports at their disposal, and then immediately sent for the American Chargé d'Affaires, Herschel Johnson. When Johnson arrived, Eden told him that he was deeply grieved to hear of the attacks committed by the Japanese against both British and American shipping, although it was just the kind of incident which he had feared could result because nothing had been done since the July 7th incident to restrain the Japanese Government from behaving in this belligerent fashion. In bringing the interview to a close, Eden asked the Chargé to suggest to the United States Government that they should postpone making any final decision on what to do in this matter until they had had an opportunity to meet Ambassador Lindsay and hear the

[1] The Times, 13 December 1937, p.12.

British Government's views on the Far Eastern situation.[1]

It was clear that Eden attached great importance to British and American action being at least along synchronised parallel lines, if it was to have any effect on the Japanese. As Johnson indicated in his rush cable to the State Department on 13 December: "What they really hope for, as set forth in the telegram to Lindsay, is that we will consent to joint action."[2] Cadogan had also suggested to the Chargé while he was at the Foreign Office that the present situation might make the Americans reconsider the possibilities of joint action with the British. Johnson's report, therefore, stressed this concern with establishing as united an Anglo-American front as possible and added his own feeling that the British were not displeased that U.S. interests had at last been directly involved as a result of the Panay incident. He believed the British Government hoped that American public opinion would react strongly to the sinkings and force the Roosevelt Administration to take some positive action, such as authorising the movement of the U.S. Fleet. Johnson stated that, should this occur, the British would undoubtedly increase their own naval contingent in the Far East. He concluded by pointing out that, rather than seeing an early end to the Sino-Japanese conflict, Eden feared that hostilities would move shortly to the Canton area of Kwangtung province where Britain,

[1] Draft telegram by Eden for Lindsay, No. 1159, F11086/10816/10, 13 Dec. 1937, FO 371/21021.

[2] F.D.R. Papers, Johnson to State Department, 13 Dec. 1937, PSF Box 46.

in particular, had considerable interests at stake.[1]

Eden's telegram No. 591 to Sir Ronald Lindsay dealt with the same points as those raised in the Foreign Secretary's conversation with Herschel Johnson. It also contained the following statement:

> No doubt United States Government will be contemplating the presentation of a series of stiffly worded demands and if we could have information as to what they are we should be prepared to send similar intimation. More important is the question whether the United States Government will be taking simultaneous action of a more menacing character such as the mobilization of their fleet, or part of it, pending the receipt of the Japanese reply. If anything of the kind were contemplated we should probably desire to take similar action, although of course our ships could not reach eastern waters as soon as United States ships.[2]

Ambassador Lindsay's reply arrived late in the evening of 13 December, following his meeting with Sumner Welles, the American Under-Secretary of State, during which he had outlined the substance of Eden's proposals on the Far East. Lindsay reported that Welles had shown little enthusiasm for concerting a joint Anglo-American response to the Japanese and had refused to be drawn on the issues of joint naval action and naval staff conversations.[3]

Unlike Welles, Leahy believed the time had come to take a firm line with the Japanese. His diary entry for 13 December reveals that he was in favour of getting the

[1] F.D.R. Papers, Johnson to State Department, 13 Dec. 1937, PSF Box 46.

[2] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 591, 13 Dec. 1937, quoted in Avon, Facing the Dictators, pp.542-543. See also F10961/10816/10, FO 371/21021.

[3] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 464, 13 Dec. 1937, and No. 466, 13 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

U.S. Fleet ready for sea and reaching an agreement with the British Government for joint action in the Far East.[1] At his conference with the President on 14 December, Leahy suggested sending ships of the U.S. Fleet to the navy yards without delay to take on fuel and stores and to have their hulls cleaned prior to being despatched for sea duty. Roosevelt, however, was not prepared to agree that this type of strong action was necessary at this particular time.[2] Initially, at least, he was willing to rely on the traditional methods of diplomatic censure, a fact underlined by the sending of a formal note of protest to the Japanese Government by the State Department on 13 December.[3]

Although they sent an advance copy of their note to the British, the American decision to act independently was regarded with disappointment, even if it did not come as much of a surprise to anyone in the Foreign Office, least of all to Eden, who may have most desired Anglo-American cooperation. It meant, however, that the British Government had no option but to send a separate note of protest to the Japanese. Before this message had reached

1 Leahy Diary, entry for 13 Dec. 1937, p.146.

2 Leahy Diary, entry for 14 Dec. 1937, p.147.

3 The Japanese Foreign Minister Hirota apologised to Ambassador Grew on 13 December for the Panay incident. It was thought by the Cabinet that the Americans had wished to send off their note before they received a written apology from the Japanese Government which they had learnt was about to be despatched. Cabinet meeting 47(37), 15 Dec. 1937, Cab 23/90A.

Tokyo, however, the Foreign Office had received a note of apology from the Japanese Government which was published in the press that day.[1]

On the following afternoon (14 December), Eden again wired Lindsay instructing him to meet Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, at the earliest possible moment and convey to him the British position on the Far Eastern situation as spelled out in telegram No. 594:

> His Majesty's Government feel that they cannot contemplate a continuance of this process of successive and increasing outrages followed by simple apology. They fear that Japanese, finding that nothing worse follows, may be encouraged to go to lengths which we shall not be able to tolerate, and that we shall then be faced with the necessity of taking very drastic action. They are inclined to think that it may be better, before it is too late, to take some measures or make some dispositions to show Japan that they are determined to protect their nationals and interests.[2]

Lindsay was also instructed to raise the question of naval movements and explain to Hull that the British felt that under existing circumstances the Americans themselves could have embarked upon some measure of mobilization to demonstrate to the Japanese that the democracies were willing and able to defend their legitimate interests against encroachment by others. Eden's wire concluded by stating that while he thought that the opportunity for joint mobilization might have passed, the British felt

[1] Eden informed the Cabinet that his note demanded similar action to that which the Japanese had already promised to accord to the Americans. Cab.meeting 47(37), 15 Dec. 1937, Cab 23/90A.

[2] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 594, 14 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

strongly that the situation in the Far East was likely to worsen unless something was done by the United States and Britain to arrest this deterioration and to uphold the authority of the Western nations.[1] Neither Eden nor the Prime Minister, whom he had consulted before sending this telegram, were confident that the Roosevelt Administration would feel able to adopt any of these suggestions, but they both felt that it was necessary for the United States to be fully informed as to the British attitude and what they had in mind.[2]

At their meeting which was hurriedly arranged for 14 December, Hull told Lindsay that isolationism was the major stumbling block to any concerted Anglo-American initiative on the Far East. Hull made it quite apparent that while he favoured such cooperation, together with consultation between the two Governments on major issues, he considered that in view of the prevailing sentiment of rigid non-involvement, parallel action by the British and the Americans was very nearly as good as the joint action for which the British were striving but which they were unlikely to obtain.[3]

Before receiving Lindsay's reply, Eden met Chamberlain, Duff Cooper, Chatfield and Sir Alexander Cadogan and pressed for a tougher attitude against the Japanese. He

1 Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 594, 14 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.
2 Cab.meeting 47(37), 15 Dec. 1937, Cab 23/90A.
3 Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 470, 14 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

was in favour of sending a battle fleet to Far Eastern waters and of holding naval staff conversations with the Americans. As a result of their discussions, a draft telegram was prepared for despatch to Washington which went further than any previous communication had done in stating the British Government's intention to send a naval force to the Far East providing the United States were willing to do the same. In discussing the matter at the next meeting of the Cabinet on 15 December, the Prime Minister expressed his reservations about the message, pointing out that the draft did not make clear the fact that the British would not act unless the Americans did so as well. In his opinion, even if the Cabinet approved the draft in principle, the phraseology would have to be amended to bring out this stipulation unmistakeably.[1] Chamberlain was not alone in expressing doubts as to the wisdom of sending the Foreign Office draft to Washington. Alfred Duff Cooper, the First Lord of the Admiralty, went further by stating that since previous telegrams had evoked no satisfactory response, the American Government might feel that they were being pressed too hard and become irritated by a further message calling for assistance on the scale envisaged. Apart from feeling that a fresh message would only serve to exacerbate matters and not lead to any overall improvement in the Far Eastern situation, Duff Cooper was concerned about the effect

[1] Cab.meeting 47(37), 15 Dec. 1937, Cab 23/90A.

that the despatch of the fleet to Singapore would have upon the Italians in the Mediterranean. He acknowledged that an agreement would have to be negotiated with the French Government to the effect that their fleet would be redeployed in order to look after the Mediterranean in the absence of the British. He was aware, however, that difficulties could be encountered in obtaining French acqueiscence in this plan. He had good reason for believing that the French would be apprehensive about the safety of the Atlantic and therefore, wary of committing themselves to any plan which would place an extra burden upon them and increase the risk of losing control in the Western Atlantic.[1]

At this point Eden read out Lindsay's telegram No. 470, which had only just reached him, describing the British Ambassador's interview with Hull and stating his conclusion that the Americans were not yet in a position to adopt any measures of the kind under discussion.[2] Such an answer prompted Eden to remark that it appeared that some other event would have to occur before the American Government would be prepared to act in line with

[1] Cab.meeting 47(37), 15 Dec. 1937, Cab 23/90A. Chamberlain was to criticise Duff Cooper severely for a speech he made at Pimlico on 16 December in which he was alleged to have said that the Japanese Government had expressed their deep regret in unqualified terms for the Panay and Ladybird incidents and he was of the opinion that the British Government should accept that full apology. Duff Cooper, in his reply to the Prime Minister, pointed out that he had been misreported and what he had in fact said was that the British could accept that apology if they could be convinced that the necessary steps would be taken by the Japanese.

(cont.)

the proposals set out in the draft telegram before the Cabinet. As a result, Eden considered that it would be expedient to consult Lindsay before sending any further message to the Americans. Surprisingly, not all agreed on such a cautious policy. Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India, told the Cabinet that he was convinced that nothing but a display of force would have any influence on the Japanese, and he advocated the sending of the draft telegram on the basis that it might produce the desired results and, even if it did not, it could hardly offend the Americans bearing in mind that Hull had told Lindsay that he would always be glad to listen to anything the British Government had to suggest.[1] If Duff Cooper and Zetland represented the polarity of opinion in the Cabinet, Chamberlain steered a middle course between these views. He believed it was clear that the British could not press the United States Government to despatch their fleet to the Far East and yet he felt that some action ought to be taken to restore the loss of prestige affecting the democracies and offset the gains made at their expense by the forces of totalitarianism. Chamberlain's idea of action in this case was to ask the American

---

(cont.)
N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Duff Cooper, 17 Dec. 1937, and Duff Cooper to N.C., 19 Dec. 1937, NC 7/11/30/38.

2 Cab.meeting 47(37), 15 Dec. 1937, Cab 23/90A.

1 ibid.

Government whether they were willing to consider mobilization as a first step. He thought that this might be sufficient in itself, but in the event of further outrages occurring, the Americans might consent to do more. Paradoxically enough, it was Eden who pointed out that 'mobilization' was rather a formidable word and that it might be better to use some phrase such as 'an improved state of readiness of the Fleet'.[1] When asked what British policy would be in the event of an American refusal to help in the Pacific and of further incidents taking place affecting British prestige, the Prime Minister echoed Chatfield's argument that it would be useless to send only a few ships to the Far East, for such a small force would be unlikely to deter and could conceivably tempt the Japanese Navy to attack and destroy them. He felt, therefore, that should the British be forced to act alone in dealing with the Japanese they must send nothing less than an adequate contingent of vessels to Sino-Japanese coastal waters. It was clear, however, that Chamberlain was unenthusiastic about

[1] Bearing in mind his views on American assitance in the Far East, it may well appear as if Eden was indulging in semantics by objecting to the term 'mobilization' and urging its replacement by a phrase implying, though not actually saying, partial mobilization. It can be safely assumed, however, that his enthusiasm for American co-operation on a grand scale had not waned, but he was concerned, in the light of Hull's remarks, to temper his own enthusiasm for such a project with caution for fear of scaring off the Americans from lending the sort of assistance in the Far East which he felt was an essential pre-requisite for an eventual return to the status quo ante.

adopting an independent policy in the Far East.[1] Apart from the strategic objections that could be raised, he felt that once having acted alone it would then be extremely difficult to enlist American cooperation thereafter. It was eventually decided that the Foreign Secretary should contact Sir Ronald Lindsay before making any further proposals to the American Government and the telegram to the British Ambassador should take into consideration the trend of Cabinet opinion and convey no impression that the Government were contemplating unilateral action. Assuming the Americans felt unable to agree to the sending of a battle fleet to the Far East, the Cabinet agreed that Lindsay should be consulted on whether he saw any objection to the suggestion of less drastic steps, such as measures to put the fleet in a state of greater readiness and/or naval staff conversations.[2] This desire for Anglo-American naval cooperation was expressed in Eden's telegram 607 which was despatched to Washington on 15 December. Lindsay was informed that the British Government had contemplated the possibility of sending to Far Eastern waters a fleet of eight or nine

[1] Little was said on the question of dominion assistance, although the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Malcolm MacDonald, suggested that at the appropriate moment his department could send a message to Australia and New Zealand, in particular, enquiring whether they would cooperate with the British in a naval operation and possible engagement against the Japanese. Cab.meeting 47(37), 15 Dec. 1937, Cab 23/90A.

[2] Cab.meeting 47(37), 15 Dec. 1937, Cab 23/90A.

capital ships accompanied by other naval units if the United States Government would make at least an equivalent effort. Eden's cable made it clear that such a fleet might be ready to sail in three to four weeks time.[1]

This telegram appears to have crossed with one sent by Lindsay on 15 December marked 'Most Secret' and bearing the news of an apparent shift in official American policy. This was exemplified by the President's request to meet the British Ambassador secretly on the following Friday in order to discuss naval staff conversations and the procedures for arranging them.[2] As he expected Roosevelt to be mainly concerned with discussing the arrangements for, rather than the substance of, the naval staff conversations, Lindsay felt that it would be better to refrain from giving the President a firm undertaking to the effect that the British Government would send a force of eight or nine capital ships to the Far East. Although he had no objection to raising other less drastic measures with the President, Lindsay thought that Roosevelt would not agree to partial mobilization. In fact, the British Ambassador doubted whether the President would agree to taking any but the most secret steps until he could discern a fundamental change occurring in the expression of public opinion within the United States on

1 Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 607, 15 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

2 Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 471, 15 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

the question of overseas involvement.[1] Later that day, another Foreign Office telegram, drafted by Cadogan and approved by Eden, was sent to Lindsay giving him full authority to tell the President whatever he thought was most appropriate in connection with the British attitude outlined by their earlier wire No. 607. Eden's message continued:

> . . . I have felt that our attitude hitherto of being ready to do whatever the U. S. Gov(ernment) would do might have become embarrassing to the latter, and that it might be easier for them if we privately told them what our ideas were as to possibilities of action. . . . I suggest it might be helpful to talk on the line that democracies have to meet rising criticism of inaction and helplessness and that the moment has it seems to us now come to do something to restore our damaged prestige. Firm action would have its effect not only in the Far East but in Europe, and would give notice to Dictators that democratic Gov(ernmen)ts are as jealous of their authority as they are, and as willing and as able to maintain it.[2]

Although genuinely surprised and delighted by the apparent shift in American policy, Eden avoided the temptation of making a further initiative and contented himself with an assurance of future assistance for any effort the President might wish to make in dealing with the Far Eastern question. He did so not because his belief in American cooperation had dimmed, but rather to avoid embarrassing or antagonising the Americans by proposing action which they might feel unable or unwilling to take at this time.

1 Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 472, 15 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

2 Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 609, 16 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

Unbeknown to the British Government, Roosevelt's policy advisors on the Far Eastern crisis had agreed at a conference held in Washington on 16 December that there was nothing to be gained from holding conversations with the Japanese at present. Leahy records both Norman Davis and Judge Moore as being in favour of a naval demonstration in force, but his lack of comment about the views by the other participants suggests that these two officials had been prepared to go further than Hull, Welles or Hornbeck felt was necessary in the circumstances. Leahy's sympathies clearly lay with the proposal for joint action, but most of the President's senior Cabinet colleagues seemed to baulk at this idea.[1]

Late that evening Roosevelt met Lindsay at the White House as previously arranged. The British Ambassador's account of this extraordinary meeting was wired to the Foreign Office marked 'Important: Very Secret'. Confirming that the Secretary of State had been present throughout the interview, Lindsay recalled that the President had begun by dealing with the question of staff conversations. Apparently he wished to have an arrangement such as the one which had prevailed from 1915 to 1917 by which a systematic exchange of secret information had been established between the Admiralty and the Navy Department. In Roosevelt's opinion this had been most fruitful. Lindsay continued:

[1] Leahy Diary, entry for 16 Dec. 1937, p.149.

> Understanding had been that the State Department and Foreign Office should know nothing about this and would have denied its existence if anything had transpired. It will be remembered that as the Under Secretary of Navy he himself had been personally associated with this arrangement. It became evident that he had not considered the purely practical features of this liaison and he had an open mind as to where conversations should be pursued. In the ensuing discussions he made it clear that officers concerned must be fully familiar with the latest Staff plans and thoughts of their respective Navies and he seemed inclined to think that the secret would be more easily secured in London than here. He thought that he would have no difficulty whatever in finding a suitable person to send over to London at short notice if that were decided upon.[1]

He then described how the President in his 'worst inspirational mood' had proceeded to discuss what the primary object of staff conversations should be; namely, an agreement to arrange a naval blockade of Japan which would enable the joint Anglo-American force to quarantine the Japanese and cut them off from foreign sources of raw materials.[2] According to Roosevelt, the blockade line should run from the Aleutian Islands through Hawaii and midway between the islands to the north of the Philippines to Hong Kong, with the Americans being responsible for everything up to the Philippines and the British having to deal with the western section. Denying that such a blockade would result in war with Japan, Roosevelt stated his desire to see the blockade implemented after the next grave outrage by the Japanese. Nevertheless, when Lindsay

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, Nos. 481,482,483, 17 Dec. 1937, FO 371/20961.

[2] ibid.

presented Roosevelt with a frank appraisal of the British position and urged cooperation in the form of naval mobilization, the President rejected the Ambassador's suggestion, stating that such mobilization in America did not count for anything. He preferred instead to bring the U.S. naval manoeuvres forward by a couple of months and agreed to consider sending a squadron of cruisers from the United States Fleet to pay a visit to Singapore. It also became clear that he was opposed to Eden's rash offer to send eight or nine capital ships to the Far East, believing this to be strategically inadvisable. In his opinion the British Government should retain their fleet of battleships in Home waters rather than commit themselves to an extravagant action which could have incalculable consequences if the European situation deteriorated and war resulted while the main detachment of the British Fleet was at least 10,000 miles away in the South China Sea. In the President's opinion, a reinforcement of cruisers, destroyers and submarines in the Far East would be sufficient to regulate matters in this area. Despite the fact that the Americans had once more declined to accept the British idea of naval cooperation, Ambassador Lindsay concluded his lengthy message in a more hopeful vein:

> I assure you that the chief impression left on my mind was that I had been talking to a man who had done his best in the Great War to bring America in speedily on the side of the Allies and who now was equally anxious to be able to bring America in on the same side before it might be too late and if it should be necessary. The utmost friendliness was implicit in everything he said and I myself

reciprocated with the utmost frankness.[1]

Lindsay's important message had an immediate impact upon and within the Foreign Office. N.B. Ronald, in a minute written on 19 December about the Lindsay-Roosevelt meeting, described the President's plan as a 'fantastic chimaera' which could he thought, with care and patience on the British side, be transformed into something more congruous and constructive. Believing that the President's plan, as it stood, was unpractical and fraught with every kind of danger, Ronald considered that it should not, however, be impossible to lead the Americans away from the silliness of it while leaving them with the impression that the modified result was their own creation. In fact, he felt that there were two noteworthy features about the original plan. One, the desire of the United States Government that British capital ships should be left in European waters, with only cruisers and submarines sent to the Far East, and two, the projected visit of a number of United States cruisers to Singapore.[2]

Although not disagreeing with Ronald, Cadogan believed that both the President's plan and his intentions on the Far East were still shrouded in uncertainty. In his minute Cadogan wrote:

> The President has agreed to naval staff conversations, and that is the necessary preliminary. But the object is not too clear. At first the President says that the 'first object . . . should be to

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, Nos. 481,482,483, F11201/G, 17 Dec. 1937, FO 371/20961.

[2] Minute by N.B. Ronald, 19 Dec. 1937, F11201/G, FO371/20961.

> arrange for a blockade of Japan' and that the 'occasion of the blockade would have to be the next grave outrage by the Japanese'.
>
> When the Ambassador suggested a demonstration or naval mobilization, the President 'rejected this' (the latter anyhow) 'out of hand'. But later he seems to have contemplated advancing the manoeuvres in Hawaiian waters to January, and even finally to have come to the idea of a visit of American cruisers to Singapore. He seems also to have welcomed the idea of a British naval reinforcement, but whether that would be only in the event of a blockade, or whether as a demonstration is not clear.
>
> The President seems to have rather naive ideas on the possibility of blockading without going to war or, apparently, running the risk of it. His light-hearted (though probably quite justified) assumption that the blockade would require eighteen months to take effect is rather alarming. It might be very difficult for us to maintain a fleet in Far Eastern waters for that period.
>
> Sir R. Lindsay has warned us against the danger of speaking of 'joint' action, and we must be careful of this. I imagine that, from the point of view of our own public opinion, we want rather to avoid any mention of 'collective action': the note should be that we are defending our own interests and prestige.[1]

Cadogan felt that if anything were to result from the President's plan, the British would, of course, have to consult the French, though they would not do so while there was a desire to maintain secrecy since Quai d'Orsay leakages were in his words both 'proverbial and inevitable'. In conclusion, Cadogan stated:

> I suggest that, if we wish to secure the President's cooperation (or rather 'parallel' action), we should strike while the iron is hot and, while he is in this mood, try to keep him up to the mark. We can probably best leave it to Sir R. Lindsay to decide when and how to do this. And, if possible, we should try to get the President to do something <u>now</u>.[2]

[1] Minute by Cadogan, F11201/G, 19 Dec. 1937, FO 371/20961.
[2] <u>ibid</u>.

While the Foreign Office discussed Lindsay's despatch, the Admiralty responded immediately. In a memo, dated 17 December and drawn up on the subject of naval staff conversations with the United States, the Admiralty stated:

> It has been decided, and His Majesty's Government have accepted that if we send a fleet to the Far East at all this fleet must be in fighting strength not substantially inferior to the Japanese, and that we cannot rely on the fleets from the U.S.A. and ourselves each markedly inferior to the Japanese and depending for superiority on their working together. It would presumably be necessary to notify the U.S.A. of this decision and to obtain their agreement, if possible, to they themselves sending a fleet at least equal to that of Japan. . . . The passage of the Fleets to the East will require careful coordination, and it will be necessary to find out whether the U.S.A. really visualise sending a fleet east or whether their idea would merely be to mobilise and remain ready. Assuming that the U.S.A. Fleet goes East, it is clearly very undesirable that one fleet, even if strong enough, should be placed so that it might have a Fleet action with the Japanese before the other Fleet reached the East. In view of this, it seems undesirable for the U.S.A. Fleet to proceed direct to Manila from Honolulu or Guam, and the best course seems to be for both Fleets to proceed to Singapore and from there to proceed together North to Manila, or whatever base is selected.[1]

In the Admiralty memo serious consideration was given to the passage of the two fleets to Singapore and three possible routes were proposed. Of the three the Admiralty appeared to favour the plan which envisaged the British Fleet using the Suez Canal on its normal route to Singapore, and the American Fleet proceeding to the same destination by way of Hawaii, Fiji and the Torres Strait.

[1] Admiralty Memo on "Possible Staff Conversations with U.S.A.", PD 06557, 17 Dec. 1937, Adm 116/3922.

This plan had two distinct advantages. Firstly, by using the shortest available route to Singapore each fleet would be able to arrive there in the minimum period of six weeks. Secondly, plans were already in existence for such a journey to be undertaken at short notice and all administrative arrangements covering items such as oil supplies and repair facilities had also been made.[1]

It was, of course, one thing to have plans and quite another to obtain the necessary agreement of both the British Cabinet and the Americans to bring them to fruition. Recognising this dilemma, the Admiralty considered that if an agreement were finally reached with the Americans it would almost certainly be confined to making a naval demonstration in force and that initially, at least, there would be no other intention unless the Japanese took the initiative, declared war and attacked the Anglo-American naval force mustered in the Far East. Aware that the possibility of war could not be excluded, the Admiralty felt that naval preparations should be based on the assumption that it might come at any time. In any case, they were anxious to begin discussions with the Americans on the question of auxiliary services such as contraband control, minesweeping and naval control.[2]

One of the most important topics for discussion with the Americans was whether the British and American Fleets

[1] Admiralty Memo on "Possible Staff Conversations with U.S.A.", PD 06557, 17 Dec. 1937, Adm 116/3922.

[2] ibid.

would operate together tactically, as they had done in the First World War, or whether general arrangements for cooperation, such as existed between the British and French Fleets, would suffice. In the Admiralty's opinion, the only real solution for the satisfactory conduct of a war in the Far East would be for the fleets to be able to operate together tactically.[1] To do this successfully it was essential that signal books be exchanged by the two navies and various secret matters would have to be disclosed, such as methods of cyphering and recyphering, in which the British were probably ahead of the Americans. Another major difficulty of tactical cooperation would centre on obtaining agreement on the question of command, since a single command structure was considered to be the only satisfactory way of conducting a joint naval war.

As far as supply and maintenance considerations were concerned, the Admiralty memo outlined some of the major difficulties confronting an Anglo-American task force in the Far East.[2] Not only was the Singapore base equipped to meet only the requirements of a single fleet, it was also doubtful whether its repair and maintenance facilities could be extended to render any material assistance to the American Fleet until a few months after the outbreak of war. As a result, it was essential that the United States capital ship fleet should be docked at either

[1] Admiralty Memo on "Possible Staff Conversations with U.S.A.", PD 06557, 17 Dec. 1937, Adm 116/3922.

[2] ibid.

Honolulu or Manila, although repair facilities in the Philippines were of a minor nature and probably only sufficient to carry out the normal refit and repair work of a small force. For these reasons the Admiralty considered it essential that the margin of strength of the two fleets over the Japanese Fleet should be as great as possible.

On the subject of attacks on and defence of trade, the Admiralty memo proposed dividing the Pacific and Indian Oceans so that the British Fleet would be responsible for attack on and defence of trade in one part and the American Fleet in the other part.[1] For this purpose a line was drawn by the Admiralty to the South and West of which the British Fleet would assume responsibility for supervision, while the Americans would be expected to fulfil the same role to the North and East of the blockade line.[2] It was also anticipated that contraband control bases would be required and contingency plans existed for such an eventuality.

On the same day as the Admiralty memo was circulated, the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, telephoned the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, asking whether the British Government would act in concert with the Americans in applying economic sanctions against Japan. He proposed that this should be done under the

1 Admiralty Memo on "Possible Staff Conversations with U.S.A.", PD 06557, 17 Dec. 1937, Adm 116/3922.

2 ibid.
India, Hong Kong, Borneo, New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand would be in the British area.

'Trading with the Enemy Act' of 1933, an American statute which was designed to allow executive action to set up an exchange control against another country. When considered together, this unexpected enquiry and Lindsay's report of his clandestine conversation with President Roosevelt appeared to suggest a radical shift in American policy from non-involvement to embracing the possibility of joint action which the British had been seeking vainly for some months. Whatever the reason for such a marked change of attitude, however, the Treasury was even less enthusiastic about Morgenthau's plan than Ronald or Cadogan were about Roosevelt's proposals.

In examining Morgenthau's plan in detail, Sir Frederick Phillips stated that an Anglo-American embargo on the Japanese export trade could not be expected to achieve a decisive effect for between one to two years. Moreover, in a memo on 18 December, Sir Warren Fisher, a leading Americanophobe, expressed a total lack of confidence and trust in the United States.

> Over and above the unreality of economic sanctions, we sh(oul)d find ourselves left in the lurch sooner or later by the U.S.A. (who incidentally have no very special stakes in Asia) & Japan w(oul)d scoop Hong Kong. Sh(oul)d we then add the fatal folly of going to war with Japan & so committing suicide in Europe?[1]

Treasury opposition to Morgenthau's proposal was largely based on the belief that the imposition of economic

[1] Memo by Sir Warren Fisher, 18 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

sanctions was likely to lead to the threat or use of force and could result in a potentially hazardous war with Japan, which would then enable Britain's enemies in Europe to present a series of ultimata to her. Sir Frederick Leith Ross thought that the Japanese might react by adopting an aggressive attitude to British shipping in the Far East and possibly against their interests in Shanghai and Hong Kong as well. He believed that the extent to which this risk could be met would depend upon how far the Roosevelt Administration would be prepared, if necessary, to support economic sanctions by the use of force. Fisher had no doubts on this score: "The U.S.A. w(oul)d fail us at the critical moment even in the Far East. Still more w(oul)d she fail us in our consequential danger in Europe."[1] Briefed with these persuasive objections, Sir John Simon sent a reply to Morgenthau on 20 December suggesting that his proposal could best be discussed at the naval staff talks in January.

In a note for Chamberlain written on 19 December, Eden endorsed the Treasury's opinion that no action should be taken on Morgenthau's suggestion. He stressed that it was vitally important that Ambassador Lindsay should be the only channel of communication between the British Government and the Roosevelt Administration. In underlining the importance of the naval staff conversations,

[1] Fisher's note on memo by Sir Frederick Leith Ross, 20 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

Eden hoped an attempt would also be made to try and obtain Roosevelt's agreement for an immediate movement of ships rather than for some future blockade.[1]

Morgenthau's proposal came on the same day that Roosevelt was urged by his Secretary of the Navy, Claude Swanson, to teach the Japanese a lesson. In this respect, Swanson's belief in direct action to preserve American rights matched that of Admiral Leahy. His call for naval involvement in the Far East caused little surprise and was nothing new since he had been in favour of taking the fight to the Japanese for at least two and a half months prior to the attack on the U.S.S. Panay. What made it more acceptable on this occasion was the belief that the bombing of the Panay and the other vessels on the Yangtse had been deliberate. This naturally presented a pretext for revenge and Swanson wished to grasp the opportunity that had been presented to the United States. In his diary Ickes noted that the Secretary of the Navy wanted a war with the Japanese and that the U.S. Navy felt confident of winning such an encounter, if it was held at the present time. In a revealing passage Ickes writes that as Swanson continued to shout for war the President remarked that he wanted the same result but he did not want to have to go to war in order to get it. At the same Cabinet meeting Roosevelt outlined his blockade plan and suggested that, if implemented, the scheme would

[1] Eden to Chamberlain, 19 Dec. 1937, T160/693/F15255/01.

bring the Japanese to their knees within a year by strangling their economy.[1]

While the British were considering how to respond to Secretary Morgenthau's proposal, Lindsay's 'Very Secret' telegram No. 488 arrived at the Foreign Office. This latest wire disclosed that Welles had confirmed that serious consideration was being given both to advancing the date of American naval manoeuvres and to the visit by U.S. cruisers to Singapore.[2] This news set off a rapid interchange of telegrams between Washington and London. In one such Foreign Office draft intended for Lindsay, written by Cadogan and much amended by Chamberlain, the British Ambassador was not only told of the delight felt in official circles about the forthcoming naval staff conversations, but also of the prevailing sense of confusion concerning elements of the President's plan, its implementation and desired objectives. Cadogan's draft underlined the Foreign Office position, re-emphasising its belief that some preparatory action by the two fleets would be of the greatest advantage in restraining Japan and inducing her to have some regard for foreign rights and interests.

> For your information, I should not exclude possibility of immediate discussion of movements of ships by both Governments to for instance Singapore and Manila respectively, but I imagine that United States Government are not prepared for any such discussion at present.[3]

1 Ickes, Diary, entry for 18 Dec. 1937, pp.274-276.

2 Lindsay to Eden, No. 488, 18 Dec. 1937, F11226/G, FO 371/20961.

3 Avon Papers, Eden to Lindsay, No. 616, 20 Dec. 1937, US/37/26.

Such had been the intense activity on this issue that at the meeting of the Cabinet on 22 December the Foreign Secretary was able to inform his colleagues at length of the steps which had been taken by both the Americans and the British in seeking improved cooperation on Far Eastern questions. In dealing with the change in the attitude of the United States Government, the Prime Minister said that this advance was due largely to the attitude of the Japanese themselves: "Our difficulty was not in President Roosevelt's goodwill, but in his failure to appreciate the needs of the situation."[1] On the question of sanctions, Chamberlain said that it was necessary to convince the Roosevelt Administration that it was impossible to apply a blockade without being ready to support it by force, if necessary.[2] However, both he and the Foreign Secretary felt that the time for action had arrived, since British prestige was suffering internationally because of the passive policy which had been followed hitherto. This sentiment, indicative of a more positive foreign policy, appeared at once to be contradictory and enigmatic. Having said that the time for a move had arrived, if a move were to be made at all,

[1] Cab.meeting 48(37), 22 Dec. 1937, Cab 23/90A.

[2] Some of the earlier uncertainty had been cleared up when Hull told Lindsay on 21 December that a naval blockade was a remote contingency which would require careful and technical study and to which recourse could not be had except in the case of some further outrage, if then. Captain Ingersoll was also able to place this matter in some perspective during his talk with the Admiralty delegation led by Captain T.S.V. Phillips in early 1938.

Chamberlain then declared his belief that unless the Japanese embarked upon a further serious act of aggression it would be a mistake for the British to send ships to the Far East. In reality there was no contradiction. From the beginning Chamberlain had been determined to resist involving the navy in a Far Eastern adventure unless he could be certain of receiving equivalent support from the U.S. Navy. This he knew now to be most unlikely unless the Japanese committed a further act of aggression. Nevertheless, if the United States Government were prepared to agree to send a naval force to the Far East, he too was willing, providing all other avenues had been explored, to do the same. In fact, as he told the Cabinet, any simultaneous demonstration of force by the United States and Great Britain, whether in the Far East or even at a distance, would have a steadying influence all over the world.[1]

On the following day Sir Alexander Cadogan drafted yet another telegram bearing Eden's name which was despatched as No. 628 to Ambassador Lindsay. In this wire Cadogan asked if Lindsay would be able to ascertain whether the President had developed his plan into a definitive line of action.

[1] Although he acknowledged the deterrent effect a joint Anglo-American naval action would have upon the European dictatorships, the Prime Minister still preferred the less hazardous courses of action which were available to him in dealing with the Japanese.

> If any steps are to be taken, we should wish them to be as 'parallel' as possible, and if possible simultaneous. If U.S. Gov(ernmen)t are developing any action which could only be followed by us at a comparatively long interval, effect would not be so good.
> As regards your conversation with Mr. Hull, we believe it is true there are divided counsels in Japan and we are not without hope that saner elements may be able to reassert themselves to some extent. . . . But apart from immediate effect in restraining Japanese outrages, we have to consider the future. Unless some pressure is ready to be brought to bear on Japan, it seems likely that she will seek to impose a settlement intolerably unfair to China and designed to destroy foreign rights and interests. I understood from American Delegation in Brussels that U.S. Gov(ernmen)t took the line that we sh(oul)d not contemplate a settlement that did violence to 9 Power Treaty, but it seems unlikely that we shall have much to say in the settlement unless we can make a display of considerable force.[1]

In some ways this latest telegram represented a change of emphasis as far as the British were concerned. Instead of referring to loss of prestige in the Far East, Cadogan's draft seemed to be justifying naval action on the ground that, as a signatory of the Nine Power Treaty, Britain would then be able to impose her will on the peace settlement of the Sino-Japanese war. As a bargaining counter this latest appeal had a somewhat hollow sound to it. In the past, the British had not seen fit to mention, save in passing, the effect upon China resulting from the Japanese invasion. They had mostly been concerned with cataloguing the excesses of the Japanese in so far as they affected the interests of the foreign countries within China. This attitude had

[1] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 628, F11362/G, 23 Dec. 1937, FO 371/20961.

certainly come to the fore in the aftermath of the Brussels Conference with strident calls for American co-operation based on the threat posed by the Japanese and the possibility that, unless checked, their aggression in the Far East would be a potent source of encouragement to all the other totalitarian powers in the world. What amounted to an essentially selfish attitude, with its sense of outrageous indignation, had not inspired the Americans to seek joint naval action. This now appeared to be forsaken in favour of obtaining as fair and just a settlement as possible.

In his diary entry for Christmas Day Ickes also returned to the theme of joint action with Britain in the Far East.

> From the newspapers I gather that Great Britain is getting ready to send some more of her fleet to the Far East and apparently we are beginning to shift our ships through to Hawaii. According to the Secretary of the Navy, our fleet is in good condition. He reported . . . that it could be ready for service within two weeks. If we should decide upon an economic blockade of Japan, our Army would be sent to the West Coast, although, according to the President, the Army would not have to see action.[1]

By the end of the Christmas festival, however, it had become clear that any display of considerable force contemplated in Cadogan's telegram would have to be made solely by the British. This situation arose as a result of the Japanese sending a note of apology to the State Department in which they offered to pay an indemnity for

[1] Ickes, Diary, entry for 25 Dec. 1937, p.277.

the Panay Incident and gave assurances that there would be no recurrence of attacks on American interests. As far as the United States Government were concerned, this latest development effectively closed the Panay Incident. Unlike the Americans, however, the British were not disposed to regard the Ladybird and Bee incidents as being closed. On the contrary, the Japanese note to the British was less conciliatory in tone and its receipt did not nullify the aspirations still entertained by Eden, that the Ingersoll visit would pave the way for an Anglo-American naval demonstration in the Western Pacific. It is difficult to ascribe the Foreign Secretary's confidence in the outcome of the naval staff conversations to anything more than wishful thinking. It seems inconceivable that he could still believe that joint naval action was possible after the Japanese had given the Americans the excuse of bringing the Panay affair to what many regarded as an acceptable close.[1] But by the end of December even Eden was forced to admit that unless another outrage was committed by the Japanese, the Americans were unlikely to send any naval force to the Far East, apart from the four cruisers which would stop at Singapore on their way home from Sydney. Nonetheless, he saw the visit of the American

[1] In the light of American policy throughout this crisis, such a settlement appears to have been not only most welcome, but also something they had been seeking from the very beginning. By not committing themselves to action or despatching any ultimata to Japan, the Americans had left the door open for the Japanese Government to make a full unqualified apology which would help to bring the whole matter to an end without recourse to war or further threatening action on the part of the USA.

cruisers as being a very important step and one which the British should make the most political capital out of.

> We should clearly have some ships at Singapore at the same time, and a unit or two of Australian and N(ew) Z(ealand) navies would greatly enhance the effect. If it is necessary to send out ships from home the opening of the dock at Singapore could be made the pretext and the Japanese be kept guessing. In any event - this is a matter for urgent decision, with the resolve to make the best use we can of presence of U(nited) S(tates) ships at Singapore.[1]

Chatfield did not share the Foreign Secretary's enthusiasm for a Far Eastern adventure. In a letter to Admiral Sir Dudley Pound the First Sea Lord critically reviewed the latest developments:

> The whole situation as regards the Fleet going East is at present very uncertain: naturally I am averse to sending it if it can be avoided but I am making all preparations as far as I can. . . . Obviously the Fleet that you will have to take out is not very satisfactory, but if it did go out I think we should be certain to have the American Fleet as well and that will make a great difference. . . . I have had some pressure put on me to send out 'reinforcements' but I have stated that nothing less than a Fleet equal to the Japanese would be sufficient. . . . All talk, however, of any action by the United States is taboo and highly secret, but we won't mention it to anybody else. Anyhow, one can never be sure what they will do so we cannot rely on them absolutely. . . . A good deal might happen and changes might be made as a result of staff conversation with the United States. It is quite possible of course that now the Japanese have had such a warning of the danger they are running to, they will be more careful and their military officers will be less inclined to run amok and endeavour to confine the war to the east and centre of China. . . . No doubt, however, if both we and the United States send powerful Fleets to the East, war would not arise and the object would be an overwhelming display of combined forces. . . .[2]

[1] Memo by Eden, F11749/4880/10, 29 Dec. 1937, FO 371/21011.
[2] Chatfield Papers, Chatfield to Sir Dudley Pound, 30 Dec. 1937, CHT/4/10.

It was already becoming clear, however, that the ability of the British to despatch a large capital ship fleet to Singapore was strictly limited. Eden was particularly concerned by the forecasts that Britain would be weak at sea during the period from May 1938 to the autumn of 1939, and in a letter to Chamberlain on 31 December, he suggested that the Government should consider accelerating some of the naval construction programme to counteract this deficiency. Apart from strengthening the defence in a critical period, the Foreign Secretary thought that the moral effect upon the whole world would be excellent.[1] Turning to the diplomatic prospects for the coming year, he was encouraged by the hope that Anglo-American co-operation was at last making real progress. Eden was sure that the British must do everything they could privately to encourage the Americans, on the basis that if they did send some ships to Singapore in the New Year it would be an event of first class importance.[2] Much, however, would turn on what the U.S. Navy's representative, Captain Royal E. Ingersoll, might be able to inform him about American naval policy at their meeting on New Year's Day. Although he had looked forward to the interview, Eden was to be bitterly disappointed by its outcome, which went a long way towards dispelling any illusions he may have had about the prospects for joint naval action with the Americans in the Pacific.

[1] Avon Papers, Eden to Chamberlain, 31 Dec. 1937, FP/37/23.
[2] ibid.

Chapter Five: Inconsistency and Disappointment (Jan.-Feb. 1938)

Eden regarded naval staff conversations as the first important step which the Americans had consented to take in approaching the question of joint action with the British and one which he hoped was destined to lead on to further and more strategically important collaboration in the future. He was, therefore, taken aback when it became obvious that the United States Government, upon which he had pinned his hopes, did not appear to share his view. Captain Ingersoll had begun their interview on 1 January by explaining that since American plans were based on certain assumptions about British policy, both the President and Admiral Leahy, the Chief of Naval Operations, thought that the time had come to exchange and coordinate these plans more closely. Encouraged by this, Eden asked Ingersoll whether the United States Government were seeking joint action at this stage and received the fairly uncompromising reply that no movements could be made at all in the Pacific unless and until full preparations had been made for every eventuality, including war. Ingersoll cited as an example of the U.S. Navy's Far Eastern policy their unwillingness to concentrate the Pacific Fleet at Hawaii or further west before crews were raised from 85% of their full war complement to full strength. Eden was

plainly disappointed with Ingersoll's reply and his admission that he had been sent to Britain primarily to discuss technical problems with the Admiralty, and that political and strategic decisions could not easily be made until such discussions had been held and plans coordinated.[1] Eden's sense of frustration was heightened, if anything, by Ingersoll's apparent ignorance about whether the U.S. Navy Department still intended sending a cruiser detachment to Sydney and the Far East in the New Year. His immediate response was to wire Lindsay asking for clarification of the United States Government's policy on the Far East:

> So far as I can gather, their idea is to be prepared for action if such is rendered inevitable by further Japanese provocation. What had rather been in our mind was, as you know, that it would be preferable, if possible, to proceed as soon as may be to some demonstration of naval strength, with the double purpose of averting further outrages and of giving us some standing in the discussion of the ultimate settlement.[2]

Eden did not know, however, that Ingersoll had not given him a full account of the President's latest thinking on Anglo-American cooperation in the Far East. Ingersoll has subsequently admitted that Roosevelt had wished him to take up with the Admiralty the question of implementing a naval blockade against Japan in which private yachts

[1] Report of interview between Eden, Ingersoll and U.S. Naval Attaché, Russell Willson on 1 Jan. 1938, F95/G, FO 371/22106.

[2] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 1, 1 Jan. 1938, F95/G, FO 371/22106.

would supplement the existing complement of warships.[1] It was thought that such a force would be sufficient to enable two lines of ships to patrol the Pacific and ensure a severance of Japanese trade. This fantastic exploit bears all the hallmarks of Roosevelt's inspirational and at times extraordinarily unpractical nature. He did not, for instance, explain what the Anglo-American naval force was supposed to do in the event of an attempt by the Japanese to break the blockade. It was a moot point whether they would only be expected to defend themselves or whether they would be asked to press home an attack on the Japanese Navy. In any case, yachts were a vulnerable target since they could not be expected to prevent breaches of the blockade by Japanese warships. Moreover, even if the combined force did manage to inflict a defeat upon the Japanese or cajole them into submission, it was unclear as to the length of time the task force would be expected to remain in Far Eastern waters. Once the force sailed for their home ports again, almost anything could happen. In fact, one of the imponderables in this situation was the difficulty of predicting what the Japanese would do when the joint force had been dispersed. Furthermore, it was not made clear whether the naval units were expected to bring about a change of attitude on the part of the Japanese such as, for instance, the suspension of hostilities with China and an unqualified withdrawal from the Chinese mainland, or a complete change of government. In the event, Ingersoll, for reasons not wholly adduced by Leutze, did not mention the plan in his conversations

[1] James Leutze, Bargaining for Supremacy (Univ. of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1977), p.22.

with the British preferring instead to cloud American policy with a vagueness which neither accurately represented opinion within U.S. Navy and Cabinet circles nor proved helpful to the British in bringing about an agreed programme of cooperation. In filing his report of the interview, Ingersoll felt that Eden was more interested in immediate gestures to impress the Japanese than he was in long range planning. There was obviously some truth in this conclusion as the Foreign Secretary was at this time primarily concerned with responding to the present Japanese threat. Nevertheless, it would be quite incorrect to infer from this that he was not interested in planning long term strategy with the Americans.

While Eden went off to Grasse in the South of France for a holiday, Cadogan assumed day to day control of the Foreign Office in his absence and continued the search for an Anglo-American accord.[1] On the same day that naval staff conversations began at the Admiralty, Ambassador Lindsay wired his reply to Eden's telegram of 1 January. It was obvious from this message that the Ambassador was unable to give anything other than a vague indication of what the President had in mind regarding the naval staff conversations. Lindsay added that while the President

[1] Cadogan had officially succeeded Sir Robert Vansittart as Permanent Under-Secretary of State on New Year's Day. Vansittart had been appointed to the newly created post of Chief Diplomatic Advisor, a post which in practice turned out to be something of a sinecure.

might be willing to make the type of demonstration which the British Government were seeking, it was probably better for the Foreign Office to wait a little before pressing the matter again, since public opinion had to be prepared for such a step. In describing the Roosevelt Administration, Lindsay compared it to a horse that would run best if the spur was not used, and added that the Americans greatly preferred to act independently of the British and avoid any appearance of collusion or of joint action.[1]

At a conference between Ingersoll, U.S. Naval Attache Russell Willson, Chatfield and Vice Admiral James on 3 January, the First Sea Lord revealed that there had been political pressure applied to have British forces in the Far East reinforced by small numbers of craft as time and opportunity allowed. Opposing this, Chatfield divulged that a naval contingent of sufficient size to cope with the Japanese Navy had been prepared which would be ready to set sail on 15 January, if required and ordered by the British Government. He said that he would want to mobilize ten days before the force started in order to have ships in reserve ready to cope with any European situation which might arise in the absence of the main fleet. Chatfield stated that the eastern entrance to the Mediterranean would be held by occupying Egypt, probably with troops from India, but that Malta and Cyprus would probably have to be abandoned. Although the British would rely upon the French to take care of the Western Mediterranean,

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 5, 3 Jan. 1938, F96/G, FO 371/22106.

problems could be expected from the German surface raiders which would be ready to begin operations in the Atlantic by May 1938. Chatfield broached the subject of coordination and stated that, as a principle, he believed the American and British fleets would be widely separated at first and probably for some time to come, so there could not be unity of command in a tactical and strategical sense and that strategic cooperation would be all that was possible. This placed a premium on arranging the means of communication and exchange of intelligence between the two fleets wherever it became necessary. He further disclosed that the Singapore base would not be completed for eighteen months. Before its completion date there would be only two docks available for use and even when it was fully operational he did not believe it would have the facilities for handling large repairs of ships damaged in action. Nevertheless, in other respects, he thought it could support the task force that had been planned for the base.[1]

Writing of this discussion, Ingersoll stated that both Chatfield and James were concerned about Japanese capital ship construction and believed that some action ought to be taken to ascertain from the Japanese what size of ships they were building. He also got the impression that the British were ready to throw over all qualitative limitations if Japan would not give any definite information or indicate that they were building ships which were

[1] Operational Naval Archives, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., (U.S. Navy), Anglo-American Co-operation, Series VII, Box 116.

exceeding the limitations of the 1936 Treaty.[1] In replying to Chatfield's candid summary, Ingersoll stated that in certain respects the United States were more ready than might be interpreted from the description he would give of their preparations. Although the U.S. Fleet had only 85% of its war complement ready at this stage, it had certain advance forces of cruisers, destroyers and submarines which could proceed at once to the Aleutian Islands and other islands to the west of Honolulu. Ingersoll remarked that if war occurred it was intended to send the whole fleet to the Pacific. Even so, the first step that the Americans would probably take would be to assume a position of readiness covering the west coast of the USA and the Hawaiian Islands. He felt that an advance of the whole fleet beyond this position was not desirable until the fleet was ready to move on and not have to return to base. When questioned on what the American views were upon the prospect of making some form of naval demonstration in advance of a further crisis, he replied that the United States considered that while Japan was preoccupied with the Chinese she would not make a pre-emptive strike against either British or American possessions in the Far East. Apparently, the Americans felt that sending the U.S. Fleet to Honolulu would also prove to be a strong deterrent to Japanese action against other targets such as the Philippines. Chatfield records:

[1] Operational Naval Archives, Series VII, Box 116.

> I pointed out to Captain Ingersoll our difficulties in having a very important backdoor to guard, and that that might limit the strength of the Fleet which the Government would be willing to send out to Singapore. I also said that the composition of the Fleet which we might send out on our own, might be different to that which we would send out if the American Navy was cooperating. I informed him that we had never envisaged the tactical combination of the two Fleets but rather that they would go in support of each other. Captain Ingersoll agreed that this policy represented the view of the United States Naval Board. The most they had envisaged was a somewhat distant blockade or, as he called it, quarantine. They would be able to support the blockade on the Pacific side with their Fleet based at Honolulu and their ships in a distant circle from the Aleutian Islands through the Sandwich Islands and Johnston Island South-westwards. Would we be able similarly to hold the blockade on the South-western side? I said that that would be our intention in such circumstances.[1]

Later that afternoon Ingersoll and Willson met Phillips, Creasey and Hampton of the Admiralty's War Plans Division and discussed the points raised in the meeting with Chatfield. In addition, the British delegation provided information on the naval force which they would be prepared to send to the Far East. This comprised nine battleships, the battle cruiser Hood, two aircraft carriers, fifteen cruisers of heavy and light types including two with destroyer flotillas and those of the Cape and East Indies stations, fifty-four destroyers and ten submarines in all. Ingersoll replied that the Americans were also prepared to send ten capital ships to Japanese waters in addition to other contingents of naval craft.[2] Discussion

[1] Report of interview between Chatfield, Ingersoll, Willson and James, 3 Jan. 1938, F95/G, FO 371/22106.

[2] Operational Naval Archives, Series VII, Box 116. For the British records of the Staff talks see PD 06585/38 and PD 06593/38, Adm 116/3922.

also centred upon the subject of a distant blockade or quarantine. It seemed that the British were prepared to cover the line from Singapore via the Southern Philippines at least as far as the New Hebrides and that the Americans could cover to the eastward via Fiji, Samoa, Hawaii and the Pacific seaboard of the United States. In addition, the British assumed that the Americans would close the Panama Canal and cover the west coast of South America. As far as an operating base in the China Seas was concerned, the British much preferred Manila to Hong Kong. In fact, they were apprehensive about their ability to hold Hong Kong against a landward based attack from within China. Ingersoll, however, did not share the British enthusiasm for Manila as the operational home for the main U.S. Fleet, believing that it presented an unacceptable security risk being situated too close to the Japanese shore-based aircraft in Formosa. Answering this, the Admiralty delegation told Ingersoll that they did not believe the Japanese would attempt to take the Philippines while they were still occupied within China. Ingersoll noted:

> The British believe that even if no war with Japan results because of future 'incidents' or other reasons, that a demonstration by the two fleets in the Pacific, the British at Singapore and the United States at Hawaii or further west will be necessary in order to bring about peace terms between Japan and China that will continue for the other nations of the world the principle of the 'open door' in China. In other words, if there are no further 'incidents' the real test will come when peace terms are under discussion.[1]

[1] Operational Naval Archives, Series VII, Box 116.

He was also informed that the British did not expect to receive any help from the French or Russians in the Far East and that the Dutch were expected to be benevolent provided they were assured that the British would not let them down if the Japanese should attempt to take any of their possessions in the East Indies.[1] Furthermore it was made clear that the dominions could not be committed in advance to any joint action proposed by the British Government. In these circumstances, the dominion governments would reach their own independent decision on whether to join the British or choose to ignore their call for assistance. There was no doubt that Ingersoll was surprised by the specific aspects of British policy that had been revealed to him in these discussions. It was also apparent that he had no wish to commit himself as Phillips and Chatfield had done in this respect.[2] He began by remarking that the purpose of his mission was to exchange general naval information and followed that by outlining the preliminary measures already taken by the U.S. Navy. He gave details concerning the state of readiness of the American Fleet, explaining in passing that it was impossible to bring the fleet up to its full complement without a Declaration of National Emergency by the President. The British were obviously anxious to find out how many ships the United States Navy would be able to mobilise in the Pacific and when they would be ready.

1 Operational Naval Archives, Series VII, Box. 116.
2 ibid.

Ingersoll stated that vessels of the U.S. Fleet in commission in the Pacific could move as far as Hawaii as soon as they had been fuelled and filled with stores. If they were fully manned and docked it would take approximately twelve to fifteen days, but it would probably require a month at least to assemble the forces necessary to permit them to move beyond Hawaii. Ingersoll also dwelt upon the exchange of technical information which had begun on a tentative basis several months before and was still taking place between the U.S. Naval Attaché and the Director of Naval Intelligence on Japanese naval constructions and the Mandated Islands. From his conversations with the Admiralty delegation, it soon became clear that the British wished to extend this exchange to include the movements and location of Japan's naval units.[1]

In a further meeting of the two sides on 5 January, details of codes, cyphers, calls and signals were discussed. Ingersoll was told that the Admiralty were prepared to stop all Japanese traffic crossing a line roughly from Singapore through the Malacca Straits, the Sundra Strait, the islands between Borneo and New Guinea, the Torres Strait and between Australia and New Zealand. This appeared to demonstrate the quite elaborate steps the British were prepared to go to in concert with the United States. According to Ingersoll's account of the conversation, the British stated that they were certain that they could keep the Straits of Gibraltar under their

[1] Operational Naval Archives, Series VII, Box 116.

control, and anticipated few difficulties with possible enemy submarines. They also contemplated supplying their fleet in the Far East from Australia. Although only two days had elapsed since their last meeting, the Admiralty delegation had to amend the figures of capital ships that they could send. They now stated that only eight battleships and one battle cruiser would be sent and even this might be subject to change when the German battle cruisers were completed. It was quite possible that they might have to retain Hood in Home waters. Should this be the case, the Admiralty stated that they would attempt to substitute a battleship for her. It was agreed by both sides that it seemed unnecessary to send a War Plans Officer of the Admiralty to the United States since both Willson and the British Plans Division had knowledge of the respective plans of both navies. However, it was felt that as the coordination of the fleets' activities developed, it would probably become necessary to enlarge the naval communication facilities in London, at which point the question of such an exchange of War Plans Officers should be reconsidered. The common assumption made during these discussions was that in the event of an agreement on joint naval action in the Far East all waters of the British Commonwealth, including the dominions, would be available for use by the United States naval forces. Similar facilities would be extended to the British forces in all territorial waters of the United States, including the Philippines.[1]

[1] Operational Naval Archives, Series VII, Box 116.

Once the staff conversations were concluded an agreed memo was drafted on the results of the conversations between Ingersoll and Phillips. According to this memo, the Admiralty were prepared to release eight battleships, one battle cruiser, three aircraft carriers, nineteen cruisers, one cruiser minelayer, seven destroyer flotillas and twenty-five submarines for service in the Far East. The joint memo explained that the exact composition of the Far Eastern Fleet would be subject to modification with the passage of time but that the figures quoted served as a general guide to planned British strength in Eastern waters. In addition, it was also understood that the ships of the Home and Mediterranean Fleets would be ready to sail for the Far East at ten to fourteen days' notice, if mobilization was ordered after 15 January 1938.[1]

Under the heading of 'General Policy' the memo described the strategic implications for the British arising from a war with the Italians after the bulk of the British Fleet had proceeded to the Far East. Not only would it become necessary for the Admiralty to rely entirely on the alternative route to the East via the Cape of Good Hope, but also in these circumstances the main problem would be to hold the Suez Canal and Egypt. For this reason the Admiralty would have to depend on

[1] Agreed Memo on record of Phillips/Ingersoll Conversations, Jan. 1938, PD 06593/38, Adm 116/3922.

the French Navy to hold the Western Mediterranean while some of her own naval forces would have to be based on Gibraltar to secure the western entrance.

> In the event of such a general European war it would almost certainly be necessary to effect a considerable reduction of British strength in the Far East. With the reduction of British strength in the Far East under these conditions the possible necessity of direct tactical cooperation between the U.S. and British Fleets would require further consideration.[1]

Moreover, Ingersoll and Phillips appreciated the fact that both the Admiralty and the U.S. Navy Department were deeply concerned about the position of the British and American troops already in the Far East. Indeed it was something of an open secret that the U.S. Navy Department wished to see a withdrawal of the United States garrisons from Northern China and, in an emergency, the withdrawal of the American Asiatic Fleet from Northern Chinese waters. Conversely, however, the Admiralty were extremely reluctant to commit themselves to any unilateral scheme of withdrawal, stressing that very serious consideration would have to be given by the British Government to this question before such a scheme could be implemented. It was essential to ensure that the withdrawal of British troops from Northern China to Hong Kong, together with the withdrawal of the British Chinese Fleet to Hong Kong or Singapore was accurately timed. Above all, it was vital neither to exaggerate the acute

[1] Agreed Memo on record of Phillips/Ingersoll Conversations, Jan. 1938, PD 06593/38, Adm 116/3922.

difficulties with which they were already confronted nor to jeopardise long term British interests in staging the evacuation from the Chinese mainland.[1]

Though a little discouraged by the outcome of the Ingersoll-Phillips conversations, Cadogan drafted another message which was shown to the Prime Minister and despatched to Lindsay on 7 January.

> I understand American preparations are making good progress, and ours are in their most advanced state short of actual mobilization.
> I quite agree that it may be undesirable to press the United States Government unduly, but there are certain points on which it would be very useful if we could be enlightened. . . . For instance, I understand that United States Government would not be prepared for naval demonstration except on basis of being prepared for war, which means making up crews to full strength, etc. That could not be done until 'state of emergency' is declared. Can you estimate likelihood of such deliberation in absence of further grave provocation?
> I hope it might be agreed in any case that, if we find it necessary to order mobilization or President decides to declare state of emergency, neither side actually proceeds without giving fair warning to the other. Can you say how far any American action will be dependent on our cooperation?[2]

This part of the telegram had been written before news reached the Foreign Office of an assault carried out by the Japanese military on two British police officers in Shanghai. This prompted Cadogan to inform Lindsay that the British would have to consider what their policy was towards the Japanese in view of this latest incident. Two plans of action suggested themselves; either a demand

[1] Agreed Memo on record of Phillips/Ingersoll Conversations, Jan. 1938, PD 06593/38, Adm 116/3922.

[2] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 19, F96/G, 7 Jan. 1937, FO 371/22106.

for an apology or an announcement that they were completing certain naval preparations short of ordering mobilization. Cadogan wished to discover whether in the event of the British having to proceed to such a step they could expect any parallel action by the United States, such as the sending of an advance force of cruisers, destroyers and submarines to Hawaii and the rest of the fleet to Pacific ports.[1]

Cadogan's telegram, therefore, may be seen as representing a further bold attempt at grasping the rather elusive hand of American friendship in the Far East. Informed by Lindsay that there could be no change in United States policy unless another grave outrage occurred, and knowing of the disclosures made by Ingersoll confirming this opinion, Cadogan had seized upon this relatively minor incident as the latest excuse for pressing the Americans to commit themselves to naval action. It is clear from his letter to Eden on 12 January that in doing so he had received the support of the Prime Minister who agreed that the Government should have to take exceptional notice of the Shanghai incident.[2] In fact, as Chamberlain admitted in a letter to his sister on 9 January, he had been instrumental in approaching the Americans on this question.

> I am trying to jolly them along with a view to making some sort of joint (or at least 'parallel') naval action. They are incredibly slow and have missed innumerable buses. . . . I do wish the Japs would beat up an American or two! But of course the little

[1] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 19, F96/G, 7 Jan. 1938, FO 371/22106.

[2] Avon Papers, Cadogan to Eden, 12 Jan. 1938, FE/38/1.

> d-v-ls are too cunning for that, and we may eventually have to act alone & hope the yanks will follow before its too late.[1]

Bearing in mind his constant desire to avoid sending the fleet away to Singapore, his admission of active encouragement for the initiation of steps which might ultimately lead to such an event appears somewhat enigmatic and rather out of character. It is difficult to imagine that he actually meant to take action alone, even though he was to follow this private letter with a discursive minute for Cadogan advocating that a firm approach should be taken against this latest example of Japanese aggression. But if it was only an action designed to draw the Americans onward, he was destined to be disappointed with its practical results.[2]

Lindsay's telegram despatched on 7 January put any optimistic hopes on this score into their proper perspective. He thought it most unlikely that the United States Government would declare a 'state of emergency' without further grave provocation affecting American interests or honour. He also believed that if the Americans took any action of a military nature they would expect similar action by the British and were likely to insist upon it in advance of their action. Lindsay concluded:

> In general I hope you will not base too sanguine hopes on forward state of naval preparations or on

[1] N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Hilda, 9 Jan. 1938, NC 18/1/1034.

[2] Minute by N. Chamberlain, 11 Jan. 1938, F407/G, FO 371/22106.

> favourable dispositions of the administration. Both are in advance of public opinion and it is the latter which decides the pace.[1]

Lindsay's reply also illustrated the wide difference of opinion which existed between the British and the Americans as far as the Panay crisis was concerned.

> I am sure Panay affair has made a profound impression which will not be forgotten. It has brought unpleasant possibilities vividly before country and resentment is wide. But at present prevailing feeling is one of relief that it is over. It is talked of no more.[2]

Here then was the real crux of the problem; while the Americans were relieved to think that the Panay crisis was closed, the British regarded it as anything but closed. While the British tended to use any excuse to induce the Americans to take action in the Far East, the Americans themselves resisted all such efforts, realising that a public outcry was likely to follow once such action was announced. Under these circumstances, therefore, it is little wonder that the British were unable to obtain joint naval action with the USA in the Pacific. In reality, it was always most unlikely and from 24 December, the date that the Japanese tendered their note of apology to the Roosevelt Administration, any remote chance there might have been of securing such cooperation lengthened perceptibly.

While the Foreign Office awaited the American reply

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 27, 7 Jan. 1938, F313/G, FO 371/22106.

[2] ibid.

to their latest telegram, Anthony Eden wrote to Cadogan from the South of France on 9 January once more on the theme of joint action.

> It looks from here as though the moment was fast approaching when, if we are to retain our position as a world power, we shall be compelled to move the larger part of the fleet to Singapore. We should not, I think, then overlook the possibility of the following procedure with U.S. Say to them: 'The limit has been reached & we have decided to mobilise our ships and move such & such a proportion to Singapore - We shall announce this (say) 1 day week or in 48 hours.' This would give U.S. time to take parallel action if they so wished, & they probably would. In any event I do not believe that they would sit with folded hands & watch British Empire in jeopardy, if it really came to that.
> I believe that our chief difficulty if we did have to move ships would be from the French who would certainly be very jumpy, but Chautemps is sensible and our good relations should help us there.[1]

Eden's letter, written without the benefit of knowing what telegrams had recently been exchanged, or that firm action had already been taken, furnished further evidence of his disinclination to give up the prospect of securing this form of Anglo-American cooperation, an attitude strongly supported by Cadogan himself.[2]

It also, I suggest, implies a good deal more than that. Whereas Roosevelt thought that an economic blockade would be sufficient to induce the Japanese to mend their ways, Eden realised that these measures would take some time, perhaps eighteen months or longer, to become fully effective. He also could not have failed to appreciate

[1] Eden to Cadogan, 9 Jan. 1938, F407/G, FO 371/22106.

[2] In a letter to Chamberlain on 9 January, Eden repeated that 1938 was likely to be a very difficult year with the three Anti-Comintern Powers doing their best to (cont.)

the difficulty of retaining a large detachment of naval vessels in the Far East on blockading duty throughout this period, when the situation in Europe was as threatening as it had become by January 1938. Therefore, in renewing his earlier proposal for sending a battle fleet to the Far East, Eden may have been hoping that instead of adopting merely a defensive strategy based as it would be on Singapore, the force might be able, if it was supported by the Americans, to take offensive action, if necessary. His suggestion in December of sending eight or nine battleships to the Far East had clearly embodied Chatfield's recommendation that any force sent there must be of sufficient strength to engage and defeat the full Japanese Navy in battle, should it be called upon to do so. While there is no documentary evidence available to confirm or deny the theory that he may have wanted a localised war, the idea is not incompatible with what I assume to be his overall strategic thinking. In short, if he could persuade Roosevelt to release a battle fleet for duty off the China coast and should the Japanese become so incensed at the Anglo-American naval presence in the

---

(cont.)
undermine Britain's position and that of France and even the United States. However, Eden thought the Japanese tactics might have the effect of bringing the Americans closer to the British. "The more Tokyo preaches the anti-white crusade the less will an important part of Germany like to be associated with the Japs."
N. Chamberlain Papers, Eden to N.C., 9 Jan. 1938, NC 7/11/31/100.

Far East that they decided to attack the battle fleet, it would provide the joint force with an ideal opportunity to cripple the Japanese Navy and thus at a stroke completely alter the whole strategic situation. Such a double contingency, however unlikely it may have been, had a number of obvious advantages. By destroying the Japanese Navy, the democracies would be providing a salutary example to the other dictatorships, while profoundly affecting the balance of power both within the Far East and the rest of the world. It would provide them with the means of forcing the Japanese to curtail their activities within China by cutting off their essential supplies from the sea. It would also remove, for several years at least, the threat posed by Japan to other countries and allow the British in particular to concentrate wholly upon the European situation. I accept, however, that while the theory may have been valid it relied upon too many assumptions which were unlikely to be fulfilled. The major stumbling block to the implementation of this theory was undoubtedly the practical problem of obtaining American consent to join in such an operation. Even then it was by no means certain that the Japanese would react in a hostile way to the presence of the joint force. Their recent inability to exercise suitable restraint made it just conceivable, however, that some preemptive strike could be undertaken against an Anglo-American force. If war did break out the Japanese Navy, though heavily outnumbered, would still have the potential to inflict serious damage

and loss upon the two fleets. If they succeeded in doing so the extent of the damage would be of crucial importance. It is obvious that the costs in fleet loss of eliminating the Japanese Navy would have to be more than adequately compensated for by the strategic benefits accruing from such an action, otherwise it would be extremely foolhardy to commence such a hazardous operation. Admittedly, if the Americans declined once more to join in such a naval demonstration Eden's force would presumably have to adopt a more defensive posture. While I do not suggest that he would be in favour of deliberately courting an Anglo-Japanese war, I think he was prepared for such an encounter if all else failed. In my opinion, Eden's Far Eastern strategy appears to have been based on the threat or use of force to supplement the shortcomings of conventional diplomacy. In other words, this early period provides an example of the relationship of strategy and personal initiative upon foreign affairs. It is my contention that Eden's policy was initially one of resistance to further encroachment by the dictatorships. I believe this led inexorably onward to embrace the possibility of dealing with Japan to serve as both an example to Germany and Italy and to alter the existing balance of power in favour of the democracies. This latter point could only be achieved if one of two things occurred. First, a total reorientation of Japanese foreign policy away from the dictator bloc to reassume an outlook favourable to the democracies. Or second, and as an alternative, the destruction of the Japanese Navy or the

limitation of their power. I believe that while Eden hoped that wise counsels would prevail in Japan he was prepared to contemplate naval action to bring about the change in the strategic situation he desired.

On 10 January, the day following Eden's call for another approach to the Americans, Lindsay informed the Foreign Office of the President's decision to announce shortly that three out of the four U.S. cruisers on their way to visit Sydney would go on to Singapore. In addition, the President was prepared to announce that vessels of the U.S. Pacific Fleet were to have their hulls scraped, i.e. made ready for sea, if, but only if, the British Government announced their own preparations beforehand. Lindsay reported that, should this be acceptable to the British, an announcement would be made by the U.S. Navy Department to the effect that the U.S. Pacific manoeuvres were to be advanced by two to three weeks and would begin in the second week of February.[1] Taken in isolation, this decision seems to be a rather strange one for the United States to contemplate making at this time, particularly in view of the fact that they had gained the perfect excuse to leave matters well alone in the Far East following the unqualified tone of the Japanese apology. However, it is possible that the President's willingness to re-open the Far Eastern question from the American point of view, if only in a

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 35, 10 Jan. 1938, F407/G, FO 371/22106.

limited and fairly inconclusive way, was possibly a bargaining ploy for his peace initiative which he was proposing to outline to the world on 22 January.

Foreign Office reaction to this news was understandably cautious. C.W. Orde, in a minute of 11 January, considered that dry docking would not commit the United States Government politically as much as a statement about naval preparations would commit the British Government. Nevertheless, he still thought that some use could be made of the American visit for the opening of the Singapore dock, providing care was taken to ensure that should a retreat or a standstill on this question become necessary or unavoidable this could be achieved without incurring humiliation.[1] When Cadogan discussed the American reply with the First Sea Lord he began by asking Chatfield whether the preparations the British were making would be bound to become known. He thought that if this were so it might be more valuable to announce them before they became common knowledge. Chatfield was, however, able to reassure him on this point, stating that the British had not made any preparations that would be regarded as being really unusual and that could not be explained by the necessities imposed by the forthcoming spring cruise. When asked about the kind of announcement the British could make, Chatfield suggested that it might be to the effect that the fleet was in a state of

[1] Minute by C.W. Orde, 11 Jan. 1938, F407/G, FO 371/22106.

preparedness for emergency. He pointed out, however, that if any announcement indicated that the fleet was prepared to sail to the Far East, and if that did not produce the desired effect and the British were forced to take any further action, the only action that could be taken would be to send the fleet.[1]

In a memorandum prepared on this subject for the Prime Minister, Cadogan wrote of Chatfield's misgivings, shared incidentally by both Chamberlain and himself, about the likely effect which this policy might have on the Italians. Cadogan agreed that there was some justification for this concern:

> . . . it certainly has to be remembered that if the fleet were to sail in three or four weeks, that might be just at the time when we are trying to come to terms with Mussolini, who might choose to think that he was in a stronger position for dealing with us if the fleet were removed from home waters and the Mediterranean.[2]

Cadogan's memorandum continued:

> I am afraid that in whatever way we begin we must recognise that we may be drawn on to the ultimate decision to send the fleet out to the Far East, as once we have launched any kind of announcement, we are in the hands of the Japanese, and it will depend on the way in which they react whether we have to proceed by stages to the last alternative.
>
> There arises the question whether the present incidents are of sufficient gravity to justify starting along this road.[3]

[1] Memo by Cadogan for Chamberlain, 11 Jan. 1938, F407/G, FO 371/22106.

[2] ibid.

[3] ibid.

It appeared from this memorandum that he, like Chamberlain and Chatfield, did not believe they were. In fact, Cadogan was in favour of negotiating with the Japanese and only taking action in the event of these discussions breaking down or proving to be very unsatisfactory. He believed that a hostile Italy in friendly relations with Japan, both being co-signatories of the Anti-Comintern Pact, would be in a position to affect materially British interests and communications in the Mediterranean and that this would inevitably react on the freedom of action the British would have in the Far East. Cadogan did not claim that successful talks with Mussolini over de-jure recognition of his country's colonial claims to Abyssinia would suddenly convert Italy into an ally, but he did hope that it would restore her to neutrality. He appreciated that with only ten of their fifteen capital ships immediately available, the British could not afford to antagonise the central European powers and so strengthen the Rome-Berlin Axis at a time when the Government were contemplating taking naval action in the Far East. On this issue, therefore, he differed substantially from that of his Secretary of State and took up a position in support of the Prime Minister's policy of appeasement. Undoubtedly the lack of a positive response from the Americans helped to convince him that in reality there was no effective alternative to appeasement. It was evident, despite the President's three point plan, that the Americans were unenthusiastic about naval cooperation with the British in the Far East. For this reason he opposed the idea fostered by Chatfield of approaching the Americans with a further enquiry as to their action in future contingencies.

While agreeing with Cadogan on this latter point, Chamberlain minuted:

> On our side I feel that this would be a most unfortunate moment to send the fleet away and I would therefore take no immediate action which would involve us in having to do so if the Japanese returned an unsatisfactory reply. At the same time it must be recognised that the provocation on this occasion is worse than ever before since there is no question here of an 'accident' and indeed the action of the military has since been justified and described in the most insulting way by the Japanese spokesman.[1]

Although concluding that the British had better not make any announcement yet of their naval preparations, Chamberlain felt that the telegram to Craigie, which Cadogan had drafted, did not go far enough in informing the Japanese that the British Government took a very grave view of the incident:

> Coming on the top of so many previous incidents each of which has been followed by assurances from the Japanese Gov(ernmen)t that care would be taken to prevent recurrence H.M.G. feel that something more than assurances are now required and that they will regard the response of the Japanese Gov(ernmen)t to their invitation (for suggestions) as a test of their sincerity & ability to control their own subjects.[2]

Cadogan redrafted the telegram in line with Chamberlain's comments and despatched it as No. 26.[3]

[1] Minute by Chamberlain, 11 Jan. 1938, F407/G, FO 371/22106.

[2] ibid.

[3] If anything, the Japanese belligerency strengthened his resolve to come to a satisfactory settlement with the Italians. In urging an early start to these talks, Chamberlain remarked: "It will be as well, for the Japs are growing more and more insolent and brutal." Keith Feiling, The Life of Neville Chamberlain (Macmillan, London, 1970), p.336.

Chatfield's opinion, as expressed in a letter to Sir Thomas Inskip, was that if the British had to send a fleet to the Far East, even in conjunction with the United States, it would leave them so weak in Europe that they would be liable to blackmail or worse.[1] Therefore, it comes as no surprise to find him sending a letter to Cadogan bearing the news that both the First Lord and himself had agreed that the fleet should only be despatched under the threat of the most serious strategic consequences being posed by the Japanese to British interests in the Far East, as, for instance, in order to safeguard the defence of Hong Kong.[2]

By the time Cadogan came to reply to Lindsay's telegram he knew the strength of both Admiralty and Prime Ministerial feeling surrounding the Government's Far Eastern policy and he proceeded to draft his telegram No. 31 with this evidently in mind. Although it was essentially a non-contentious message, Cadogan had been unable to resist asking whether the United States Government would be prepared to do anything in the event of the British issuing some statement concerning the representations that were being made to the Japanese about the recent attacks on British police officers in Shanghai. Cadogan ended his message by stating that it would be more effective if any announcement by the Roosevelt Administra-

[1] Chatfield Papers, Chatfield to Inskip, 25 Jan. 1938, CHT/3/1.
[2] Chatfield to Cadogan, 12 Jan. 1938, F407/G, FO 371/22106.

tion could be made simultaneously with the British. "Is there," he added, "any possibility of inducing them to do this?"[1] It is, of course, a moot point whether any possibility existed of achieving this objective, given the American reluctance to involve themselves overseas and their dislike of any appearance of joint action. But whatever the answer might have been the question was never really put to the test because, at this juncture, another event of major importance occurred to divert attention away from the Far East.

This new diplomatic development concerned the peace plan which President Roosevelt wished to launch on 22 January at an important gathering of the diplomatic corps in Washington. As a concession to Hull, the President wrote to Chamberlain on 11 January outlining his plan and its timetable and asking for his reaction to it.[2] Chamberlain's hostile response to the President's message and his decision to ignore Ambassador Lindsay's advice to accept the plan is well known. As is Cadogan's concern and Eden's desperate and ultimately vain attempts, once he had been recalled

[1] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 31, 12 Jan. 1938, F407/G, FO 371/22106.

[2] The history of the British Government's handling of the President's peace initiative has been well documented in the past and does not require further detailed examination for the purposes of this thesis. Apart from the Avon Papers, Chamberlain and Templewood Collections in Britain, the peace plan is discussed in many secondary sources. For closer study of this initiative see Prem 1/259; The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, ed. D. Dilks (Cassell, London, 1971), pp.35-42; Avon, Facing the Dictators, pp.548-567.

from France, to repair the damage wrought by the Prime Minister's 'douche of cold water'.[1] Unlike Chamberlain who had thought the President's plan would possibly cripple his European appeasement policy, Eden had not shared this view. He wrote at the time:

> What we have to choose between is Anglo-American cooperation in an attempt to ensure world peace and a piecemeal settlement approached by way of problematical agreement with Mussolini.[2]

In a message to Lindsay on 25 January, Eden said he was deeply disappointed with Chamberlain's response to Roosevelt's peace plan.

> I am sure that we should have been wiser to give the President's scheme full backing from the start while, of course, commenting upon any points which seemed to us to call for it. I am now apprehensive lest the working of recent months should be prejudiced. To me nothing matters so much in the world today as the steady growth of Anglo-American understanding.[3]

In his reply Lindsay admitted that though there may have been drawbacks to Roosevelt's plan, he had believed that the British would have been committing a capital error if they had turned it down.

> Our diplomacy with America has to follow a very strait (sic) and narrow path and it must be guided far more by psychological than by political considerations. What brings America closer to us is the identity of American aims, desires and policies with our own.[4]

1 S. Welles, The Time For Decision (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1944), p.56.
2 Avon, Facing the Dictators, pp.558-559.
3 Avon Papers, Eden to Lindsay, 25 Jan. 1938, US/38/10.
4 Avon Papers, Lindsay to Eden, 7 Feb. 1938, US/38/11.

Although the British Government did eventually agree to accept Roosevelt's initiative, their collective decision came a little too late to save the plan. The President felt that if the British were hostile to the implementation of the plan there was little point in issuing an appeal for support on a world-wide basis. Consequently, the ill-fated January initiative was successively postponed and then finally dropped altogether.

While the President's January initiative was being discussed and attempts were made to salvage something from the wreckage of his plan, the idea of securing American naval cooperation in the Far East was put on one side. It was only revived at the end of the month when Eden asked Cadogan about the possibility of some form of naval demonstration off the Chinese coast. In his reply, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State said that he thought that the British Ambassador in Tokyo, Sir Robert Craigie, had not yet acted on his instructions contained in telegram No. 26 of 12 January, concerning the alleged ill treatment by the Japanese military of two British members of the Shanghai Municipal Police.[1] Cadogan wondered whether it was necessary to do anything at all to renew British interest in the controversy and suggested that if any future action were contemplated this action

[1] Memorandum by Cadogan to Eden, 31 Jan. 1938, F407/G, FO 371/22106.

should probably be confined to making a general statement to the effect that it would be wrong to suppose the British were unable to do anything in the Far East.[1]

Whatever the reluctance to involve themselves overseas may have been, practically all of Roosevelt's Cabinet were by this stage in favour of substantially increasing the size of the U.S. Navy. Moreover, at a Cabinet meeting on 18 January, the President said that for some time he had had a special message ready for Congress calling for an appropriation of ships beyond the number provided for in the Navy Department budget.[2]

Two days later Admiral Leahy sent a memo to the President reminding him of Eden's statement in a Commons debate at the time of the Brussels Conference to the effect that the British Empire was prepared to go as far as the United States and in conjunction with her in the Far East.[3] In his speech Eden had suggested that if the United States were prepared to work with the British the dictatorships would not be able to do as they liked throughout the world. His thesis was that if the Americans consented to provide powerful, firm leadership in world diplomacy, they could accomplish more for world peace during the next few years than any other country; but that the success of this diplomacy depended completely upon the dictatorships believing that the USA were ready

[1] Memorandum by Cadogan to Eden, 31 Jan. 1938, F407/G, FO 371/22106.

[2] Ickes, Diary, entry for 18 Jan. 1938, p.296.

[3] F.D.R. Papers, Leahy to F.D.R., 20 Jan. 1938, PSF Box 78. Eden's speech in House of Commons debate on the Address, 1 Nov. 1937, Hansard (Commons) 5th Series, 1937-38, Cols. 583,596, Vol.328.

and willing to fight for the protection of their interests. Leahy's memo may well have been inspired by a further advance of the Japanese forces in China and the threat which this posed to British and American interests in the Far East.[1]

It was not the last time that Leahy was to raise the question of some form of naval action with Britain in the Far East. On 2 February 1938 he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet and the Commander-in-Chief of the Asiatic Fleet about the possibility of parallel action by the British and American Fleets in the Pacific. In the event of a decision being made in London and Washington to implement parallel action certain assumptions would have to be made to adapt the existing Orange operation plans to the changed situation of Blue (America) and Red (Britain) against Orange (Japan).[2]

Although not straying from the path of the subjugation of the Chinese, the Japanese at last began to show signs in the following weeks of a growing awareness that their activities were deeply resented beyond the borders of China.[3] In practice this meant they pursued a more restrained policy and deliberately avoided the type of anti-foreign incident that had occurred in the previous seven months.[4] Nevertheless, Eden remained suspicious of

1 F.D.R. Papers, Leahy to F.D.R., 20 Jan. 1938, PSF Box 78.

2 Operational Naval Archives, C.N.O. to C-in-C U.S. Fleet, 2 Feb. 1938, Series VII, Box 116.

3 Harvey, Diaries, p.82.

4 This was evident in the case of the naval base at Wei-hai-wei which the British continued to use without interference by the Japanese.

Japanese intentions. He told Hugh Wilson on 4 February that if the Japanese attacked Hong Kong, the British would act at once in its defence and that though this might involve withdrawing substantial forces from the Mediterranean the British could not do otherwise. He is also alleged to have said that the British would act to defend Hong Kong, if it was attacked, regardless of what the American response would be and whether they could expect United States reinforcements or not.[1] Despite Eden's concern, any improvement in the Far Eastern situation temporary or otherwise was a welcome development.

A further cause for modest satisfaction came from the official opening on 14 February of the graving dock at Singapore. Although no battleships arrived for the celebrations, the visit of three American cruisers sent specially for the occasion and the attendance of American personnel from these vessels at the opening ceremony was not without interest. Unfortunately, as a base for the British capital ship fleet, Singapore was far from ideal. Apart from its limited capacity, the anti-aircraft defence of the base needed urgent improvement. Until such time as this remedial work was completed Singapore would remain acutely vulnerable to air attack. These factors notwithstanding, the opening of the dock was a boost to morale and served notice of the possibility at least of

[1] F.D.R. Papers, Johnson to Hull, 4 Feb. 1938, PSF Box 28.

a future active British presence in the Far East, a point which could not have failed to register with the Japanese.

Although naval cooperation in the Far East may have been shelved as a result of the British Government's decision to forego announcing their naval plans, the Admiralty did not lose contact with the U.S. Navy Department. On the contrary, in February 1938, following the limited success of the Ingersoll-Phillips conversations, the U.S. Naval Attaché Russell Willson suggested to the Director of Naval Intelligence at the Admiralty, Rear Admiral J.A.G. Troup, that an exchange of information might take place on the subject of Boom Defence and Damage Control in Action. The Admiralty's technical departments, while favouring the exchange of technical information in principle, believed that on these particular questions the British had more information to give than they would gain from the Americans in return and so opposed the exchange.[1] Other departments, however, pointed out that on general grounds the British had much to gain from cooperation with the United States Navy and since one could assume that war between the two countries was out of the question there was nothing for the British to lose by helping the Americans with this type of information, providing that their discretion and secrecy arrangements could be trusted.[2]

[1] Memo by D. of T.D., 1 Feb. 1938, M07537/38, Adm 116/4302.
[2] See minutes by T.S.V. Phillips, 9 Feb. 1938, and Head of M., 16 Feb. 1938, M01537/38, Adm 116/4302.

The First Sea Lord also considered that the closer the British could get to the U.S. Navy the better. But he agreed with the technical departments that the British would lose on an actual exchange of information. He also pointed out that once exchanges were started they might be difficult to stop and could well lead to approaches by other countries requesting the same facilities. Nevertheless, he concluded that the question of all such exchanges with the Americans would have to be decided on political and general grounds.[1] Chatfield's views were shared on this matter by Duff Cooper, who was in favour of improving Anglo-American relations where this could be done without incurring risk to the Admiralty.

By early February, however, the signs of an acute rift between Eden and Chamberlain over certain aspects of British foreign policy, and in particular the appeasement of Italy, had become

[1] Minute by Chatfield, 8 March 1938, M01537/38, Adm 116/4302.

the major consideration of the hour and all discussion concerning Anglo-American cooperation in the Far East was shelved pending the outcome of this ministerial crisis. Chamberlain's desire to effect a settlement with Italy had widened the breach between Eden and himself to the point where it was in the best interest of both for the Foreign Secretary to resign. Eden had believed that the most effective way of dealing with Mussolini, whom he described as the Anti-Christ, was by tough measures.[1] Chamberlain did not. He was prepared to begin conversations with the Italians in the hope that a reasonable settlement and an amicable understanding could be reached between the two nations. The Prime Minister regarded this as being essential for the continuance of a policy of peaceful coexistence in Europe.

[1] Harvey, Diaries, p. 65.

In putting Anglo-Italian relations on a firmer footing, the Prime Minister hoped Mussolini would not feel the need to strengthen the Rome-Berlin Axis at the expense of the western democracies. Whereas Eden had sought American assistance in the Far East and had seen Anglo-French relations as being vital for the maintenance of peace by deterrence in Europe, Chamberlain had little confidence in either.[1] He was strongly supported by the Chiefs of Staff who vigorously opposed Eden's desire for staff conversations with the French and regarded the prospect of obtaining American help in any quarter as being most unlikely.[2]

Described as an anti-American Englishman, Chamberlain did not share his Foreign Secretary's belief in American assistance as a panacea for the ills of the world.[3] He was prepared to work closely with the United States, if this could be arranged, but he seriously doubted the capacity of either the British or, even if given the will, the Roosevelt Administration to bring this about.[4] Chamberlain regarded the Americans as

1 Avon, Facing the Dictators, pp.560-561.

2 COS 228th meeting, 28 Jan. 1938, Cab 53/8; COS 680, 4 Feb. 1938, Cab 24/274.

3 Tom Lamont had used this expression in describing Chamberlain to Orville Bullitt, the United States Ambassador to France, see O.H. Bullitt, For the President (Andre Deutsch, London, 1973), p.213. In a letter to Templewood, Cadogan admitted that Chamberlain had an almost instinctive contempt for the Americans. Templewood Papers, Cadogan to Templewood, 26 Oct. 1951, XIX 12.

4 In his diary for 19 February 1938 Chamberlain conceded that the United States had drawn closer to the British (cont.)

something of an uncertain friend whose value can never properly be measured but whose unpredictability always causes some concern. This belief in the ambivalent nature of the Americans hardly inspired the type of confidence necessary to place either much trust or reliance upon them. Chamberlain appeared to view them with a curious detachment. He had turned down the opportunity of meeting Roosevelt during the autumn of 1937 because he felt that little would come of the meeting. He rejected the President's peace initiative in January 1938 for much the same reason. Throughout he seemed most anxious not to raise hopes of success, if it was possible that these would soon be dashed by either a failure to agree or as a result of the impinging of other events. He acquiesced in most of Eden's plans for approaching the Americans but opposed the possibility of sanctions and regarded the prospect of sending the bulk of the fleet to the Far East with ill-concealed distaste. While recognising the need to restrain the Japanese, his major concern was to avoid a situation in which Britain would find herself drawn into war with them. Although not shrinking from the challenge of Japan, Chamberlain plainly did not wish to force a confrontation in which hostilities would become inevitable.

(cont.)
but the isolationists were so strong that they could not be depended on for help if the British should get into trouble.
N. Chamberlain Papers, Diary entry of 19 Feb. 1938, N.C. 2/24A.

I have suggested that Eden may have wished to deal with the Far Eastern crisis before tackling the European problem. Chamberlain approached this matter from an entirely different angle. He placed far more emphasis upon forging the first links of his policy of appeasement towards Germany and Italy than making any positive or aggressive step towards Japan. In this connection he criticised Eden for not having made any genuine attempt to get together with the dictators.[1] Much the same criticism could be made of him for failing to respond favourably to the few American initiatives which were made during this seven month period. It is arguable, of course, whether the most important of these, the President's peace initiative, would have come to anything. One can only guess at its likely effect upon the dictatorships and the rest of the world, but one cannot be sure what would have happened and whether it would have had a crippling effect, as Chamberlain feared, on his relations with Germany and Italy. However, the fact that the peace plan was not given the chance to succeed was due in no small measure to the Prime Minister's unsympathetic reply. He has been severely admonished for his part in this incident and there is no doubt that he deserves some criticism. By ignoring Ambassador Lindsay's advice to accept and in refusing to contact Eden about the terms of the offer before sending such an uncooperative reply, Chamberlain

[1] Avon, Facing the Dictators, p.582.

deserves censure. It is debatable though, whether Churchill was correct to draw the conclusion that the rejection of the peace initiative was the loss of the last frail chance to save the world from tyranny otherwise than by war.[1] Anyone blessed with the benefits of hindsight can make bold statements about circumstances which at the time of the event were by no means certain. This episode demonstrates, however, that Chamberlain possessed some of the traits for which Eden has been criticised.

It is perhaps because both believed in and felt compelled to follow their own policies in foreign affairs, disliked interference by others and viewed things from a vastly different perspective that a rupture in their working relationship occurred. When this happened Eden conceded that the majority of the Cabinet favoured Chamberlain's policy rather than his own.[2] After surrendering his portfolio as Foreign Secretary, Eden returned to the back benches of the Commons and his place at the Foreign Office was taken by Lord Halifax, a friend and confidant of the Prime Minister and a man known to be favourably disposed to a policy of European appeasement. What this meant for British policy and in particular Anglo-American relations will be the subject of the following chapters.

[1] W.S. Churchill, The Second World War: Vol. 1 The Gathering Storm (Cassell, London, 1948), p.199.

[2] Avon, Facing the Dictators, pp.586-598.

Chapter Six: Caution rather than Experimentation (Feb.-Sept. 1938)

In the weeks immediately following Eden's resignation, Anglo-American relations entered a subdued phase; the Far Eastern situation showed some sign of improvement and no attempt was made by either Halifax or Chamberlain to press for the type of naval operation which Eden had contemplated in conjunction with the United States. Bearing in mind the recent history of relations between the two powers, a period of calm reappraisal had certain merits.[1] Although Halifax hastened to reassure the State Department that Eden's resignation did not signal a change in British foreign policy, the truth was it did represent a shift in both emphasis and direction and one which brought an end to an important era in Anglo-American relations.[2] As far as the British were concerned, close cooperation with the United States was no longer considered to be essential to the success of their foreign policy. Apart from the personal feelings of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, which were cooler and more restrained towards the Americans than Eden's had been,

[1] In a letter describing Ciano's delight at the news of Eden's resignation, Ivy Chamberlain, the Prime Minister's sister-in-law, revealed that the U.S. Ambassador to Italy, William Phillips, had also told her that the change at the Foreign Office would help America too. N. Chamberlain Papers, Ivy Chamberlain to N. Chamberlain, 22 Feb. 1938, NC 1/17/8.

[2] Halifax to Lindsay, No. 140, A1410/1409/45, 24 Feb. 1938, FO 371/21547.

the Government were encouraged by their military advisors to believe that little of practical value could be expected from the Americans in Europe. After all, it was not an area which was seen as a prime sphere of U.S. influence or one in which the Roosevelt Administration would consent to involve themselves directly arising out of any commitment to Britain. Memories of the last war, the strength of isolationism and the existence of the Neutrality Act forbade any possibility of active assistance in Europe and limited the type of support which the United States could give to the Prime Minister's efforts to improve relations with Hitler and Mussolini.

Despite approving of Chamberlain's policy towards Germany and Italy, the Chiefs of Staff still regarded the military situation as being fraught with greater risk than at any time in living memory, apart from the war years.[1] In a memorandum on 11 February they had drawn the attention of the C.I.D. to the disturbing fact that the rearmament programme was faltering and unless immediately accelerated would fail to give the British security in time. According to their evidence, even if the Government approved the new standard fleet and implemented the Admiralty's new construction programme, the British would be hard put to retain a bare numerical superiority in capital ships over the combined fleets of

[1] DP(P)20, para.3, 11 Feb. 1938, Cab 16/182.

Germany and Japan.[1] It would certainly not achieve the short of dominance thought necessary by the Chiefs of Staff for the navy to perform its defensive role effectively against modern, well equipped fleets in two war theatres simultaneously. Moreover, it was not even possible to be comforted by the future position, since it was estimated that in 1942, for example, the combined German and Japanese fleet strength would reach a total of twenty capital ships as opposed to a total British Fleet of twenty-two, including three partially modernised and five unmodernised ships.[2] When the Italian Navy was taken into consideration, the problem of imperial defence was worsened still further. Even an agreement with the French Navy would not solve the problem completely, as it was thought likely that for two years at least the French would be unable to deal unassisted with the Italian Navy in the Mediterranean, much less safeguard Britain's interests, as well as her own, in that area.[3] These factors were to have an important bearing upon and provide an added stimulus for Chamberlain's efforts to reorientate British foreign policy along the lines of an agreement with the Germans and Italians.

Further proof that the Chiefs of Staff thought such a policy was imperative came with the publication of their

[1] DP(P)20, paras.5,6, Appendix 1, 11 Feb. 1938, Cab 16/182.
[2] ibid.
[3] DP(P)20, para.5, 11 Feb. 1938, Cab 16/182.

Mediterranean, Middle East and North East African Appreciation on 21 February. Apart from the detailed provisions relating to purely European involvement, this important strategic document also drew attention to the possibility that a war initially against Italy could bring in the Germans and the Japanese as well. Assuming that France, Belgium and possibly Russia would be allied to Britain in such an event, the Chiefs of Staff still concluded that war against three Axis forces simultaneously in 1938 was a commitment against which neither the existing nor the projected strength of Britain's defence forces was designed to meet.[1] In their opinion, such a war would place a dangerous strain on the resources of the British Empire. It was conceded, however, that if it was possible to count on the intervention of the United States in her favour, the strain would be considerably reduced. The Chiefs placed little reliance on this remote contingency, however, a belief well illustrated by the almost complete absence of material relating to the United States in the Appreciation. In describing the strategy to be adopted in a world war, the Chiefs of Staff reaffirmed the opinion given at the Imperial Conference in June 1937 that the security of the United Kingdom and that of Singapore would be the cornerstones on which the survival of the British Commonwealth would depend.[2] While

[1] COS 691, part III, para. 209, 21 Feb. 1938, WO 33/1507.
[2] ibid.

anticipating a direct air offensive against the former at the outset of hostilities, they felt the attack upon the latter by the Japanese might be delayed but would not necessarily be prevented by any conflict with Russia that might arise out of an extension of the war. Therefore, a British Fleet would have to proceed to the Far East leaving sufficient strength in Home waters to neutralise the German Navy.

> We could rely on France to neutralise the Italian fleet in the Mediterranean to some extent, to maintain command of the Western Mediterranean, and with the assistance of the U.S.S.R., to prevent essential trade reaching Italy. At the same time, so long as we retained our position in Egypt, we could control the Suez Canal. Some or all of our Mediterranean possessions might be in a state of siege, and we might be hard put to it to maintain our forces in Egypt; but this weakness in the Mediterranean would not be nearly as serious as the surrender of our sea power in the Far East.[1]

In order to avoid presenting the Japanese with the temptation of launching a seaborne attack on Singapore, as a prelude to any further expansionist aims in the Far East, the Chiefs of Staff were to reaffirm the naval position as outlined by Hoare at the Imperial Conference. Namely, the recognition that whatever the strategic position in the Mediterranean, nothing should be allowed to interfere with the despatch of a fleet to the Far East. In these circumstances, the COS expected the British Mediterranean Fleet to be reduced to a few submarines and light surface forces, a factor which would

[1] COS 691, part III, para. 210, 21 Feb. 1938, WO 33/1507.

enable the Italians to exert complete control over the Eastern Mediterranean and pose a considerable threat to the defence of Egypt and the Suez Canal.[1]

While the Chiefs of Staff supported the Prime Minister's policy of attempting to reduce the number of Britain's potential enemies, they remained concerned about the state of the rearmament programme. Duff Cooper undoubtedly shared their anxiety. In the absence of an alliance which would ease Britain's defence policy, the Admiralty had proposed a new naval construction programme for 1938 which went much further than the Treasury were prepared to go. In a Cabinet memorandum on 11 February Duff Cooper had set out the details of the building programme which he estimated would cost a little over £70 million in the 1938-42 period. In budgeting for three capital ships, two aircraft carriers, seven cruisers, eight destroyers, seven submarines and an accompaniment of other vessels, the First Lord explained that because the international situation had not improved over the last few months it was his duty to make preparations for the worst eventuality that might occur.[2] Compelling though he felt his case to be he failed to convince the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Minister for Coordination of Defence and the majority of his Cabinet colleagues of the need to sanction the building

[1] COS 691, part III, para. 223, 21 Feb. 1938, WO 33/1507.
[2] CP 29(38), 11 Feb. 1938, DP(P)19, Cab 16/182.

programme he had proposed. Instead an agreement to curtail all forms of British defence expenditure to the maximum figure of £1650 million for the 1939-41 period was made at a Cabinet meeting on 16 February.[1]

Within a few weeks, however, this decision had been overtaken by a series of events which had tended to consolidate the Axis hold over central Europe and Spain and weaken the effectiveness of the western democracies. Not surprisingly, the opponents of appeasement, seeing increased rearmament as more of a strategic necessity than ever, demanded a substantial acceleration in the defence budget to offset the gains made on behalf of Britain's potential enemies. It was a view shared neither by Inskip nor by Simon. Both men regarded the state of the economy and the need for financial restraint as the decisive and limiting factors in implementing any programme involving public expenditure on such a massive scale as that demanded by those in the rearmament lobby.[2] In short, therefore, the British Government's dilemma was one of trying to attain effective international security without incurring national bankruptcy.

Duff Cooper remained in the forefront of what became a running battle with the Treasury over the defence estimates. Adopting an uncompromising position throughout, he was totally opposed in principle to the rationing of the service departments. He asserted that it was the

[1] Cab.meeting 5(38), Conclusion 9, 16 Feb. 1938, Cab 23/92.
[2] CP 24(38), paras.36-38, 8 Feb. 1938, DP(P)16, Cab 16/182.

first duty of the Government to ensure the adequate defence of the country.

> It seems to me that in this matter we should decide first upon our needs, for after all the continuance of the Empire depends upon its defences, and that we should then inquire as to our means of meeting them. If it is found quite impossible to meet them, then it might be necessary to alter either the whole of our social system or the whole of our foreign and imperial policy.[1]

In rejecting the allocation to the Admiralty of £355 million from the defence budget for the 1939-41 period Duff Cooper informed Inskip that if such a restriction were to be placed upon naval expenditure, it would no longer be a question of economy or limited sacrifice but would entail the fundamental revision of the scope of naval rearmament that had been previously considered. He emphasised that even to maintain the DRC standard fleet, which the Government had agreed to, the Admiralty would need about another £30 million more than the allocation Inskip had allowed them; whereas the new standard fleet, upon which the Cabinet had yet to make a decision, would, if it was sanctioned, require an extra £80 million. Responding to Simon's criticism that the Admiralty had not even tried to make reductions in their estimates, Duff Cooper informed the Chancellor on 9 May that they had been awaiting the Cabinet's decision on the new standard fleet when the Government had decided to cut back on defence spending.

[1] Memo by Duff Cooper, CP 104(38), 28 Apr. 1938, Prem 1/346.

> We couldn't adjust our necks to the axe until we were told what was expected of us. If we were to produce a very much smaller fleet than the D.R.C. fleet we must be told what functions that fleet would be expected to fulfil before we could begin to plan it. If we were told that it was to fight Japan and Germany we must say, regretfully, that it couldn't be done for the money. If it was to fight Germany only and maintain our position in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea-and possibly the Indian Ocean it would be another matter - but we couldn't plan a fleet until we knew what it was to be used for.[1]

It was exactly this type of strategic situation, where Britain might be opposed by two or, even worse, three major powers simultaneously, which the Prime Minister's policy of appeasement was designed to avoid. In the absence of such an agreement, however, the case for a stronger navy as proposed by the First Lord had a good deal of validity. In a memorandum drawn up on the subject of naval policy and defence expenditure in future years, Duff Cooper reminded his ministerial colleagues that if Britain suffered defeat at sea the finest air force in the world could not save her or the empire from complete destruction.

> Naval power is less capable of improvisation than the other arms. Battleships and smaller vessels cannot be built at short notice and it has therefore always been necessary for this country to have a very clear and definite naval policy in order that those who are entrusted with carrying it out may be quite clear in their own minds as to what it is desired to produce at the end of a period of at least three years or four years.[2]

[1] Memo by Duff Cooper, 9 May 1938, Adm 116/3631.
[2] CP 104(38), 28 Apr. 1938, Prem 1/346.

In a letter to the Chancellor on 27 May, the First Lord pointed out that far from being unrealistic in their demands the Admiralty were striving to reach the degree of naval strength necessary to fulfil the strategical requirements set out in the report of the Defence Requirements Sub Committee in November 1935.

> So long as this recommendation accurately describes the strategical problem with which the Admiralty has to deal, and so long as German and Japanese fleets are not reduced, we are unable to see how we can reduce effectively our estimate of the size of the fleets necessary to deal with it, for it must also be borne in mind that since the D.R.C. gave the directions on which the Admiralty have acted the international situation has not improved but deteriorated.[1]

Citing the fact that Germany had grown more powerful and Japan less friendly, Duff Cooper complained that the Admiralty had been working since 1936 on a hand to mouth policy without Government guidance as to its ultimate future strength. He drew Simon's attention to the alarming fact that even if the Cabinet approved the new standard fleet the navy would not have reached the size necessary by 31 March 1942 to engage in a joint war with Germany and Japan without incurring very considerable risk to itself. In his opinion, any smaller fleet produced as a result of curtailing naval expenditure would be quite hopelessly inadequate.[2]

Such arguments did not convince Simon. He indicated

[1] Duff Cooper to Simon, 27 May 1938, Prem 1/346.
[2] ibid.

to the Prime Minister that the new standard fleet was practically a two power standard and doubted whether Britain could honestly afford the outlay on a navy of this size.[1] This view was supported almost inevitably by Inskip who rejected what he regarded as the short term policy of ensuring safety in numbers as it would be clearly quite beyond Britain's means to maintain the fleet once it had been built up to the new level.

> Either we must shape our policy to avoid the double contingency for which the New Standard Fleet is proposed.
> Or else we can decide that, while the policy in general should not be modified, we must attempt to carry out that policy with more slender resources than those deemed to be adequate by the naval experts.[2]

He had reached the conclusion that the proposed new standard of naval strength was impossible of attainment and that the Admiralty would have to be content with something substantially less. If this did not make a great deal of sense strategically, it still appealed to those ministers who were concerned with the financial ramifications of the new standard fleet and pinned their hopes on the appeasement policy to avoid the necessity of ever fighting two or three such formidable powers simultaneously.

During the Cabinet's discussion of the new standard on 20 July, Hoare suggested that pressure might be applied to the dominions in the hope that they might

[1] Simon to Chamberlain, 24 June 1938, Prem 1/346.
[2] CP 170(38), para.57, 12 July 1938, DP(P)19, Cab 16/182.

consent to help share in the burden of the expense. He believed that the Australian Government might still be prepared to bear the cost of building a capital ship, but he thought it was not likely that they would do so if they felt that the British could not be relied upon to defend the status quo in the Far East.[1] It was, of course, debatable whether anything other than the new standard would be sufficient for this purpose. It was already evident that the existing DRC standard was seriously inadequate as could be determined by the fact it would be deficient by as many as six capital ships, three aircraft carriers, twenty-six cruisers and five destroyer flotillas from the number prescribed by the Chiefs of Staff as the minimum requirement needed by the British in 1942 to counter the threat of a simultaneous war against Germany and Japan. By agreeing to refer the matter of the Admiralty's share of the defence budget to a meeting between the Chancellor, Inskip and Duff Cooper, the Cabinet were preparing the way for a compromise solution. Although ministers were unable to give approval to the new standard, the eventual increase in the Admiralty's allocation of £55 million over the original sum prescribed for the 1939-41 period meant that the expenditure on the navy would exceed the estimated DRC level and correspond roughly to half the difference in cost between the DRC fleet and that of the

[1] Cab.meeting 33(38), 20 July 1938, Cab 23/94.

new standard. As a figure of overall expenditure this represented a reduction of £21 million on the estimated costs of the new standard fleet. In crude quantitative terms it was equivalent to the loss of a capital ship, an aircraft carrier, three light cruisers and one heavy cruiser from the naval construction programme. In other words, the loss was bearable, and providing the dominions would assist in supplying two or three cruisers or perhaps a capital ship the overall position was much better than had appeared possible in February. For this reason, if for no other, Duff Cooper deserves considerable praise. His vigorous defence of the navy had reaped solid rewards and been worth the time and effort expended on the issue.

In discussing the need for the new standard at the Cabinet meeting on 20 July Duff Cooper had agreed that real cooperation with the United States would make all the difference but contended that there was no prospect of achieving it in the next twelve months.[1] This seemed particularly true with respect to the Far East as Hornbeck's letter to Cadogan had indicated on 13 April when rejecting the idea of coordinating naval policy in order to bring pressure to bear on the Japanese.[2]

Despite the State Department's resistance to the use of naval force in the Far East, the United States Joint Planning Committee had been working since November

[1] Cab.meeting 33(38), 20 July 1938, Cab 23/94.
[2] Hornbeck to Cadogan, 13 Apr. 1938, File 30, FO 115/3415.

1937 on exploratory studies of the changing international situation created by the tripartite pact linking Germany, Italy and Japan. The Joint Board in directing the strategic survey had realised that the existing war plans needed urgent revision.[1] By February a new plan had been devised which in addition to maintaining the traditional offensive strategy in the Pacific also took into account the danger of conflict with the European Axis Powers in the Atlantic. Although it was planned that the U.S. forces would adopt initially a position of readiness for action in both oceans, the planning staffs had taken into consideration the increasing probability that in the event of a two ocean war the United States would not be fighting on her own without European allies. While the extent of any allied help could not be predicted, it was assumed that they would receive sufficient naval assistance from their potential allies to maintain an adequate superiority over Japan and to permit them to extend their offensive operations into the Western Pacific without jeopardising the security of U.S. territory or their vital interests in the Western hemisphere.[2]

What the revised war plan demanded, of course, was a larger navy. Roosevelt had been aware of the need for a significant increase in the naval construction programme and had requested Congress on 28 January to approve a

[1] National Archives, Washington, D.C., Joint Board Serial No. 617, J.B. File 325.

[2] J.B. Serial Nos. 617-618, J.B. File 325.

significant rise in the naval budget.[1] When the U.S. Navy Construction Bill became law in May 1938 it provided for three battleships, two aircraft carriers, nine light cruisers, twenty-three destroyers and nine submarines, in addition to a maximum of three thousand planes for the Naval Air Force. This was similar in form to the scheme for new construction proposed by Duff Cooper in December 1937 but which had been scaled down subsequently to bring it into line with the Cabinet's decision on defence spending. In sanctioning such an increase the President was therefore effectively committing the U.S. Navy to a faster rate of growth than was possible under the amended programme available to the Admiralty.

It had long been recognised that the period between the spring of 1938 and the summer of 1939 would be a difficult one for the British. Hoare had admitted so at the Imperial Conference the year before and it was certain that the Admiralty would have to do without the services of at least three of their capital ships for the entire period while modernisation and reequipment was completed. As the navy was in such a depleted state, the Admiralty were unlikely to favour making any small or large scale excursions beyond their normal operating areas. They were almost certain to be against any deployment of their main fleet in Far Eastern waters. Whatever reluctance was felt by the Naval Staff was shared by the

1 Roseman, The Public Papers of F.D.R., Vol. 1938, pp.68-71.

Government who were grateful for the improvement in Anglo-Japanese relations and the lessening of tension in the Pacific area. Even without the prevailing state of crisis in Europe, it is difficult to imagine the Government being willing to conduct an active policy east of Suez. As it was, however, the majority of ministers were keen not to do anything which could worsen the Far Eastern situation or renew controversy or antagonism between Britain and Japan at a time when the Germans seemed poised for war. Eden's concept of Anglo-American naval cooperation in the Far East was nothing more than a lofty ideal. By May 1938 it had become as impractical as it was unlikely.

Nonetheless in June the British were shaken from their Far Eastern lethargy by the news that the Japanese had extended their operations into Southern China by landing troops and supplies at Amoy only 300 miles north-east of Hong Kong. Halifax told the Cabinet on 29 June that he had heard from Craigie only two days before to the effect that the Japanese Government had no intention of invading Southern China.[1] If this was not their intention, it was difficult to imagine the purpose of their military expedition. Unlike Chamberlain who wished to keep out of the affair for as long as possible, Halifax was known to be sympathetic to the idea of providing some financial assistance for the Chinese so

[1] Cab.meeting 30(38), 29 June 1938, Cab 23/94.

as to enable them to purchase more arms and supplies of war material from abroad.[1] As the Cabinet minutes for 6 July record, Chamberlain agreed to Halifax's proposal very reluctantly. He did so because he regarded a loan or provision of financial assistance as being tantamount to intervention in the Sino-Japanese war. In his opinion, the more effective that intervention was, the more disagreeable it would be to the Japanese. Since the British could not be sure that the Japanese offensive in China would grind to a halt because of their economic difficulties, the effect of giving a loan to prop up the Chinese would only succeed in alienating the Japanese Government and worsening relations with them. It was evident that the Prime Minister much preferred a policy of non-intervention, similar to that pursued in the Spanish Civil War. This had had the chosen effect of limiting the spread of the conflict and Chamberlain was obviously at pains to do the same with the situation in China. Nevertheless, he did agree that the matter became somewhat more manageable if the United States agreed to cooperate with the British in providing financial assistance for the Chinese. This might at least afford a measure of protection against the possibility of a hostile Japanese reaction being directed against their interests in the Far East. Moreover, Kennedy who had just returned from Washington had implied that the President was willing to

1 Harvey, Diaries, p. 149.

cooperate to some extent with the British Government. After discussing the matter at some length, the Cabinet agreed to take discreet soundings with the American Ambassador on the question of whether the President's helpful attitude extended to cooperation on the financial issue.[1] Once more the prospect of a joint Anglo-American undertaking proved to be illusory. On this occasion it took less than a week to kill the issue. Kennedy, who had been instrumental in making the Prime Minister change his mind about approaching the Americans, was to suggest to Halifax that the British should not gratuitously take on more troubles than they already had by providing financial assistance to the Chinese. Halifax took his advice and recommended that in the absence of American support, and with the likelihood that the Japanese would react adversely to the news of the loan, the Government should not proceed with it.[2]

By taking the line of least resistance, the Cabinet reaffirmed that Far Eastern affairs had a relatively low priority providing nothing was done by the Japanese to harm British interests in China. Unfortunate though this may have been, Halifax saw it as a regrettable necessity in the light of Britain's problems in Europe. Instead of considering measures which could have a hostile effect on the Japanese, the British Government favoured the more

[1] Cab.meeting 31(38), 6 July 1938, Cab 23/94.
[2] Cab.meeting 32(38), 13 July 1938, Cab 23/94.

pacific methods of diplomatic negotiation to redress the balance of advantage in the Far East. Ambassador Craigie was, therefore, encouraged to continue the dialogue he had begun with the Japanese Foreign Minister Ugaki in the hope of restoring some form of equilibrium to Far Eastern affairs.[1]

It is a common failing of many historians who have criticised the appeasement policy as being shallow and naive to see it only in terms of European affairs and to neglect the interaction of Far Eastern problems and the overall weakness of Britain's defence forces. It was virtually impossible, given the state of her preparations and in the continued absence of American assistance in the Far East, for Britain to have adopted a forward or assertive policy anywhere without running the considerable risk of becoming embroiled in one area and paying dearly for their involvement in another. This had been made clear when Hitler had sent his troops across the Austrian border and proclaimed the Anschluss in March. Although disheartened and discouraged by the German action, Chamberlain had also been particularly severe on the Americans.

[1] In a debate in the House of Commons on the Government's Far Eastern policy on 26 July 1938 Chamberlain explained that since the Brussels Conference had shown that no proposals for joint action involving intervention in the Sino-Japanese conflict had any chances of acceptance it was not to be expected that the Government alone or accompanied by one or two countries should undertake the burden. Moreover, the League seemed powerless to intervene effectively in the Far East, Britain was therefore thrust back on the traditional methods of diplomacy. (cont.)

> What a fool Roosevelt would have looked if he had launched his precious proposal. What would he have thought of us if we had encouraged him to publish it, as Anthony was so eager to do? And how we too would have made ourselves the laughing stock of the world.[1]

Apart from being less than generous, Chamberlain's statement does not do him any credit. It is easy enough to be wise after the event, but this is a clear example of where the Prime Minister was applying faulty logic in justifying his action over the ill-fated peace initiative. It not only assumes that the Germans would still have gone ahead with the Anschluss even if the peace plan had been launched by the President, but it also implies that Chamberlain realised beforehand that the Germans would not have paid any attention to the scheme or been dissuaded from achieving the goals which they had set themselves. Naturally Chamberlain felt his judgement had been vindicated but this private expression of contempt conceals the fact that without issuing the peace initiative the United States were unable to put German reaction and policy to the test.

Despite Chamberlain's criticism of U.S. foreign policy, he was known to be favourably disposed towards the idea of an Anglo-American trade agreement. There had already been some discussion in the Foreign Office as to

---

(cont.)
N. Chamberlain Papers, Speech for Foreign Affairs Debate (Supply), 26 July 1938, NC 4/5/23.
For the course of the negotiations between Craigie and Ugaki and the Foreign Office reaction to them see D.B.F.P. 3rd series, vol. VIII.

1 N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Hilda, 13 March 1938, NC 18/1/1041.

whether the Prime Minister ought to go to Washington for the signing ceremony and Cadogan had commented that whichever Cabinet minister was asked to perform this function he would probably be expected to engage in a full discussion of the international situation with members of the Roosevelt Administration.[1] It was obvious from the lukewarm reception this suggestion received that the Foreign Office were none too keen on either the Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary attending the ceremonial and becoming involved in confidential talks with the Americans. This reluctance to send Chamberlain or Halifax is particularly strange when it was freely conceded that the announcement of the trade agreement would have an immediate and very great impression throughout the world and particularly on those countries whose recent policies had run counter to those of Britain and the United States. The real reason for this reluctance is unclear but several possibilties exist; it may have been that the British were afraid of raising too many hopes by sending a top level delegation to Washington, it could have been that they were concerned about giving too much information away, or of wasting valuable time which could be better spent on trying to find an acceptable solution to the vexed problems of Europe. Perhaps they were more worried about the effects that such a meeting would have upon Germany, Italy and Japan. It is quite likely that all these factors were

1 F. Ashton-Gwatkin to Sir Horace Wilson, 14 Mar. 1938, Prem 1/261.

instrumental in creating this concern about not wishing to do anything which might worsen an already disturbing situation.

Unlike some of his colleagues in the Treasury whose reticence towards the Americans was well known, Frank Ashton Gwatkin, a senior economic advisor to the Government, was more convinced than ever that, in the light of the Anschluss, the way to defensive salvation lay in close cooperation of the United States, in order to show the world that force could be met by strength. He thought that an economic agreement with the USA might deter the Germans initially from embarking upon some further act of violence, but whatever effect it had would soon wear off unless something was done to extend Anglo-American cooperation into other more important fields.[1]

One such area was naval policy. Yet again, however, mutual distrust was evident. In the Admiralty, for instance, the issue of exchanging information with the U.S. Navy Department always appeared to be contentious and divisive. Duff Cooper had summed it up succinctly in a minute on 12 March.

> The general policy seems to be in favour of exchanging information with the Americans, but against giving anything away. There also seems to be some scepticism as to the value of anything they may have to offer. I suspect this scepticism may be exaggerated. Their F.A.A. for instance is supposed to be the best in the world whereas ours is a source of grave anxiety. These conversations will be of no use if

[1] Ashton-Gwatkin to Sir H. Wilson, 16 Mar. 1938, Prem 1/261.

they are entered into in the spirit of "you show first" - but I believe a frank exchange of information would be useful from more points of view than one.[1]

Meanwhile Captain Royal Ingersoll had written to the U.S. Naval Attaché in London, Russell Willson, about an article which had appeared in the journal Last Week and which had caused a furore in the United States. According to the article, the plans of Japanese ships had been stolen by a U.S. agent from Japan in November 1937 and carried to London by a Mr. Smith, presumably Ingersoll, who showed them to the Admiralty during a four day visit.[2] Ingersoll was convinced that the story had been deliberately leaked by the British Office of Naval Intelligence in order to cover their own agent or agents in Japan while seeking to pin the blame upon the Americans for any wrongdoing. While giving no clue as to the truth of the alleged theft of naval documents, he was concerned that the report in Last Week had been mischievous in drawing attention to and linking his own recent mission to London with intelligence activities. He regarded it as likely to damage the degree of trust which was essential in conducting Anglo-American relations. Willson did not agree that the British had released the story, but he was careful not to encourage the Admiralty to believe that

[1] Minute by Duff Cooper, M01573/38, 12 Mar. 1938, Adm 116/4302.
[2] Operational Naval Archives, U.S. Navy, Ingersoll to Willson, 21 Feb. 1938, Series VII, Box 116.

the Ingersoll mission could be the start of a regular system of visits by naval officers between the two countries.[1]

Despite these hiccups in their relations, Duff Cooper encouraged the Naval Staff to be more accommodating to the Americans. Apart from drawing up a list of ninety-five technical subjects on which it was thought the British had something to learn from the Americans, ranging from buoyancy requirements of carrier aircraft to de-icing arrangements, the Admiralty Board agreed that the United States should be treated exceptionally.

> No public decision to agree upon a comprehensive exchange of information was possible, owing to the appearance of an alliance between the two countries which would thereby be created, and the political difficulties which would arise in America. It was, however, agreed that if the United States Naval Authorities asked for information on any subject we should where possible give it, demanding as a quid pro quo information which we ourselves desired, possibly on some different subject. There are certain matters which are kept as secret as possible, even in the Royal Navy itself, and we clearly could not give the United States information which was withheld from the Fleet. When, however, we decided that information might properly be given, it was agreed that we should be as frank as possible.[2]

Several weeks before the Board had given their official approval to the question of exchanging technical information with the Americans an agreement had been devised between the two countries concerning the latest minesweeping techniques. The D.N.I. had written to the British Naval Attaché at Washington requesting him to arrange for a visit

[1] Operational Naval Archives, Willson to Ingersoll, 4 March 1938, Series VII, Box 116.

[2] Extract from Board of Admiralty Minutes, 3547, 12 May 1938, Adm 167/100.

to be made to one of the U.S. destroyers, either the Dorsey or the Elliott, for a detailed inspection of the latest minesweeping gear installed by the Americans.[1]

This improvement in naval relations prompted Willson to request the Admiralty to supply information on fleet tactics, battle formations, destroyer attacks and other tactical matters. According to the D.N.I., in raising the question Willson had mentioned that recently cooperation between the two fleets might have been necessary and hinted that such a situation might arise again in the future. Pointing out that the Naval Attaché had admitted that he had no authority from the U.S. Navy Department to make the suggestion, the D.N.I. stated that once an exchange had begun there was a possibility of embarrassment being caused to one or both of the parties involved. Troup's minute was supported by other departmental heads within the Admiralty who felt that the information should be withheld until it was actually necessary.[2] On this occasion it was the Director of Plans who urged the Admiralty to be more accommodating than a number of his senior colleagues had suggested. He believed that Anglo-American cooperation was of such vital importance for Britain that no proposal which might lead to closer relations between the two navies should be rejected without careful consideration. He supported the First Lord's earlier opinion that proposals of this

[1] D.N.I. to British Naval Attaché, Washington, N.I.D. 719/38, 7 Apr. 1938, Adm 116/4302.

[2] Minute by Troup, M05446/38, 20 May 1938, Adm 116/4302.

nature should be judged from this wider angle rather than on the strict merits of how much the British stood to gain or lose from the purely service aspect of the matter.[1] The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff disagreed. In his minute of 14 June he recalled that though the question of cooperation had arisen some time ago when the situation in the Far East was menacing, the Admiralty had realised that because of the multiplicity of technical details required to control a fleet, and the enormous variation that could be used in controlling different fleets, strategical cooperation was possible but the merging of the two navies into one fleet was not a practical proposition.

> D. of P, takes the line that we want to be friends and so we should give the Americans what they ask. But though the U.S.A. officers are very friendly and the U.S.A. Naval Authorities w(ou)d doubtless like to go far in arranging for cooperation in war, the indications today are that the U.S.A. government + people are just as far away from anything approaching an Anglo-American Pact or Treaty as they have ever been. I therefore think that caution is imposed on us, and that this proposal to divulge our most confidential books should be tactfully resisted.[2]

While agreeing with much of what the D.C.N.S. had written, Chatfield suggested that the closer the cooperation which existed between the Admiralty and the Navy Department the more likelihood there was of bringing influence to bear upon the United States Government

[1] Minute by Dir. of Plans, M05466/38, 30 May 1938, Adm 116/4302.

[2] Minute by D.C.N.S., M05466/38, 14 June 1938, Adm 116/4302.

in times of trouble. Nevertheless, he thought that it would not be desirable to begin discussing tactical details with Willson because it would be difficult to know where to stop and how much information ought to be divulged.[1] In the end it was rather unsatisfactorily resolved to invite the Naval Attaché to discuss only the general nature of tactics with the Head of the Admiralty's Tactical Division. This proposal was thought to have the additional merit of keeping matters within strict bounds without causing any unnecessary offence by rejecting the request outright. It resulted in two meetings being arranged in August, which though of general interest revealed nothing of practical value. By giving such a low priority to the subject the Admiralty effectively ensured that no harm befell British interests in the face of what was after all an unofficial approach from Willson without support or authority from the U.S. Navy Department.[2]

Some of the other aspects of Anglo-American naval cooperation had fared better than Willson's personal initiative. In the same month that he had met the Head of the Tactical Division an exchange of information on boom control and defence took place with the U.S. Navy Department, while in June the British and Americans agreed to use the escalator clause in the London Naval

[1] Minute by Chatfield, M05466/38, 17 June 1938, Adm 116/4302.

[2] Minute for D. of T.D., M05466/38, 19 Aug. 1938, Adm 116/4302.

Treaty to increase the size of any new capital ship they would build in the future.[1] They had agreed to raise the maximum treaty limit to 45,000 tons in response to voluminous reports that the Japanese were fully intending to build ships exceeding the old limit of 35,000 tons. Unlike the Americans who wished immediately to build up to the new level in order to match the rate of new construction embarked upon by the Japanese, the British had no intention at this time of exceeding 40,000 tons for their new vessels.

Throughout the long Czechoslovakian crisis of the spring and summer of 1938 the most that the Foreign Office expected from the Americans was a benevolent neutrality. Information was passed to Washington explaining British policy but no appeal was addressed to the President for joint action and direct intervention in central Europe should war result from a total breakdown in German-Czech relations. To have expected anything more was totally out of the question. A typical example of the American attitude on this matter was provided by Ambassador Kennedy at a luncheon on 15 June. He had been asked whether he thought that the understanding between Britain and the United States had ever been so close. In reply he is alleged to have said:

> It has never been so far apart. England to the United States today means war. That doesn't mean

[1] For further details on the raising of the tonnage limit see FO 371/21518-24 and Cab. meeting 17(38), 30 March 1938, Cab 23/93.

> we dislike the British. We shall never fight against them. It may be we some time might have to fight with them. Therefore, we must watch carefully all the moves Great Britain makes for fear we shall be involved without warning.[1]

Furthermore, despite his messages in the latter days of the crisis pledging support for those who were striving to obtain an agreed settlement by negotiation, President Roosevelt had never been an enthusiastic advocate of appeasement. On the contrary, he had foreseen its limitations and had criticised the British Government's reliance upon it as the major instrument of their foreign policy.[2] As the summer drew on the President was to make a series of unflattering remarks about the policy and its architect, Neville Chamberlain, whom he considered ready for peace at any price.[3] Nonetheless, Roosevelt did show a confirmed willingness to support the democracies as war approached.

Contrary to Ambassador Kennedy's forecast about a possible future American entry into war on the side of the Anglo-French forces, there were no immediate plans

[1] British Library of Information (New York) to News Department, Foreign Office, 22 June 1938, A5021/944/45, T160/934/F13300/13.

[2] Roosevelt to John Cuddahy, 9 March 1938, in The Roosevelt Letters, ed. E. Roosevelt (Harrop & Co., Vol. III, 1952), p.232.
In his book Washington and Other Memories Sir Arthur Willert wrote of his meeting with the President in April 1939. He commented that Roosevelt's indignation at Chamberlain's refusal to let him have a hand in trying to settle the troubles of the previous year was still evident. "The President was bitter about appeasement. He had no use for Chamberlain. He thought Simon and Samuel Hoare about the worst foreign ministers we ever had . . ."
J.P. Lash, Roosevelt & Churchill 1939-1941 (Andre Deutsch, London 1977), p.24.
(cont.)

for such participation.[1] Despite being on record as having promised the British everything except troops and loans, the President was very hesitant about making any commitment to action.[2] In an interview with Lindsay on 19 September for example, Roosevelt disclosed that even if the Japanese, who he was convinced were bound by secret treaty to come to Germany's support in case of war, were to attack and seize Hong Kong, it would take some time before the United States would do anything.[3] However, he was prepared to assist the democracies in any way that he could without jeopardising or infringing the non-belligerent status that his Administration had increasingly come to adopt in the crisis. He had agreed, for instance, to the sending of the U.S.S. Nashville and U.S.S. Honolulu to England to collect a substantial amount of gold from the Bank of England and return with

---

(cont.)

3 Ickes, Diary, p. 468.

1 Halifax to Lindsay, No. 744, 2 Sept. 1938, and No. 824, 10 Sept. 1938, D.B.F.P. 3rd Series, Vol. II.

2 In a diary entry for September, Sir Thomas Inskip, the Minister for Coordination of Defence, wrote that on 13 September Lindsay had informed the British Government that American opinion was in favour of them making a strong stand against German aggression and warned that a compromise would diminish American friendliness very much. "Roosevelt told someone we could have everything except 'troops and loans'. He ought to have added 'or lethal weapons'."
Churchill College, Cambridge, (Caldecote Diaries), Diary entry for Sept. 1938, 1/1.

3 Lindsay to Halifax, 20 Sept. 1938, D.B.F.P. 3rd Series, Vol. VII, pp. 627 - 629.

it to New York. In the case of the Honolulu, its main purpose was to provide a means of evacuating American citizens if the Czech crisis turned to war. Whatever the primary function may have been, the visit of these two American ships was the source of some satisfaction to the British Government who regarded them as underlining Presidential support for the democracies at a critical time.[1]

In a press statement issued earlier in the month, Chamberlain had paid a compliment to the United States which, he said, was the one country whose sympathy was always precious to the British but particularly in times of emergency.

> I am happy to think that our relations with that great country were never more friendly or more sympathetic in my experience than they are today and we have felt that we owe it to her to keep her fully informed as we have done throughout of our views on the European situation.[2]

Chamberlain's comments about the close involvement of the two governments was certainly demonstrated in the way in which as the crisis developed the Admiralty supplied the U.S. Naval Attaché with the latest information on what steps were being taken to bring the fleet into a state of maximum readiness short of mobilization. The U.S. Attaché in turn sent a series of messages to the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington recording

[1] National Archives, Selected Naval Attaché Reports Relating to the World Crisis 1937-43, Roll One, Microfilm M975.

[2] Chamberlain's press statement, 11 Sept. 1938, Appendix III, D.B.F.P., 3rd Series, Vol. II, p. 682.

these top secret details. Even before the order for the mobilization of the Navy had been given, the planned location of the various British Fleets had been disclosed to Willson. On 24 September he informed Leahy that the shift of the Mediterranean Fleet to Alexandria was part of the preparations and that the other forces were stationed according to plan.[1] A day later he cabled the following report:

> No new developments concerning mobilization in strictest confidence have been furnished information on present and initial war distribution British naval forces period Mediterranean Fleet will remain there against possibility Italys joining Germany now or later Italy is sending heavy reinforcements to Libya which British consider a threat against Egypt. . . .[2]

Duff Cooper approved of these measures to keep the U.S. Navy Department informed about current British policy. It was a striking gesture and one which did much to correct the impression that the British were not prepared to trust the Americans or provide them with information without wishing for something in return. Undoubtedly cynics will claim that the Admiralty's willingness to pass on this privileged information was designed ultimately to elicit a benevolent neutrality from the USA or even perhaps to set them on the road to actual involvement in the European crisis. Important though the material was, it could have been gathered by

[1] Operational Naval Archives, U.S. Navy, Alusna (Naval Attaché, London) to Op.Nav. (Chief of Naval Operations), 241300, 24 Sept. 1938, Commander Naval Forces in Europe File, Series I, No. 1.

[2] Alusna to Op.Nav., 251500, 25 Sept. 1938, Com.Nav.Eu., Series I, No. 1.

the intelligence community in time. Therefore, it was unlikely to revolutionise American naval policy and ought to be seen as merely a friendly act showing Britain's determination to pull her own chestnuts out of the fire if the Czech crisis eventually resulted in war.

Despite his reservations about the appeasement policy and his unfavourable references to Chamberlain tacitly accepting the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, Roosevelt made it clear that if hostilities occurred and he was obliged to invoke the U.S. Neutrality Act all doubts in the interpretation of the statute would be resolved in favour of the democracies.[1] Reviewing the crisis on 30 September, Ickes records:

> At Cabinet it was clear that if war came this country ought to do everything that it could to help the democratic countries. No one thought that in any event we should go to war, but all of us did want to help them in every way possible short of war.[2]

Roosevelt's relief that war had been averted at virtually the last minute can be detected in his suitably laconic "Good Man" message of support for Chamberlain on 28 September. Whether the conditions of peace, and the price which the British and French Governments agreed that the Czechs should pay to secure it, was to the

[1] Ickes, Diary, p. 474.
[2] Ickes, op.cit., p. 481.

president's liking or not in the long run, the fact remains that Roosevelt was at least initially "not one bit upset at the final result."[1]

[1] The Roosevelt Letters, Vol. III, p.244.

Chapter Seven: Reasserting the Strategic Value of the United States (Oct. - March 1939)

After returning from the Munich Conference to a hero's welcome, Chamberlain might have been excused for believing in the old maxim that 'nothing succeeds like success'. But even at a time when he enjoyed great personal popularity, the Prime Minister was astute enough to realise that the post-Munich euphoria would soon be forgotten.[1] Within a few weeks the mood of gratitude and relief that war had been averted changed to one of disillusionment and critical despair as the suspicion grew that the defences and territory of Czechoslovakia may have been sacrificed in vain.

Apart from Duff Cooper's resignation as First Lord of Admiralty, there were no other prominent ministerial defections. Stanley's death in October, however, forced the Prime Minister to reshuffle his Cabinet. In resisting Halifax's suggestion that Eden be recalled, Chamberlain decided instead to appoint his friend the seventh Earl of Stanhope to the post of First Lord of the Admiralty. There was more than a hint of expediency in this gesture, as Stanhope could be relied

[1] Feiling, Chamberlain, p.382.

upon to give full support to the policy of appeasement.[1] Chamberlain spelt out what this meant at a Cabinet meeting on 31 October. He reaffirmed that the basis of British foreign policy was one of appeasement and that his Government must aim at establishing relations with the dictatorships which would lead to a settlement in Europe and to a sense of stability. He also pointed out that a good deal of false emphasis had been placed on rearmament, as though the Munich Agreement had meant that it would be necessary for the British to increase their rearmament programme.[2] This reaffirmation of the Prime Minister's belief in appeasement, and the linking of it to a possible slowing down of the arms race, was a timely reminder of government policy for those who, like Churchill, regarded the formation of a Ministry of Supply and the construction of a Grand Alliance as essential prerequisites for an eventual war with Germany. Chamberlain neither subscribed to the Churchillian demands for what was in effect a Ministry of Rearmament, nor did he believe in the theory of an inevitable war with Hitler's Germany.

In the United States President Roosevelt's

[1] Stanhope was hardly the most talented First Lord that Chamberlain could have chosen but few could have been more loyal. It was unfortunate that though he meant well he was not very effective and within six months Cadogan was moved to record in his diary "Why do we keep exhibits like Jim in the Cabinet!!" There is, of course, a simple answer. Chamberlain had had enough of the charismatic figures like Eden or the awkward intelligent individuals such as Duff Cooper. He placed a high premium on loyal support and rewarded it, as in this case, with Cabinet office. This naturally enabled him to keep firm control over the direction of government business and reduce the chance of obstruction within Cabinet.

[2] Cab. meeting 51(38), 31 Oct. 1938, Cab 23/96.

enthusiastic support of the Munich settlement, which he described as presenting the greatest opportunity in years for the establishment of a new order based on justice and on law, rapidly took on a different form. According to Ickes, Roosevelt expected Hitler to demand a colonial empire and that the British Government might be tempted to offer him Trinidad and persuade the French to give up Martinique.[1] This would provide the Germans with strong outposts off the eastern seaboard of the United States as well as the coasts of Central and South America. Ickes alleges that Roosevelt was so determined not to allow this to happen that he was prepared to send the U.S. Fleet to occupy both of the islands in the event of such an arrangement being made.[2] This concern about the scope and direction of the appeasement policy was reflected in the coming months in his attempts to achieve a rapid acceleration of the United States rearmament programme and by his own admission that he was striving to ensure that the industrial resources of the American nation would be behind the democracies should they be forced to go to war with the dictatorships.[3] In public Roosevelt's pronouncements were less explicit, though in a

[1] Ickes, Diary, p.484.

[2] ibid.

[3] An old friend of the Roosevelt's, Colonel Arthur Murray, went to stay with them at Hyde Park in October 1938. During his conversations with the President, Murray was to gain the unmistakable impression that Roosevelt would do all he could to help the British providing they did something to help themselves.
Note of Conversation between Roosevelt and Murray 16-24 October 1938, Prem 1/367.

radio address on 26 October he did seek to explain to the American people why they could not rely upon the maintenance of prolonged peace and stability within Europe.

> It is becoming increasingly clear that peace by fear has no higher or more enduring quality than peace by the sword.
> There can be no peace if the reign of law is to be replaced by a recurrent sanctification of sheer force.
> There can be no peace if national policy adopts as a deliberate instrument the threat of war.[1]

In a speech at New York on 1 November Cordell Hull made it clear that the United States would continue to rearm so that they would be in a position to prevent world domination by any single nation or group of powers committed to aggression. While not saying so his speech seemed to suggest that the Americans might have to perform a more active role in international affairs in the months to come.[2] It was with this background of increasing uncertainty about the future that the U.S. Army and Navy Planning Staff began to carry out a strategic review of the world situation.[3] These efforts during the winter of 1938 led to the formulation of the hemisphere defence plans which were to become known as the Rainbow series.

[1] Radio Address by President Roosevelt to the Herald Tribune Forum on 26 October 1938, in The Public Papers of F.D.R., Vol. 1938, p. 564.

[2] Department of State, Peace and War, Address by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 1 Nov. 1938, Document 119, pp. 433-439.

[3] J.B. Serial No. 634, J.B. File No. 325, 1938-39, Joint Board meeting, 9 Nov. 1938.

As far as the British Chiefs of Staff were concerned, however, the Prime Minister's policy of appeasement remained the only one under the circumstances which they could fully support. They had maintained a consistent line throughout the Czechoslovakian crisis pointing out that if Britain became involved in a war on two or three fronts against the members of the Anti-Comintern Pact she would be faced by a combination of hostile forces against whom she was not adequately prepared to fight. This message was reinforced in a strategic appreciation of the situation that would result from a war against Germany, who might be able to induce both the Italians and the Japanese to support her either as full allies or in some lesser capacity.[1] In such an event the Chiefs had assumed that Britain would be fighting with France, but that the USA, despite an appreciable movement of informed opinion away from isolation, could not be relied upon to come to their assistance. In the continued absence of the Americans, the intervention of other powers, such as Italy and Japan, on the side of the Germans would very seriously embarrass the Anglo-French forces. It was also reemphasised that the British would be unable to despatch an adequate naval force to the Far East and hold the Eastern Mediterranean in any strength at the same time. Moreover, unless the French Navy had assumed full responsibility for the Western

[1] DP(P)32, para.30, 4 Oct. 1938, Cab 16/183A.

Mediterranean and the Gibraltar area, Italy would have an almost free hand throughout the Mediterranean, a position of such strategic importance that she could endanger British interests in the Middle East.[1]

Whatever hopes may have been pinned on the Craigie-Ugaki talks eventually paving the way for peace in the Far East were dashed when Ugaki resigned on 29 September in response to fierce criticism by right wing opponents of his Anglophile foreign policy. Despite Prince Konoye's claim that the resignation of his Foreign Minister did not imply any radical change in Japanese policy, it seemed an ominous coincidence that Ugaki had left the Government on the day that the Munich Agreement had been arranged. Furthermore, Craigie was soon to report that opinion in Japan was running strongly in favour of Germany and Italy and that Konoye might find it impossible to resist those elements who wished to move closer to their Anti-Comintern partners.[2]

The Manchester Guardian of 13 October was one of the first newspapers to link appeasement with movements by the Japanese military to reassert a more dominant role in China.

> The Munich Agreement confirmed the extremists in their belief that the British Empire was unready and unwilling to fight except in dire necessity. The attack on Southern China is one of the first

[1] DP(P)32, paras.9-10, 4 Oct. 1938, Cab 16/183A.
[2] Craigie to Halifax, Nos. 119,125,131, D.B.F.P. 3rd Series, Vol. VIII.

results of that diplomatic defeat.[1]

Ambassador Grew had reached the same conclusion. His contention was that those with the most influence in Japan would like to see continued unrest, anxiety and discord within Europe and the nationalists, in particular, regarded the prospect of early appeasement with some dismay.[2] Nonetheless, as long as things continued to improve in Europe the threat of war in the Far East receded. In fact, it had long been assumed by the Chiefs of Staff that the Japanese were likely to be at their most threatening during a crisis in Europe, when they could exploit allied weakness in the Far East to the maximum advantage. An appeasement policy which was designed to preserve and maintain peace within Europe would enable the British to respond more positively to any Japanese démarche in the Far East. Unlike Eden who had been prepared to gamble upon enlisting American naval cooperation in carrying the fight, if necessary, to the Japanese, Chamberlain preferred a more conciliatory policy at this time. Craigie's attempts at establishing a better rapport with the Japanese Government were designed, therefore, to prevent the Konoye Cabinet from making any move at Britain's expense in the event of a sudden deterioration in the European situation. Neither the Prime Minister nor Halifax wished to embark upon a policy

[1] Manchester Guardian, p. 8, 13 Oct. 1938.
[2] Craigie to Halifax, No. 148, 13 Oct. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3,VIII.

which could lead to the outbreak of hostilities and the sending of the fleet out east. But even this policy was hedged in with restrictions, since the British could not afford to be seen to favour the Japanese at China's expense or incur the odium of the United States by negotiating an alliance with their former ally. In the absence of an alliance, which was out of the question, the British were forced upon a course of discreet and gradual courtship, while at the same time appearing to support those who eschewed such an immoral liaison. It was Halifax's task to balance these contradictory elements of British policy and one that was further complicated by the extent of the Japanese victories in China and the deliberate attack on H.M.S. Sandpiper at Changsha.[1] As with similar attacks on British shipping in the past, the raid on H.M.S. Sandpiper proved to be a reliable barometer of the growing confidence and self-assertiveness of the Japanese military. This found its political expression in Konoye's statement on 3 November that Japan intended to seek the establishment of a new order in East Asia, founded upon a tripartite relationship embracing Manchukuo, China and herself.[2] If economic and political unity were to be achieved the Japanese would have to assert complete control over a substantial part of China. While Konoye did not spell out what action

[1] Canton had fallen to the Japanese on 21 October and the three Wuhan cities of Hankow, Hanyang and Wuchang surrendered shortly afterwards. The attack on H.M.S. Sandpiper took place on 24 October.

[2] Craigie to Halifax, No. 195, 3 Nov. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

the Japanese would be prepared to take to bring this new order into existence, the inference was clear and an expansion of the war effort was virtually assured. Naturally his statement came as a most unpleasant and brutal shock to the western democracies who had at one time entertained hopes that the Sino-Japanese war could be brought to an end without the total subjugation of the Chinese and who still regarded an independent China as a vital factor in the overall balance of power in the Far East. As such, the intended new order was inimical to the interests of both Britain and the United States and, to a lesser extent, France.

While Craigie advised against overreacting to the news, the Americans informed Halifax that they had decided to renew their request to the Japanese for freedom of navigation on the Yangtse up to Hankow. They also wished to know whether the British would agree to take parallel action and the extent to which the Government would be prepared to go militarily, should the Japanese reply prove to be unsatisfactory. Halifax considered this a most significant development in Anglo-American relations, since up to this time the United States had preserved an independent role in their dealings with the Japanese and had jealously guarded against making any commitment to a joint undertaking against them in the Far East.[1] Chamberlain was less impressed. Though

[1] Cab.meeting 54(38), 9 Nov. 1938, Cab 23/96.

admitting that the Japanese were becoming increasingly arrogant and difficult, he felt that economic reprisals by themselves were not likely to be very effective. Apart from demonstrating Anglo-American solidarity, the Prime Minister felt that the joint economic compact might well serve as an incentive rather than a deterrent to further Japanese aggression and could result in an outright attack being made on Hong Kong. He was adamant in wishing to avoid such a contingency and proposed, therefore, that the Government should not make any binding commitment to action and advised against the sending of an early definitive reply.[1]

Konoye's pledge of establishing a new order was no idle boast and was followed shortly afterwards by reports that the Japanese were planning to make a serious move against the Tientsin concessions as a first step in a carefully prepared programme for the destruction of Britain's political position in China. Craigie responded to the news with a call for the closest possible cooperation between the British and American Governments in order for parallel action to be taken by both of them in dealing with the problem posed by the Japanese in China.[2] His rapid conversion to a hard line policy with its emphasis on action rather than words only served to increase Ambassador Grew's suspicion of British intentions.

[1] Cab.meeting 54(38), 9 Nov. 1938, Cab 23/96. For the eventual British reply see Halifax to Mallet, No. 440, 23 Jan. 1939, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

[2] Craigie to Foreign Office, No. 281, 24 Nov. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

This unease was associated with the traditional image of perfidious Albion and the old metaphor about Americans having to pull British chestnuts out of the fire was heard once again. It is fair to say that Grew regarded British policy in the Far East as being extremely unattractive and the more so because it now seemed to be directly concerned with establishing a common front with the USA. He remained reluctant to embrace the possibility of Anglo-American cooperation and tried to dissuade Craigie from pinning his hopes on such an alignment by telling him that he could not see his way to making any recommendations for joint action in the future.[1]

This coolness was not reflected in the conversations which Lindsay had with Sumner Welles at the end of November. It appeared from these discussions that the State Department had reached the conclusion that the Japanese really meant business with their plans for a tripartite economic bloc in Asia. Welles told Lindsay on 28 November that the Japanese plans for the new order seemed designed to exclude the United States, Britain and France from commercial opportunities in China which should be secured by the observance of the Open Door principle. He followed this up by saying that the time seemed to be drawing near when the United States and the British Governments might have to devise together economic measures to protect their legitimate interests in China.

[1] Craigie to Foreign Office, No. 285, 25 Nov. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

On 1 December Welles repeated his assertion that some form of Anglo-American economic cooperation was a future possibility and suggested that the State Department would like to hear what conclusions had been reached by the British Government on the question of concerting plans for economic action against Japan.[1]

This encouraging news was used by Halifax as a lever for asking the State Department whether it was willing to join Britain in taking parallel and simultaneous action on the issue of contributing to a currency stabilisation loan for the Chinese.[2] Hornbeck confirmed on 6 December that American policy in the Far East was being revised with the likelihood that a stiffer attitude would be adopted to Japan in the future. He also said that the State Department was seriously considering what measures could be taken to give effective assistance to the Chinese.[3]

Although the British were to protest against the concept of the new order and warn the Japanese Government that they could not possibly consider any alteration to the status of China brought about by unilateral action, the new Japanese Foreign Minister Arita rejected the criticism. In reply, he accused the British of using the Burma Road as an arms supply route for Chiang Kai-shek's

[1] Lindsay to Halifax, No. 298, 1 Dec. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.
[2] Halifax to Lindsay, No. 318, 6 Dec. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.
[3] Mallet to Halifax, No. 319, 6 Dec. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

forces and maintained that this was bound to cause further ill feeling and worsen the already strained state of Anglo-Japanese relations.[1] Nothing could have demonstrated more vividly the swift change in fortunes that had befallen the Government's attempts to keep an open line to the Konoye Cabinet in the hope of moderating their future policy. Less than three weeks before Craigie had warned the Foreign Secretary that rumours circulating to the effect that both Chamberlain and Halifax were hopeful of reaching an agreement with the Japanese were having unfortunate repercussions, given the hardening attitude of the United States and the ascendancy of the extremist elements in Japan.[2] By early December this type of rumour had been effectively scotched as growing hostility replaced the muted amity of the pre-Munich period.

Seeing little possibility of a real consensus being found between the two nations on the problem of China, Craigie was to come out in favour of strengthening Britain's naval forces in the Far East.

> Japan is at the present time ruled by men who are influenced in the main by the prevalent German ideas of 'power politics' and to such minds as these the moving of a few capital ships represents a far more convincing argument than any number of protests or the most passionate advocacy of the sanctity of treaties.[3]

[1] Craigie to Halifax, No. 323, 8 Dec. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.
[2] Craigie to Halifax, No. 262, 21 Nov. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.
[3] Craigie to Halifax, No. 338, 14 Dec. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

He believed that a squadron of battleships or battle-cruisers stationed at Singapore would prevent what would otherwise be the steady deterioration of British prestige and influence throughout the Far East. Moreover, he reasoned that since the Americans seemed to be adopting a firmer line on Japan the despatch of even one or two battlecruisers to the Far East would definitely have an encouraging effect in the United States and weaken one of the most effective arguments of those who suspected that the British were not prepared to play a part in defending their legitimate interests in the area. Although aware of the criticism on strategic grounds that would be levelled at the sending of a squadron of three or four capital ships to the Far East, Craigie saw certain advantages in the proposal.

> The presence of such a squadron at Singapore would almost certainly mean that, in the event of a Japanese attack on the stronghold, a large part, if not the whole, of the Japanese battle fleet would require to be despatched in support of the naval forces accompanying the Japanese convoy. Such an operation . . . would no doubt be perfectly feasible if the Japanese could feel reasonably secure against attack by the United States. In the present state of American feeling, however, it is open to doubt whether the Japanese Government could place such implicit reliance on American neutrality as to expose the Japanese flank to attack in this manner. If, as is by no means improbable, the United States Government have in any case the intention of sending a battle fleet to Honolulu in the event of the outbreak of an Anglo-Japanese war, the potential threat from the United States would be such that the Japanese Commander-in-Chief could not presumably afford to neglect it.[1]

[1] Craigie to Halifax, No. 338, 14 Dec. 1938, D.B.F.P.,3,VIII. Craigie was taking up a suggestion made by Sir Josiah Crosby (H.M. Minister at Bangkok) on 7 November 1938 advocating the visit of a naval squadron to Singapore in an effort to restore British prestige in Siam and throughout the Far East.

Turning to a consideration of the possibility of retaliatory action by the Japanese in response to the implementation of economic measures against her, Craigie maintained that the twin features of his plan were just as likely to be as effective a deterrent to Japanese aggression as any other that might be devised.[1]

While he was advocating an active British naval presence in the Far East, the Japanese continued to increase pressure upon the foreign concessions at Tientsin.[2] After protests were registered with the Japanese Government matters momentarily improved over the Christmas period. The British Ambassador ascribed this development to the firm line both Britain and the United States were taking in refusing to meekly acquiesce in the Japanese plans for the economic and financial domination of both Tientsin and Canton. It led him to renew the suggestion for joint economic sanctions against Japan.

> I am fully alive to danger of displaying undue impatience in Washington but I suggest the importance of not missing the right psychological moment might nevertheless be brought home to United States Government particularly as they have invited our views.[3]

[1] Craigie to Halifax, No. 338, 14 Dec. 1938, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

[2] They began erecting barricades at the entrances to the city. Jamieson, the British consular official at Tientsin, wired Clark Kerr on 17 December asking for a sloop to be sent to help bolster morale. H.M.S. Grimsby was sent on 19 December. For further details see Jamieson to British Embassy (Shanghai), Nos. 346,351,374, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

[3] Craigie to Halifax, No. 384, 1 Jan. 1939, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

Although Halifax was not ready to raise the topic of sanctions with the Americans he was prepared to re-open the issue of a currency loan to the Chinese. After detailing the proposed British measures, the Foreign Secretary stressed that these were contingent on the Americans consenting to take parallel action to support them. Despite the non-committal nature of Roosevelt's reply, the possibility of the United States providing such a loan in the future was not completely ruled out, although much would ultimately depend upon whether Congress would be prepared to allocate money for this purpose.

Although little had gone right for Chamberlain's appeasement policy in Europe during the autumn of 1938, there had been encouraging signs, as Craigie had implied in his despatch to Halifax, of improving Anglo-American relations. This closer cooperation had not been confined to consultation on foreign policy and Far Eastern questions only; it had also spread to commercial and naval matters. The conclusion of the Anglo-American Trade Agreement had come only days before the Nazis had embarked upon their Kristallnacht pogrom of the Jews. News of Hitler's latest excess had been received with anger and resentment in both Britain and the United States.[1]

[1] President Roosevelt ordered Ambassador Wilson home on 15 November 1938 to report on the situation in Germany. He subsequently refused to send another Ambassador to Berlin. Oliver Harvey records in his diary that on 15 November Ambassador Kennedy came to see Halifax. "He said the effect in the United States of the German (cont.)

The sense of shock and outrage felt in both countries led to further demands being made for increased rearmament and a stronger, more rigorous policy being adopted towards Germany in the future. Apart from the squalid nature of the act, the Nazi pogrom had revived and strengthened the fears of those who had inveighed heavily against the Munich Agreement on the ground that it would do nothing to satisfy Hitler's long term political, strategic or territorial ambitions. In bringing further discredit upon Hitler's regime, the events of Kristallnacht had damaged and all but destroyed an important part of Chamberlain's appeasement policy.[1] It had also completely overshadowed the implementation of the Anglo-Italian Agreement and to some extent had trivialised its importance. Despite these inauspicious omens, Chamberlain still attempted to salvage something from the wreck of his appeasement policy by concentrating his efforts on improving relations with the Italians, whom he regarded as being the end of the Axis on which it was easiest to make an impression. But even this

---

(cont.)
Jewish policy was a violent reaction against 'appeasement' and opinion in America was definitely less sympathetic to Great Britain." Harvey Diaries, p.219.

1 This policy was further damaged by information passed in secret intelligence reports to the Foreign Office indicating that Hitler was becoming increasingly hostile to Britain and contemptuous of the Munich Agreement which he had signed only six weeks before. Halifax mentioned the substance of these reports at the Foreign Policy Committee meeting on 14 November.
FP(36) 32nd meeting, 14 Nov. 1938, Cab 27/624.

proved to be far more difficult than he had foreseen.[1]

While he was engaged upon these efforts, the Admiralty and the U.S. Navy Department were discussing the possibilities of carrying out further exchanges of technical information. The scope of their involvement had widened from the limited information on American minesweeping gear provided in October by Captain Russell Willson, the U.S. Naval Attache. By early December a mutual exchange of information had been established covering some aspects of general naval intelligence as well as including details on Japanese naval construction and the fortification by the Japanese of their mandated islands. This development led to the suggestion that Admiralty Board approval should be granted for the supply or the exchange in the future of information gathered on the activities of suspicious German merchant vessels and potential armed raiders.[2] It was an idea which was canvassed by the D.N.I. who felt that nothing but good could come from the supply of information to the U.S. Navy Department, especially as there was such a degree of antipathy towards Germany in the United

[1] Apart from the controversy which surrounded the Italian desire to recover Tunis, Corsica and Nice from French possession, the implementation of the Anglo-Italian Agreement on 16 November neither led to the removal of Italian troops from Spain nor prevented Mussolini from sending more troops to Libya.

[2] Minute by Troup, M07506/38, 6 Dec. 1938, Adm 116/4302.

States at this time. Board approval was given and a list of German merchant vessels and their military potential was provided confidentially by the D.N.I. to Willson on 17 January.[1]

Although this trend towards closer naval cooperation was welcome, incidents still occurred which showed that the Americans were not prepared to divulge certain classified information if they did not think it was in their interest to do so. The Admiralty could hardly complain about this attitude since they had adopted exactly the same policy themselves. But this did not prevent both Backhouse and Stanhope from occasionally grumbling about the poor bargain the British received at the hands of the U.S. Navy Department. After one such rejection, Jarrett minuted less grudgingly:

> In the present political situation, it is clearly in our interest to cultivate the goodwill of the United States of America. While it is always possible that, far from resenting an attitude on our part of hard bargaining they would be inclined to reflect it, there is also a risk that the adoption of such an attitude without explanation might have an adverse effect on the trend at present noticeable in the USA's opinion towards a measure of cooperation with the Western Europe Powers. Moreover, so far as the immediate issue is concerned, there is perhaps no need to take the refusals of the U.S.A. Navy Department to give us the quid pro quo for which we have asked too tragically.[2]

[1] Minute by Troup, M07506/38, 24 Jan. 1939, Adm 116/4302.

[2] Minute by Jarrett for Head of M., M07445/38, 20 Dec. 1938, Adm 116/4302.
Jarrett was proved right when in March 1939 the U.S. Navy Department agreed to sanction the exchange which they had refused on 2 December.

In discussing the matter with the D.N.I. on 9 January, Willson agreed that it was only when technical matters were being dealt with that difficulties arose. He evidently was sympathetic to the need for as equitable an exchange as possible and said he would take up the matter with the naval authorities when he returned to the United States. At this meeting Willson asked whether the conclusions reached in the Ingersoll-Phillips conversations could be reviewed and brought up-to-date so that he could advise Admiral Leahy, the Chief of Naval Operations, about the current position.[1] This enquiry caused some consternation in Admiralty circles, particularly since the British Government were in the throes of replying to the United States about the possibilities of retaliation against Japan. Captain Dundas of the Plans Division minuted on 10 January:

> It is considered that the decision as to the fleet that can be despatched to the Far East in the event of war with Japan supervening on a war with Europe must await the final approval of our dispositions for an "Axis War". It is also considered essential that the Foreign Office should be consulted, and possibly C.I.D. approval obtained, before further discussions are undertaken.[2]

While the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff minuted his agreement, he stressed that close cooperation with the United States in the Far East was most desirable. Sir Roger Backhouse, however, was plainly unmoved by

[1] Minute by Troup, P.D. 07430/39, 9 Jan. 1939, Adm 116/3922.

[2] Minute by Dundas, P.D. 07430/39, 10 Jan. 1939, Adm 116/3922.

Willson's request and wrote that unless the situation in the Far East got much worse he doubted whether either government would put the conclusions reached by the Ingersoll-Phillips conversations into effect. In his opinion the American Government had proved to be extremely reluctant in the past to make any sort of engagement which might commit them to warlike action, and he felt that the President's annual message to Congress, which he had delivered on 4 January, did not appear to materially change that policy.[1] Lord Stanhope evidently agreed that a real commitment by the United States was unlikely, but he was encouraged by what he saw as the movement by the Roosevelt Administration towards greater involvement in world affairs. He gave as an example the proposal to fortify Guam, which he thought would help to convince the Japanese that the USA was very concerned about what was happening in the Pacific.[2]

Despite the pessimism and reluctance to embark on any discussions with the U.S. Naval Attaché, an informal meeting was hastily arranged and took place on Friday 13 January at the U.S. Embassy in Grosvenor Square. The two man Admiralty delegation of Captain Dundas and Commander Hampton informed Willson that the force which might be sent to the Far East would probably be sufficient only to engage the Japanese Fleet under favourable,

[1] Minutes by D.C.N.S. and First Sea Lord, P.D. 07430/39, 10 Jan. 1939, Adm 116/3922.

[2] Minute by Lord Stanhope, P.D. 07430/39, 12 Jan. 1939, Adm 116/3922.

not normal, tactical and strategical conditions. According to a note of this meeting the size of the British Far Eastern Fleet was unlikely to exceed seven or eight battleships, two aircraft carriers, twenty or twenty-one cruisers, five of which would be drawn from the Dominion Navy, six destroyer flotillas and twenty submarines.[1] It was emphasised, however, that the figures quoted were not intended to represent any hard and fast decision as to the actual size of fleet that would be sent. Willson was told that in view of the developments in Europe during the previous year and the completion of the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau by Germany some reduction was necessary in the strength of the British Fleet that could be sent to Singapore.

> During the recent crisis it would have been impracticable to have sent a major force to the Far East until the RODNEY, which was under overhaul, became available (about 4-6 weeks). By autumn the situation will be considerably improved by the completion of the modernisation of Valiant and Renown.[2]

Dundas admitted that with reduced forces available the British would not be able, unaided, to carry on offensive operations against the Japanese Fleet in waters well north of Singapore. In his note of the conversations, Willson recorded:

[1] Note of meeting with U.S. Naval Attaché on 13 Jan. 1939, P.D. 07393/39, Adm 116/3922.

[2] Operational Naval Archives, Series VII, Box 116.

> The actual presence, however, of a major U.S. Force in the Western Pacific, would permit this reduced British Force to act on the offensive. On the other hand they are definitely committed by their undertakings with New Zealand and Australia at least to operate defensively on a line eastward from Singapore.[1]

Dundas also disclosed that no capital ships could be expected in the British Eastern Fleet before early 1941, but that the aircraft carrier Glorious together with six 6" cruisers and one flotilla of destroyers would be sent to reinforce the Eastern Fleet by the middle of 1940. As far as help from other nations was concerned, the Admiralty thought that the active co-operation of the Dutch was unlikely and at least during the early stages of a war would probably be more of a liability than an asset. Moreover, little if any naval support was expected from the French in the Far East, but the use and availability of French anchorages in the area was considered to be a useful asset.[2] In addition, Willson was told that because of the necessity to reduce the strength of the fleet that could be sent to the Far East, the possibility of tactical cooperation between the British and the United States Fleets had acquired added importance. Willson, however, appeared to disagree with this view and in conversation with the D.N.I. on 16 January suggested that the improvement in the Far Eastern situation meant that the need for cooperation

[1] Operational Naval Archives, Series VII, Box 116.
[2] ibid.

might not now be so important as it had been a year before.[1] Despite this he called to see the Director of Plans on the following day and asked him to confirm whether in the event of further conversations being required at the official level, on the lines of the Ingersoll-Phillips meetings, the matter would be handled with as much secrecy as before. Danckwerts agreed that this would be the case.[2] One of the most interesting aspects of this affair is that the official records make it abundantly clear that the Admiralty believed the U.S. Naval Attaché had taken the step of conversing with the D.N.I. on his own initiative and had not acted on instructions received from his Government.

> We do not for a moment imagine that this approach had any connection with the recent correspondence between this country and the U.S.A. regarding the possible cooperation in economic retaliation against Japan.[3]

This makes it all the more unusual that the Admiralty consented to provide Willson with any information at all. In the past the desire for as equal an exchange as

[1] Minute by Troup, P.D. 07430/39, 16 Jan. 1939, Adm 116/3922.

[2] Minute by Danckwerts, P.D. 07430/39, 17 Jan. 1939, Adm 116/3922. This meant there would be a severe restriction on the circulation of documents relating to any Anglo-American conversations and the C.I.D. would not be told about the exchange of views. This would be done to ease the fears of the Roosevelt Administration who felt that any publicity about the talks would make it extremely difficult for them to educate the American public to accept a movement away from strict isolationism to take up a position of greater involvement in world affairs.

[3] Draft letter by Director of Plans to Harvey, 17 Jan. 1939, Adm 116/3922.

possible had always been uppermost in their thinking. On this occasion the Admiralty provided classified information without receiving anything other than promises of reciprocity in return.[1] While the Admiralty Papers themselves do not reveal the exact reason why this was allowed to happen, I suspect that the Foreign Office may have had a hand in persuading the Admiralty to provide the information. For one thing Willson was bound to inform the Chief of Naval Operations of the intentions of the British, as far as their Far Eastern strategy was concerned, and this would be a most useful and convenient method of passing what was highly secret but essential information to the U.S. naval authorities and the President himself. It would enable the Americans to plan their own naval programme with more certainty and possibly help to facilitate any future action, whether joint or parallel, in the area with them. Another obvious advantage lay in the fact that by providing Willson with such a detailed and frank exposition the British could be

[1] This attitude contrasts markedly with that of the Admiralty during the summer when reluctance to discuss tactical cooperation was emphatic and with those even now who opposed it on the grounds that the Americans were unlikely to fulfil their part in any scheme for tactical cooperation that might be devised. I do not believe that the Admiralty seriously expected the Americans to take up the matter but the statement about tactical cooperation was not necessarily disingenuous and can be seen as representing a future aspiration rather than an immediate objective.

represented as being willing friends anxious to help the United States rather than a country with something to hide or dominated by the ethic of 'never giving up something for nothing'.[1] This was particularly significant since President Roosevelt had addressed Congress some nine days earlier and called for a revision of the U.S. Neutrality Act. He had done so because he believed that if the existing legislation was implemented it would seriously jeopardise the chances of the western democracies in the event of war with the dictatorships.

> There are many methods short of war, but stronger and more effective than mere words, of bringing home to aggressor governments the aggregate sentiments of our own people. . . . We have learned that when we deliberately try to legislate neutrality, our neutrality laws may operate unevenly and unfairly - may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim. The instinct of self-preservation should warn us that we ought not to let that happen any more.[2]

He thought the Neutrality Act constituted an indirect but potent encouragement to aggression and sought to repeal the arms embargo and extend the cash-and-carry provisions to enable the democracies to continue purchasing arms and material from the United States after a declaration of war.[3]

There can be little doubt that the President's

[1] Its major drawback, however, lay in the possibility that the information could be misused in some way or leaked to the press. The British seemed prepared to take this chance and Willson did not let them down.

[2] President Roosevelt's Annual Message to Congress, 4 Jan. 1939, in The Public Papers of F.D.R., Vol. 1939, pp.3-4.

[3] For further details on the background to the U.S. Neutrality Act 1939 see Adm 116/4103 and R.A. Divine, The Illusion of Neutrality (Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1962), pp.229-335.

message of public support for the democracies and his accent on increased rearmament was an encouragement to those in the British Government who saw in closer Anglo-American relations an opportunity to improve or lengthen the chances of survival in a war against the Axis nations.[1] Halifax was to show evidence of this spirit after returning from the rather unsatisfactory meeting which the Prime Minister and he had attended in Rome with Mussolini and Ciano. On 18 January the Foreign Secretary sent the following telegram to Craigie. Its importance lay in the changed emphasis and direction he set out for British foreign policy throughout the world. In it Halifax states, "It seems to me that the Anti-Comintern Pact, even in its present form is a real menace to us." He continued:

> . . . any attempt to compromise with Japan would inevitably be construed as an abandonment of China's cause and would alienate the sympathy of the United States, weakening our chances of collaboration not only in the Far East, but everywhere else. I consider that our aim must be active Anglo-American cooperation wherever possible, and we must be careful to do nothing

[1] On 12 January 1939 Roosevelt sent to Congress his estimate of the minimum needs of the United States for the purposes of national defence. He asked Congress to appropriate a sum of 525 million dollars of which 210 million dollars would actually be spent before 30 June 1940.
In a letter to the Foreign Office on 10 January, Mallet disclosed that in a recent conversation with a group of journalists the President had remarked that America could not always rely in the future upon others to fight her battles for her.
Mallet to Foreign Office, No. 26, A660/98/45, 10 Jan. 1939, FO 371/22812.

> which might jeopardise the movements in the United States for collaboration with like-minded Governments in Europe, which has already gone beyond what appeared likely a few months ago.[1]

Further confirmation that Halifax's fears were genuine came with the substance of the latest intelligence reports which were discussed on 23 January by the Foreign Policy Committee of the Cabinet. Apart from disclosing Hitler's absolute control of the German armed forces, the reports had indicated that the possibility existed that he might be prepared shortly to carry out a pre-emptive strike against the Netherlands. After ordering the Chiefs of Staff to prepare an urgent summary of the strategic implications of the situation, the Committee agreed that the Foreign Office should inform the United States about the essence of these reports.[2]

Roosevelt was particularly disturbed by the news that an attack on Holland might occur within a few weeks. He thought it was logical for the Germans to strike west and visualised Hitler demanding the Dutch East Indies from Holland and handing them over to the Japanese as a reward for joining the Triple Alliance. He was reluctant to make any immediate public announcement of support for the democracies, however, because his poor relations with Congress had been further soured by the exposure of a secret aircraft deal with the French and accentuated

[1] Halifax to Craigie, No. 433, 18 Jan. 1939, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.
[2] For further details see DP(P)43, 8 Feb. 1939, Cab 16/183A.

by his remarks to some members of the Senate Military Affairs Committee to the effect that the American frontier was on the Rhine. When he did make a speech on foreign policy on 3 February, the President reiterated that his Administration was in favour of peaceful coexistence, freedom of trade, the limitation of armaments and remained opposed to becoming involved in any entangling alliance.[1]

Roosevelt's disquiet about the grave peril attached to a German attack on the Low Countries was shared by the COS Sub Committee. In their report published on 25 January the military advisors stated that if Britain was compelled to enter a war resulting from German aggression against Holland in the near future, she would be confronted with a position more serious than the Empire had ever faced before. Seeing a German invasion of Holland as a direct challenge to Britain's security both in Europe and in the Far East, where the Dutch East Indies were of critical strategic importance, the Chiefs of Staff concluded that because so much was at stake H.M.G. could hardly afford not to intervene. Once involved, however, the outcome might depend ultimately upon the intervention of other powers such as the USA.[2]

At the same Cabinet meeting on 25 January at which the COS report on the strategic importance of Holland

[1] Mallet to Halifax, No. 19, A 1272/98/45, 3 Feb. 1939, FO 414/276.

[2] COS 830, paras.18-22, DP(P)43, 25 Jan. 1939, Cab 16/183A.

was considered, the Admiralty's new naval construction programme for 1939 was given outline approval pending further discussions between Simon, Chamberlain and Stanhope. In his memo CP 14(39) Stanhope had called for a building programme of two capital ships, an aircraft carrier, four large cruisers, two destroyer flotillas, four submarines and a fair number of escort vessels and MTB's. Faced with an uncertain international future and with growing evidence that appeasement was not having its intended effect on Germany, the case for an acceleration of the defence programme was a strong one. Yet, unlike the Americans who had provided large funds for the U.S. Navy Department to expand their capital ship fleet appreciably, the Admiralty was forced by the Treasury to prune £13.2 million from their departmental estimates and accept the loss of both new battleships and two of the four large cruisers from the programme which they had proposed for 1939.[1] In the light of Chatfield's views on the importance of the capital ship in warfare, the decision not to go ahead with building both battleships in the 1939 programme was remarkable. As First Sea Lord Chatfield had been obliged to explain the case for the capital ship to Halifax soon after he had become Foreign Secretary. On that occasion Chatfield had admitted that because of the bombing and torpedo menace, many politicians felt that the Navy's day was

[1] For the report of the Finance Committee of 2 February 1939 see Adm 167/103, and for the Stanhope - Simon exchanges see Adm 167/104.

over and that the battlefleet should be done away with and aeroplanes should be built as their replacements. He had contested this view and supported the conventional wisdom of the Naval Staff regarding the value of the capital ship.

> The British battle-fleet is like the queen on the chess board; it may remain at the base but it still dominates the naval game. Properly supported by other weapons, it is the final arbiter at sea; to lose it is to lose the game. It must not be unreasonably risked, yet in war, without risk you can do nothing.[1]

After succeeding Inskip as Minister for Coordination of Defence in January 1939, Chatfield had had little opportunity for resisting Simon's call for further spending cuts and in the face of the Public Accounts Committee's criticism of the Admiralty for overspending on its 1938 estimates there may have been nothing he could have done to save the battleship programme.

While the Admiralty's naval programme was being thwarted by parliamentary pressure and the need for financial restraint, the British Government could not draw any comfort from the current international situation. Prospects for the maintenance of peace looked at their least propitious for some time with reports being received to the effect that a triple alliance had been officially endorsed and was about to be signed by Germany, Italy and Japan. Halifax was by no means

[1] Lord Chatfield, It Might Happen Again, Vol.2, The Navy and Defence (Heinemann, London, 1947), pp.100-101.

convinced that the report was accurate and though acknowledging that Mussolini and Hitler would like to strengthen the existing Anti-Comintern Pact and widen its strategic impact, he thought that the Japanese had no wish to alienate either the United States or Britain by signing such a military agreement.

> Germany no doubt desires to be able to threaten Great Britain with simultaneous war in the North Sea, Mediterranean and the Far East. In this plan Italy and Japan are to play the role of junior partners. Italy, for her part, desires to keep Great Britain and the United States of America partially occupied in the Far East while she obtains what she wants in the Mediterranean and Near East. She also calculates that the Alliance may deter Great Britain and the United States of America from encouraging France to resist Italy's demands, and that the mere announcement of the Alliance may frighten the French into conceding some of Italy's demands.[1]

His confidence in the eventual outcome was reinforced by Craigie's interview with Arita in which the Ambassador warned the Foreign Minister that if the triple alliance was directed largely against Britain it would almost certainly provoke measures of economic retaliation.[2] Although Arita had denied that the new pact would have such an anti-British bias, Craigie thought the best policy was to keep the Japanese guessing as to whether there was any possibility of Anglo-American cooperation against them.[3]

A few days after receiving Halifax's assessment of likely Japanese policy, Victor Mallet, the Counsellor

[1] Halifax to Mallet, No. 467, 4 Feb. 1939, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.
[2] Craigie to Halifax, No. 473, 5 Feb. 1939, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.
[3] Craigie to Halifax, No. 476, 8 Feb. 1939, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

at the British Embassy in Washington, replied confirming that though the Roosevelt Administration believed the time was not ripe for the implementation of a direct embargo against Japan, the conclusion of a triple alliance would doubtlessly help to influence public opinion in the United States in favour of a stronger policy in the Far East. His contention was that while still isolationist in temperament the American people were beginning at last to realise that unless the dictatorships were checked they could pose a future threat to the United States. Mallet's advice was for the British Government to keep in the closest touch with the Americans on Far Eastern affairs and avoid going behind their backs in any way. He pointed out that it was clear the U.S. Government had no desire to take up an active role in the Pacific, but should a crisis develop in which a genuine threat was posed to Singapore by the Japanese Navy it might be difficult for them to stand idly by. These sentiments had been expressed in a recent article by the celebrated American columnist Walter Lippmann and Mallet concluded his message to Halifax by warmly endorsing them.

> As long as the Japanese think there is a better than even chance of the United States taking part in a world war, they are not likely to risk it, and if the Japanese will not risk it, there is a very good chance that Rome and Berlin will not risk it either.[1]

[1] Mallet to Halifax, No. 479, 9 Feb. 1939, D.B.F.P., 3, VIII.

On the following day the Japanese, after some prompting by both the Germans and the Italians, occupied Hainan Island off the coast of French Indo-China.

By this time Craigie's proposal for stationing a British battle squadron permanently at Singapore had been revived and given unqualified support in a Foreign Office memo drawn up on the subject by G.G. Fitzmaurice. His thesis was based on the fact that the British could not afford to lose their territorial possessions in the Far East and would have to defend them against aggression even if it meant carrying on a two or three front war simultaneously. He believed it was more advantageous for them to have a small battle fleet permanently based in Far Eastern waters rather than adopting the orthodox strategy of keeping the fleet intact within European waters and only sending it out east in the event of war being declared against Japan. In a long exposition on the subject, Fitzmaurice refuted the traditional argument favoured by the Admiralty that only a fleet of comparable size to that of the Japanese should be despatched to the Far East in time of emergency and pointed out that defensive rather than offensive needs could best be served by stationing a force of between five and seven capital ships at Singapore.[1]

On 13 February Howe passed on the memo to the

[1] Memorandum respecting the proposal to station a British Battle Squadron permanently at Singapore by G.G. Fitzmaurice, F1338/471/61, 27 Jan. 1939, FO 371/23544.

Admiralty and asked for their views on the necessity of maintaining a naval presence east of Suez. In his letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Howe stated:

> Lord Halifax feels in studying this problem, due account should be paid to possible action by the United States fleet in the event of war between this country and Japan. Lord Halifax shares Sir Robert Craigie's view that the possibility of such action taking place is greater than it has seemed hitherto.[1]

Apart from admitting that they regarded U.S. naval co-operation as being of the utmost importance, the Admiralty did not appear to take it into account when drawing up their reply some six weeks later. By this time, however, the political situation in Europe had changed dramatically for the worse. Although the Admiralty was to come out decisively in support of the orthodox strategy and reject the proposal for stationing a fleet permanently in the Far East, their answer had been largely foreshadowed in the European Appreciation for 1939-40 which had been published on 20 February.

In it the Chiefs of Staff had assumed that in a European war Britain would be allied with France against Germany and Italy with the possibility of Japan intervening against the allies. The United States were merely seen as a friendly neutral power that was probably willing to modify her neutrality legislation in Britain's favour, but not likely to intervene actively unless at a later stage. In essence, the strategic position was virtually

[1] Howe to Secretary of the Admiralty, F478/471/61, 13 Feb. 1939, FO 371/23544.

what it had been at the time of the Munich crisis. According to the Chiefs of Staff, it would be hard to choose a worse combination of enemies both geographically and militarily.

> The British Empire would be threatened simultaneously in Europe, the Mediterranean and in the Far East by an immense aggregate of armed force, which neither our present nor our projected strength is designed to meet, with France as our only major ally. The outcome of the war would be likely to depend on our ability to hold on to our key positions and upon other Powers, particularly the United States of America, coming to our aid.[1]

Moreover, in the naval sphere the long term situation would be transformed to the detriment of the allies if the Germans decided to denounce their naval agreement with the British. In that event, the economising which the Treasury had insisted upon would have severe consequences unless rectified at an early stage. But the Admiralty were under no illusion as to the formidable nature of the task confronting them in trying to match the existing rate of new construction and the impossibility of laying down sufficient ships to meet the needs of warfare against her three main potential enemies when they were building at an unrestricted level.[2] Nonetheless, the Chiefs of Staff were to come out in favour of the traditional Singapore strategy emphasising that once a state of emergency arose in Europe the British must reinforce the base without delay. To do this a

[1] DP(P)44, para.270, 20 Feb. 1939, Cab 16/183A.

[2] S.H. Phillips to Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office, M01188/39, paras.5-6, F3147/471/61, 29 Mar. 1939, FO 371/23544.

brigade group would have to be sent from India and RAF squadrons from either India or Iraq. By supplementing the existing defence forces it was expected that Singapore would be able to withstand a seaborne attack until the main fleet arrived, providing it was not unduly delayed. In the event of the Japanese intervening on the side of Britain's enemies, the Chiefs reaffirmed that a fleet would have to be despatched to the Far East of sufficient strength to protect the dominions, India and give cover to British communications in the Indian Ocean.[1]

At the C.I.D. meeting on 24 February Chamberlain referred to the European Appreciation and in particular to paragraph 237 which had stated that the addition of Japan to Britain's enemies would necessitate a change of policy. His point was that prior to the Appreciation the policy had been unconditional. He described it as categorical and unqualified, whereas now the inference was that in certain circumstances the strength of the fleet which could be sent might not be adequate.[2] It would be momentous news for the dominions, especially since Lord Stanhope and the First Sea Lord, Sir Roger Backhouse, had assured the Australian High Commissioner at a meeting on 1 November 1938 that the British Government still intended to send part of the grand fleet to the east. Bruce had cabled a report of the meeting to

[1] DP(P)44, paras.227-228, 20 Feb. 1939, Cab 16/183A.
[2] C.I.D. 348th meeting, 24 Feb. 1939, Cab 2/8.

the Australian Prime Minister from which he had gathered that two Nelsons and five Royal Sovereigns were the actual capital ships they had in mind for this mission and that the Admiralty intended despatching them immediately on the outbreak of war in the Far East.[1] Clearly the point at issue was whether the British had an obligation to inform the dominions of the change of priority. In the discussion that followed Stanhope suggested that even two capital ships would be a deterrent if Britain sent them to Singapore, particularly if the U.S. Fleet moved to Honolulu. He claimed that the Japanese would be reluctant to send a large fleet so far south as Singapore with the possibility of their being cut off if the United States became hostile.[2] While it is true that Roosevelt was genuinely worried about what the dictatorships were likely to do and public opinion had shown some signs of moving away from a rigid adherence to isolationism, Kennedy had only recently taken occasion to warn Chamberlain about asking for anything or speaking as though the Americans could be counted upon to fulfil an active role in any future crisis.[3] Without American assistance, Stanhope's argument lost a good deal of its validity. All along Chatfield had opposed the sending of a small force to the east on the

[1] Bruce to Lyons, No. 315, 1 Nov. 1938, Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937-49, Vol. I, pp. 511-512. The relevant Dominions Office file DO 3/98 has been destroyed.

[2] C.I.D. 348th meeting, 24 Feb. 1939, Cab 2/8.

[3] N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Hilda, 19 Feb. 1939, NC 18/1/1086.

basis that instead of being a deterrent such a token force could constitute a temptation to the Japanese Navy. As Minister for Coordination of Defence Chatfield still supported the policy he had advocated when he had been Chief of the Naval Staff. This meant that he thought it was possible for the British to be able to send a large force of capital ships to the Far East providing the French were allies of them at the time. Assuming this to be the case, the combined total of capital ships at their disposal would be nineteen from which nine could be spared for service in the waters off Singapore. This force would be of sufficient size that it would not need to rely on receiving any assistance from the United States in terms of either a deployment of forces or actual intervention.[1]

Because of the need for further discussion of these and other points in the European Appreciation, Chatfield convened a series of meetings to examine the implications for British foreign policy which the Chiefs of Staff had outlined in their strategic study. At the first meeting of the Strategic Appreciation Committee on 1 March Stanhope reiterated what he had said at the previous C.I.D. meeting on 24 February, namely that the situation would be greatly improved if the United States could be prevailed upon to send a fleet to Hawaii as soon as the Japanese took up a threatening attitude in the Pacific.

[1] C.I.D. 348th meeting, 24 Feb. 1939, Cab 2/8.

What actually constituted a threatening attitude was a matter of interpretation and the First Lord did not elucidate any further on this point. One assumes he was referring to a situation before the Japanese could embark upon any hostilities, either in advance of or after a declaration of war. Even if the theory could stand up to scrutiny, and that was debatable, the crippling disadvantage of Stanhope's plan was that the main U.S. task force was not in the Pacific at this time. After carrying out its winter manoeuvres in the Caribbean, it had gone on to visit the New York World's Fair and was not due back at its base in San Diego for several more weeks. Consequently, a crisis could occur in the interim period and catch the U.S. Fleet unprepared for the sort of role which Stanhope would have liked to have seen it play. If such a world crisis did suddenly happen while the U.S. Fleet was still in the Atlantic it is difficult to think what sort of a deterrent it would pose to the Japanese in the first few days of war. Much would thereafter depend on whether Roosevelt would be willing to send his navy to Honolulu or keep it intact on the west coast of the United States. In the case of the former, the Japanese would still be able to work on the basis that once war had been declared the U.S. Neutrality Act would have to be enforced, so that even if the President felt able to despatch his fleet to Hawaii it would be sent there without the intention of actually committing it to belligerent or even defensive duties on behalf of any other power. Therefore,

providing the Japanese did not attack American interests in the Far East and confined themselves to mopping up British possessions they might be able to consolidate their hold over the area without bringing the United States into the conflict. Just how far they would be able to go before the Roosevelt Administration would be prepared to intervene was impossible to gauge at this time. It was by no means certain that a threat to, an attack upon, or even the fall of Singapore would be seen by the United States as a casus belli. Indeed there was a good deal of feeling in Congress and in Roosevelt's Cabinet that a Japanese invasion of Australia and New Zealand would not be sufficient to make them renounce the neutrality legislation in favour of taking up arms on behalf of the dominions.[1] It was this unpredictable element in American policy which exposed the vital flaw in Stanhope's plan. He had said it was most unlikely that the Japanese would send the whole of their fleet south to Singapore under the possible threat of an American Fleet on their flank. Isolationism rendered that threat void, or at least reduced it considerably, since he could not guarantee having the U.S. Fleet at Honolulu when it was most needed. Furthermore, Roosevelt was unlikely to be enamoured with being cast in the role of the protector of the British Empire, as it would leave

[1] See the report of the conversations between Murray and Roosevelt in Oct. 1938, Prem 1/367.

him vulnerable to the charge of conspiring to dismantle the neutrality machinery in favour of involving the United States in war.[1] In order to avoid this criticism and the complaint that he would be making the Americans the handmaiden of the British by agreeing to comply with any request made for the movement of the fleet, Roosevelt was just as likely to keep his fleet well away from the point of danger. Moreover, his relations with Congress were too strained for him to want to court further trouble when he would need as much help from them as possible in the coming months.

Chatfield remained unconvinced by Stanhope's argument but did concede that American support would be immensely valuable, if the Roosevelt Administration were willing to provide it in the manner suggested by the First Lord. He was in favour of delivering a warning to the Americans that the British might be unable to hold the position in the Pacific, if faced with simultaneous war against Germany, Italy and Japan, unless it was possible to count on gaining their support. For this reason it was decided that the C.I.D. should approach the United States Government before an emergency arose so that they could explain the position to them.[2]

[1] He had been particularly severe on Lord Lothian when the latter, who was to be Lindsay's successor in Washington, called to see him in January 1939. Roosevelt had criticised Lothian for being so pessimistic about Britain's chances of survival in a world increasingly dominated by the forceful dictatorships. Ickes records that Roosevelt had said that while he was willing to help all he could, he would do nothing if Great Britain cringed like a coward.
Ickes, Diary, p.571. Also see F.D.R. Papers, F.D.R. to
(cont.)

Although Chatfield was to advocate sending a large capital ship force to the Far East, a policy with which he had been associated for a number of years, both Stanhope and Backhouse now clearly subscribed to a strategy which was fundamentally different from what they had disclosed to Bruce on 1 November when reassuring him that it was the Government's intention to send seven capital ships to the Far East at the outbreak of war. Backhouse, in particular, had recognised that a major weakness of the traditional strategic plan of sending the bulk of the fleet on a six to eight week journey to the Far East lay in the grave risk of damage or loss from attack by enemy forces en route to Singapore. Rather than putting the capital ship fleet at risk in this way, Backhouse had supported the call for a new naval strategy for use in a three front war. This opposed the traditional view that no anxieties or risks associated with their interests in the Mediterranean should be allowed to interfere with the despatch of the fleet to the Far East. Instead of leaving the French with the task of covering the Italian Navy in the Western Mediterranean and virtually denuding the eastern end, Backhouse favoured an assault on the weakest of Britain's three main potential enemies in the hope of

---

(cont.)
Prof. R.B. Merriman, 15 Feb. 1939, PSF Box 46.

2 S.A.C. 1st meeting, 1 March 1939, Cab 16/209.

knocking Italy out of the war in the first few months.[1] This would then enable the allies to concentrate their forces on dealing with the German and Japanese menace having already established undisputed control over the strategic areas of the Mediterranean, Middle East and North Africa. It was proposed that during the time it took to defeat the Italians the British should rely on their local defences, supplemented by small, fast mobile forces to protect their interests in the Far East and deter the Japanese from doing any vital damage in the first six months of war. Admiral Drax, the First Sea Lord's special advisor on war planning, recommended that the ideal force for this purpose would be a flying squadron of two battlecruisers or fast battleships, an aircraft carrier, one cruiser squadron and a flotilla. He suggested that this force together with an additional fast aircraft carrier was adequate for the security of the Australasian dominions and the protection of British interests in the Indian Ocean.[2] Although Stanhope and Backhouse were convinced of the potential effectiveness of the scheme it clearly had three major drawbacks. Firstly, it was open to the same criticism which Backhouse had levelled at the traditional strategy, i.e.,

[1] Backhouse felt the current weakness of the fleet made the Far Eastern commitment obsolete and that it was more realistic to alter the strategy to one that maximised their advantages.
Backhouse Paper SAC 4, 'The Despatch of a Fleet to the Far East', 28 Feb. 1939, and the minutes of S.A.C. meetings on 1 March and 13 March 1939, Cab 16/209.

[2] Churchill College, Cambridge, (Drax Papers), O.P.C. 11, 15 March 1939, 2/9.

the danger of loss or damage en route to Singapore. Secondly, even if the flying squadron arrived at Singapore intact its deterrent value could hardly be the same as that of a larger capital ship fleet. Thirdly, the fleet was only intended to fulfil a short service holding operation at Singapore, so if the British were unable to defeat the Italians within a few months it would prove to be inadequate as a long term counter to the full Japanese Navy.

When the debate about the respective merits of the Mediterranean and Far Eastern strategies was continued at the second meeting of the S.A.C. on 13 March, it was clear that Stanhope's confidence in both the deterrent value of the U.S. Fleet and its redeployment in Hawaiian waters remained undiminished, even though he could not point to any recent commitment on the part of the President to such action. However, the time was rapidly approaching when this speculation and hypothesis would be put to the ultimate test. While the British were still at odds over what strategy they should adopt in the event of war, the Germans swept into Prague and occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia during the next few days.

Chapter Eight: The Last Few Months of Peace (March - Aug. 1939)

When Hitler staged his coup against the Czech Government in March 1939 Chamberlain's European appeasement policy was brought to an abrupt end. At Birmingham on 17 March the Prime Minister referred to the latest German move by asking whether the absorption of Czechoslovakia represented the end of an old adventure or the beginning of a new one. As though drawn on by his initial question, Chamberlain pondered aloud: " . . . is this, in fact, a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?"[1] His speech underlined the real concern felt in British Government circles about the disadvantages of relying upon a dictator who had ignored both the spirit and letter of the Munich Agreement and had systematically destroyed Czechoslovakian independence and her territorial integrity.

The signal for the abandonment of the appeasement policy which was sounded in Birmingham was followed by concerted diplomatic activity on behalf of the Government to demonstrate the extent to which it was prepared to go to ensure that the Germans would not be allowed to seize other countries at will. These efforts culminated in the following weeks with the guarantee of support for Poland,

[1] The Times, p. 14, 18 Mar. 1939.

Roumania and Greece and an agreement with Turkey for cooperation against external aggression.

It is at this point with appeasement discredited and with the British searching instead for a policy of mutual deterrence in Europe by which to replace it, that Anglo-American relations came to reassert a more important and influential role in British foreign policy than at any stage since Eden's resignation over a year before. Although the British did not expect to receive active American assistance in Europe, there was a greater likelihood of achieving some help in the Far East which was seen as being a sphere of prime interest to the United States. It was this reemphasis on the importance of the USA as far as British foreign policy is concerned that I shall be concentrating upon in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

It has already been suggested that adverse events in Europe could have serious repercussions for the British elsewhere in the world. On this occasion the effects were soon felt in the Far East. Only two days before Hitler's triumphant entry into Prague, Stanhope had told his colleagues on the Strategic Appreciation Committee that in the event of a crisis arising in Europe, the location of the U.S. Fleet could become of great strategic importance to Britain. He believed the presence of a U.S. Fleet at Honolulu would be sufficient to deter the Japanese from embarking upon a southward offensive aimed at capturing Singapore as a preliminary to some further plan for territorial expansion at the expense of

British interests.[1] Unlike Backhouse, Drax and Churchill who thought that the Japanese would not undertake such a large scale operation at this time, Stanhope looked to the Americans for reassurance. He thought that if the President would agree to send his navy to Honolulu the Far Eastern situation could be kept under control, a fact which would then enable the British to deploy the bulk of the fleet originally earmarked for despatch to Singapore in Home and Mediterranean waters, where it could be used for defensive or offensive duties against their potential or actual enemies. This was a vital consideration since the capital ship fleet was at its lowest ebb and not in any state to wage war on two let alone three separate fronts simultaneously.[2]

Halifax was well aware of the fact that apart from bringing the prospect of a war with Germany much closer, the Czech crisis could encourage the extremists in the Japanese Government and military to use the opportunity to further their territorial ambitions at Britain's expense. His concern about the likely effects of a deterioration in the Far Eastern situation was heightened by the knowledge that the United States Fleet, which might have been able to exercise a restraining influence upon the Japanese had it been in the Pacific, was still performing its tasks on the eastern seaboard and was

[1] S.A.C. 2nd meeting, 13 March 1939, Cab 16/209.
[2] Despatch of a Fleet to the Far East, Paper S.A.C. 16, Paras. 3-4, 5 Apr. 1939, DP(P)48, Cab 16/183A.

expected to remain there for some time to come. Because of the enormous potential strategic importance that this fleet had assumed for Britain's position in the Far East, Halifax was prepared to risk antagonizing the Americans by making a request for its early return to the Pacific. He asked Ambassador Kennedy on 21 March to pass on this message to the State Department but he refrained from requesting the specific redeployment of the fleet in Hawaiian waters. Three days later Kennedy informed the Foreign Secretary that the United States were prepared to allow the fleet to return to the Pacific in mid-April.[1] He alleged that because the original plan was to keep it in the Atlantic for a much longer period the significance of its early return would not be lost on the Japanese. Lindsay was, however, to dismiss this claim as nonsense and in a message on 14 April took occasion to correct the misleading impression left by the American Ambassador. He pointed out that rather than being on a long term deployment in Atlantic waters, the fleet was only supposed to remain there until about 20 May after which it was expected to return to its Pacific base at San Diego.[2]

Chamberlain had reacted to Hitler's démarche by pressing the Foreign Office to wire Lindsay with instructions to ask the United States Government whether they would be prepared to agree to the resumption of naval staff conversations which had been initiated in January

[1] Halifax to Lindsay, No. 281, 24 March 1939, F2963/G, FO371/235
[2] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 422, 14 Apr. 1939, F3889/G, FO 371/23561.

1938. His explanation of why he believed it was necessary to renew these discussions and bring them up-to-date was simple and direct.

> His Majesty's Government cannot leave out of account the fact that if they are involved in a European conflict, they might not be able at once to reinforce on a large scale their naval forces in the Far East, and that might affect United States naval dispositions.[1]

Chamberlain's request had been made without reference to the Admiralty, who had not even been asked for their opinion about either the suitability or importance of participating in such an exchange. Despite this lack of departmental communication, the importance of Chamberlain's appeal to the Americans lay in his disclosure that there was some doubt about Britain's ability to defend her possessions in the Far East and the linking of this situation to the location of the United States Navy. By inferring that an inverse relationship existed between British weakness in the Far East and American naval strength in the Pacific, the Prime Minister was not only preparing the ground for a formal request for the return of the fleet from the Atlantic but also underlining the fact that the traditional strategy which had been discussed in the naval staff conversations was under serious threat, at least in the short term. Apart from the importance of this disclosure, the suggestion that a change might occur in Britain's naval strategy was bound

[1] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 131, 19 March 1939, F2879/G, FO 371/23560.

to arouse interest in American navy circles and lead to sustained pressure for the reopening of naval staff conversations. Chamberlain's initiative on this occasion clearly signified what could be construed as a belated awareness of the importance of American policy for British interests in the Far East now that Hitler had succeeded in destroying the credibility of the European appeasement policy.

Nonetheless, misunderstandings could still occur as Danckwerts, the Director of Plans, indicated when reviewing the Prime Minister's proposal in a minute on 24 March. He thought that the exchange of views desired by Chamberlain and the Foreign Office, similar in form to the Ingersoll-Phillips conversations of January 1938, was quite different from what the President had in mind when replying through Lindsay on 21 March. The British Ambassador had disclosed that Roosevelt was prepared to resume naval conversations, but the procedure would have to be different from that used in the previous year. His suggestion that talks between the two sides might be conducted on similar lines to that employed in 1915, i.e., by the use of specially briefed naval attachés, had led the Director of Plans to feel that while the intention of the British was to exchange operational plans in connection with the Far East, Roosevelt wished to establish a permanent mission for exchanging all sorts of intelligence between the two powers.[1] Danckwerts

[1] Minute by Director of Plans, Victor Danckwerts, P.D. 07577/39, 24 March 1939, Adm 116/3922.

made it clear that it was of the highest importance not to rebuff any advances made by the United States, especially as the initiative came from the British on this occasion. Yet at the same time, he felt it was imperative for the Government to decide what they really wished to arrange before making any reply to the Americans on this issue. He assumed that the Prime Minister was hoping to obtain some sort of assurance from the Roosevelt Administration that the United States Navy would be deployed in such a way that Japan would be deterred from entering a war or operating in strength to the southward. Danckwerts doubted whether staff conversations would achieve such a result because the assurance required was of a political rather than purely naval consideration. Moreover, while the Ingersoll-Phillips conversations had resulted in a broad strategical plan for cooperation between the British and U.S. Navies in the Far East, it did not amount to any kind of political undertaking to implement the plan. He was also concerned about the President's plan for re-establishing a system of liaison between the two embassies in Washington which had been in operation during the First World War.

> In 1915 we were already at war and therefore knew our circumstances with accuracy and could assess the numbers and quality of our enemies: at the present day we may be faced with hostilities against Germany, Italy and Japan simultaneously, but have not as yet arrived at that situation. While, therefore, the closest cooperation with the U.S.A. is to be welcomed, the dangers of any leakage of information are probably greater under our present circumstances than they were in 1915, when any such leakage would only commit the U.S.A. more firmly to our cause; now such leakage might have the most

> far-reaching results, and even possibly deprive us of our power to choose our own political course.[1]

Danckwerts' reservations were shared by Cunningham, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, and by Backhouse who added that it would be very little use having staff talks on naval plans unless the British were sure that the Americans wished and intended to cooperate with them under certain circumstances. The First Sea Lord felt that political guidance from the Government was needed before anything further was done about arranging the discussions. This would have the object of clarifying the line to be taken once the staff conversations got under way.

> I wish also to stress the great importance it would be to us to be able to be certain of American naval intervention on our side. Apart from the greatly increased security this would give to our general situation in the Far East, it would also ensure that neither Australia nor New Zealand would have anything to fear from possible Japanese aggression. In fact, in my view it would make the whole difference to our strategic position in the Far East and give us a much freer hand to deal with our problems in Home waters and in the Mediterranean. It would be impossible to exaggerate what this would mean to us in the event of a world war in which we were engaged with Germany, Italy and Japan.[2]

While details on the method of communication were not made final for a number of weeks, a clear political commitment on the necessity for naval staff conversations had already been made by both Chamberlain and Roosevelt and neither wavered in their support for these discussions.

[1] Minute by Director of Plans, Victor Danckwerts, P.D. 07577/39, 24 March 1939, Adm 116/3922.

[2] Minute by First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Roger Backhouse, P.D. 07577/39, 27 March 1939, Adm 116/3922.

A consistent line on naval strategy seemed at a premium at this time, however, as the Strategic Appreciation Committee's discussions had revealed prior to the German entry into Prague, and the Admiralty's reply to the Fitzmaurice memorandum would demonstrate at the end of March. Although both Backhouse and Stanhope appeared to support the flying squadron principle, they were not prepared to station a number of battleships in the Far East on a permanent basis in peacetime. Craigie had made another call for such a squadron in a telegram to the Foreign Office on 23 March, but the Admiralty reply left the Foreign Office in no doubt as to the rejection of any such proposal. In a covering letter to the Admiralty's comments on the idea floated by Crosby and Craigie and taken up by Fitzmaurice, S.H. Phillips, a Principal Assistant Secretary, wrote that the restricted number of capital ships together with heavy commitments in the Mediterranean ruled out any possibility of being able to supply a permanent peacetime force of battleships in the Far East. Instead the Admiralty hoped to be able to station a capital ship in the area by 1942.[1] Phillips stated that the Admiralty would continue to rely on their present policy of keeping one principal fleet at home and another in the Mediterranean. He admitted that though this policy in no way precluded a fleet being sent to the Far East should the necessity

[1] S.H. Phillips to Foreign Office, M.01188/39, para 9, F3147/471/61, 29 March 1939, FO 371/23544.

arise, the position would have to be far more serious than at present before the Admiralty would recommend such a step, which would involve the withdrawal of the greater part of the British Fleet from the Mediterranean.

What the Admiralty had hinted at without actually saying so was that the Government's Far Eastern naval strategy was under review. This point was made much clearer in a memo prepared for the Strategic Appreciation Committee by the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff on 5 April 1939. Sir Andrew Cunningham admitted that with only ten capital ships immediately available and two others at six weeks' and three months' notice respectively the number which could be sent to the Far East in a three front war was strictly limited and would be decided upon in the light of the strategical situation in the Mediterranean, the Japanese war strategy and the reactions of both Russia and the United States to Japan's intervention.[1] His conclusion was that too many variable factors existed for any definite statement to be made about how soon after a Japanese declaration of war a fleet could be despatched to the Far East, or what its size would be. Cunningham's belief that the movement of the U.S. Fleet to Honolulu would have a restrictive effect upon Japanese strategy and might enable the British to delay the despatch of their own fleet to Singapore had already been taken up by the

[1] Paper S.A.C. 16, 5 Apr. 1939, DP(P)48, Cab 16/183A.

Minister for Coordination of Defence in a letter to Churchill on 29 March. Hitler's coup appeared to have persuaded Chatfield that the British ought to take some risk in the Far East at the outset of hostilities in the hope of settling matters in the Mediterranean. Although he now supported the plan for dealing with Italy first, Chatfield felt that it could take up to six months to solve the Mediterranean problem.

> If, however, we have the United States Fleet at Honolulu our Far Eastern position will at once become much easier and we do not know that Japan will immediately come into war. It would seem much more likely that she will wait to see what losses we have in our Fleet and how we get on generally in Europe before she decides to come in, if at all.[1]

It was evident from the meetings of the Strategic Appreciation Committee in April and the Anglo-French staff conversations which had begun at the end of March that a great deal of importance was attached to American policy and its likely effects upon the Far Eastern situation and Japanese strategy. In forming their conclusions on the broad strategy to be followed in the conduct of a future war, the Anglo-French staff delegations had stressed that all the resources of diplomacy should be directed towards securing the benevolent neutrality or active assistance of the United States in both peace and war. It was believed by the French, for example, that if the United States took immediate

[1] Chatfield Papers, Chatfield to Churchill, 29 March 1939, CHT/6/4.

measures to concentrate their fleet in the Philippines or at Honolulu and ceased all forms of trading with Japan, the effect would be to strike a crucial blow at Japanese strategy and lead to the loss of its liberty of action. The French hoped that this might result in forcing the Japanese Government to hesitate about embarking upon any offensive operations in the Far East.[1] While there may have been a good deal of truth in what the French had to say, the leader of the United Kingdom delegation, Danckwerts, was far from convinced that the Americans would be so obliging. At a meeting between the two sides on 25 April 1939 in the War Office, he sought to emphasise the difficulty of getting the Americans to commit themselves in advance to the type of action which the French had prescribed. While agreeing with Admiral Odend'hal's suggestion that Anglo-French diplomatic pressure ought to be applied in the hope of inducing the Roosevelt Administration to move towards such action, Danckwerts still thought that it would not be possible to count on the United States undertaking any commitment to restrain the Japanese. He pointed out that even though the President had agreed to the return of the U.S. Fleet to the Pacific, no plans had yet been announced for its deployment in Hawaiian waters. It seemed likely, therefore, that it would remain for some time at its base in San Diego. Moreover, even if it went to Honolulu it would

[1] Anglo-French Staff Conversations 1939, AFC(J)45, 25 Apr. 1939, Cab 29/160.

still be 3,500 miles from Japan. Danckwerts felt that while its presence at Hawaii would have a considerable moral influence on the Japanese, the fleet would need to go much further west for it to exercise a real military threat to the Japanese Navy.[1] As far as the British Naval Staff were concerned, the presence of the U.S. Fleet at Honolulu would prevent large scale military operations being undertaken by Japan against French or British possessions to the south, or against the British dominions, but they did not expect it to prevent the Japanese Navy from undertaking naval operations in southern waters or even in the Indian Ocean. Danckwerts informed the French delegation that the Admiralty believed that only in the event of the U.S. Fleet being sent to the Philippines, Singapore, New Guinea, or even to ports in Northern Australia, would the Japanese be effectively deterred from undertaking any important military operations in the south.[2]

Danckwerts' caution reflected accurately the views held by the British about what could actually be expected from the Americans in the Pacific. It had been underlined in a political review drawn up for the sixth meeting of the Strategic Appreciation Committee on 17 April. According to the available evidence, despite increasing anti-totalitarian feeling in the USA, it would still be most imprudent of the allies to count on armed assistance

1 AFC(J) 11th meeting (Revise), 25 Apr. 1939, Cab 29/160.
2 ibid.

from the Americans. While the report did not rule out intervention at a later stage, it was emphatic in warning the British not to rely initially on receiving anything more than sympathy and either the repeal of the neutrality legislation or an interpretation of it favourable to them. Despite the fact that American public opinion was not thought yet to have reached the stage when it was convinced that the totalitarian powers represented a direct threat to the United States, and even though isolationist sentiment remained strong in Congress, action by the Japanese could help force the Roosevelt Administration's hand in favour of cooperation with the allies. It was felt, for instance, that if Japan ranged herself with her Anti-Comintern partners against the allies, the United States might feel compelled in the opening phases of hostilities to resort to common naval action with the British and French forces. Furthermore, the British were reasonably convinced that any Japanese threat to the Australasian dominions, either in the form of a direct attack upon them, or by virtue of an expedition against Singapore, would be a matter to which the Americans could hardly remain indifferent for long.[1]

By the time that the Strategic Appreciation Committee met for the sixth time, further evidence of the instability and inflammatory nature of both European and Far Eastern affairs had been revealed by the Italian seizure

[1] Political Review for the S.A.C. Sub Committee, Annex to minutes of S.A.C. 6th meeting, 17 Apr. 1939, Cab 16/209.

of Albania and the murder of the newly appointed Superintendent of Customs at Tientsin. Although unconnected, the two events had similar effects by increasing the tension which already prevailed in both areas; a situation which prompted Halifax to tell Kennedy that the sooner the United States Fleet was back in the Pacific the better it would be for the British. Roosevelt agreed and the fleet returned to its normal operating area off San Diego on 16 April 1939.[1]

On the following day it became clear that British naval strategy, which had been in a stage of evolution since Backhouse had succeeded Chatfield as First Sea Lord in the previous autumn, had at last emerged from its transitional period. Sir Andrew Cunningham's paper on the despatch of a fleet to the Far East had virtually admitted that the commitment to send a large capital ship fleet to Singapore in time of emergency was no longer feasible. In discussing this important memorandum, the Strategic Appreciation Committee concluded that an attempt to knock out Italy offered the best prospects for speedy results and should not be lightly broken off. Should the worst happen and Japan enter the war before the Italian Navy had been beaten and driven from the Mediterranean, the decision of whether to abandon temporarily either the Eastern Mediterranean or the Far East would have to be taken by the British Government at the time. It was acknowledged, however, that this dilemma would be resolved if the Japanese could be dissuaded from entering a war on the side of the axis forces, and

[1] Lindsay to Halifax, No.40, F3675/3675/61, 15 Apr. 1939, FO 414/276.

eased considerably should they delay their entry into war long enough for the Anglo-French Navies to establish a measure of control in the Mediterranean sufficient to allow the despatch of a naval force to the Far East.[1] On the same day that instructions were issued to the United Kingdom delegates at the Anglo-French staff talks about discussing this policy, Cadogan sent a message to Lindsay paraphrasing the conclusion reached by the D.C.N.S. in his memo. It would be two months before the State Department would receive an official explanation of why the British Government had adopted a naval strategy which showed changed priorities from that of the traditional policy.

As a consultative group the Strategic Appreciation Committee were not empowered to take decisions affecting naval policy, but their deliberations on the issue of sending a fleet to the Far East had underlined the need to clarify government policy on this subject at the highest level. Although the matter was only referred to the C.I.D. for consideration on 2 May, Chamberlain had already revealed to the Australian Prime Minister on 20 March that the British Government could not state in advance what size of fleet they would be prepared or could afford to send to Singapore in the event of a simultaneous three front war against Germany, Italy and Japan. Nonetheless, he had reaffirmed that the commitment to

[1] Extract of minutes of S.A.C. 6th meeting, 17 Apr. 1939, DP(P)48, Cab 16/183A.

despatch a capital ship fleet to the Far East still existed as did his Administration's determination to prevent any major operation being undertaken by Japan against Australia, New Zealand or India.[1] As he explained to his colleagues on the C.I.D., whatever merit was attached to conducting a Far Eastern war strategy against Japan, everything hinged on Britain's ability to resist her enemies in Europe. In his opinion, if Britain was defeated the fate of the dominions would be sealed. While, therefore, the British should do all they could to protect the dominions the single most important thing was to defeat the enemy.[2] This echoed the line taken earlier in the meeting by Chatfield, who had asserted that if the British took on more enemies than they had strength to combat, they must try to knock out one of them before the others could combine to inflict serious injury upon their interests throughout the world. Whether the British could succeed in knocking out Italy before the Japanese could take advantage of the situation, however, was of great strategic significance. In this connection, he suggested that the stationing of the U.S. Fleet in the Pacific was an all important factor since it could help to delay a Japanese entry into war long enough for the Anglo-French forces to direct the main brunt of their attack upon Italy in the hope of bringing about a swift and conclusive defeat of Mussolini's forces, as

[1] Chamberlain to Lyons, 20 March 1939, Prem 1/309.
[2] C.I.D. 355th meeting, 2 May 1939, Cab 2/8.

well as securing her unconditional withdrawal from the war.[1] Because of the growing importance that American foreign and naval policy was beginning to assume for Britain's Far Eastern defence strategy, the C.I.D. invited Halifax to inform the U.S. Government of the general considerations affecting the despatch of a fleet to Singapore in the event of a war with Japan. What the C.I.D. did not know, however, was that this information would be revealed in the secret naval staff conversations which were due to take place in the United States in June.[2]

This emphasis on the value of the United States as far as the allies were concerned, was underlined in a summary of agreed conclusions reached between the Anglo-French delegates and published on 4 May 1939. It was agreed that for strategical reasons the active participation of the U.S.A. on the allied side would be of vital importance. But if this proved impossible to obtain, the least that should be aimed at was an undertaking by the Roosevelt Administration to the effect that on the outbreak of war the American Fleet would be despatched to the Western Pacific regardless of whatever policy the Japanese adopted in the crisis.[3] If war had to be fought in the Far East without American support, the French in

1 C.I.D. 355th meeting, 2 May 1939, Cab 2/8.

2 Because of the need for the utmost secrecy, the Ingersoll-Phillips conversations of January 1938 had been conducted without the knowledge of the C.I.D. Roosevelt asked for the same treatment for the Hampton mission in June 1939.

3 AFC(J)53, Intervention of Japan, 4 May 1939, Cab 29/160.

particular were adamant in resisting the implementation of anything other than a defensive war strategy. Although they continued to rely upon the Americans to contain Japan until such time as Italy was defeated, the French agreed that Singapore could not hold out indefinitely and that the allies must be prepared to send out naval reinforcements to supplement the existing units in the Far East. This would then enable them to impose some form of naval blockade designed to disrupt the passage of seaborne supplies to Japan and hamper her war effort.[1] But owing to a shortage of suitable vessels the blockade would presumably only be imposed in the waters off Singapore. At such a long distance, it could scarcely be very effective and would probably only serve to be an irritant to the Japanese.

While the allies were prepared to go to considerable lengths to enlist American support, President Roosevelt made it abundantly clear where his sympathies lay. He had reacted to the news of the German coup by emphasising at a press conference on 17 March 1939 the need for some revision of the United States neutrality laws and had promised to hold conferences to draw up a programme for such revision as was necessary.[2] A few days later in

[1] AFC 25, Annex VI, Report on Stage II by U.K. Delegation, 11 May 1939, DP(P)56, Cab 16/183A.

[2] F.D.R. Papers, Press Conference No. 530A, 17 March 1939, PPF 1-P, XIII, 204.

conversation with Sir Arthur Willert, the President had talked at length about European developments and what he was planning to do to help the British in the event of war. In addition to proposing certain amendments to the Neutrality Act, such as extending the cash-and-carry provisions to cover everything, the President was considering ways in which the American Fleet could be of some assistance. He had come to the conclusion that while he would have to declare certain war zones which American vessels would be prohibited from entering, he did not see why the U.S. Fleet should not patrol the seas outside these areas. In commenting upon the proposal in his report, Willert remarked that the plan did not appear to have been thought out since without modification it would involve endless opportunities for casus belli incidents. His report continued:

> The President talked a lot about the trouble that he was having with his own public opinion and about what he was doing to educate it, helped by Hitler and Mussolini, but not at that time by us. "Things are moving here," he said. "But if only you British would give me a lead."[1]

Willert also disclosed that the President believed the defence of the United States rested largely on the strength and continued vitality of the European democracies.

> In other words, the weaker democracy grew in Europe, the weaker the United States also became. A few

[1] Conversation between President Roosevelt and Sir Arthur Willert, 25-26 March 1939, FP(36)80, Cab 27/627.

> months ago he would have named Czechoslovakia as part of the American defences. It had now gone.[1]

According to Morgenthau, the President discussed a variation of his patrol scheme with him in April. On this occasion Roosevelt was alleged to have said that in future he was going to set up a zone from Newfoundland to South America in which the U.S. Navy would not hesitate to destroy Axis submarines if they tried to interfere with American shipping.

> In other words, he is going to play the game the way they are doing it now. If we fire and sink an Italian or German . . . we will say it the way the Japs do, "So sorry." "Never happen again." Tomorrow we sink two. We simply say, "So sorry," and next day we go ahead and do it over again. .[2]

Apart from the return of the fleet to the Pacific on 16 April, American naval policy was shrouded in mystery; neither the President nor any member of his Cabinet had made any statement about whether the allies could rely on having the fleet where they wanted it, i.e., at Honolulu or further westward. This was to be a very significant omission as time would prove.

This uncertainty about how far the Americans would be prepared to go in supporting the allies was made even more significant by the momentous announcement on 27 April that the Anglo-German Naval Agreement was at an end.[3]

[1] Conversation between President Roosevelt and Sir Arthur Willert, 25-26 March 1939, FP(36)80, Cab 27/627.

[2] J.M. Blum, From the Morgenthau Diaries, Vol.2, Years of Urgency 1938-1941 (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1965), p.91.

[3] Anglo-German Naval Agreements, Case 5591, Vol.2, Adm 116/3369.

It meant that the limited naval rearmament which the Germans had accepted and upon which the British Government had somewhat complacently relied, was now forsaken in favour of an acceleration in the arms race. Essentially, however, the repercussions of the ending of the naval agreement were long term rather than immediate and were not expected to upset the balance of naval forces for a few years to come. Nevertheless, the repudiation came as yet another blow for those who had been associated with the formulation of British foreign policy in the recent past. Although the agreement had been advantageous to both countries, it had clearly outlived its usefulness as far as the Germans were concerned. Its abrogation did not just reflect the current poor state of Anglo-German relations but was virtually a tacit acceptance that things were likely to get a good deal worse between them in the future. In casting aside this agreement, the Germans provided further proof that appeasement was no longer suitable as a policy of containment in Europe and was unlikely to be revived for a long time to come. It tended to reinforce and confirm the opinion of the Admiralty that naval strength and foreign policy were closely linked.

In their letter to the Foreign Office about the Fitzmaurice memorandum at the end of March the Admiralty had concluded:

> Unless the Navy is maintained at a strength sufficient to secure our position in those parts of the world which are vital to the existence of the Empire, it is impracticable to carry out our

> chosen policy as and when we wish. But while, in theory, naval strength must be based upon foreign policy, in practice, there is a limit, governed by money, men and material, and determined by the Government of the day, beyond which our armaments cannot be advanced; and when this is reached the tables are turned, and foreign policy must depend upon naval strength, unless risk of war, and even of unsuccessful war, is to be incurred. A reduction in the number of our potential enemies is as definite an accretion to our strength as is an increase in the number of our battleships.[1]

This concluding observation could certainly be construed as a further indication that appeasement, though remote, if not entirely ruled out in Europe, might yet prove to be applicable elsewhere in the world. As the summer proceeded this became a weighty factor in the British Government's dealings with the Japanese over the Tientsin dispute, but was somewhat less obvious in its attempts to forge an alliance with the Russians.

While Chamberlain remained deeply suspicious of the Russians and admitted that open association with them would be fatal to any hope of combining the Balkan powers against German aggression, the news of an Anglo-Russian agreement would be bound to affect the situation in the Far East. Unlike the French who seemed prepared to place some reliance upon the Russians as a source of help in the Far East, the British were anxious not to do anything which could inflame matters in the area while peace was maintained. In fact, the Cabinet were anxious to prevent the Axis forces from persuading the Japanese to join in

[1] Admiralty Memo M.01188/39, F3147/471/61, 29 Mar. 1939, FO 371/23544.

a triple alliance against Britain, France and Russia. Encouraging news that the Japanese were poised to reject such an alliance in favour of strengthening the Anti-Comintern Pact against Russia demonstrated the nature and complexity of the problem facing the British in devising their foreign policy. Since the Japanese regarded the Russians as their implacable foes, any alliance between Britain and the Soviet Union was likely to have several decisive and potentially disastrous effects. If the Japanese heard rumours of such a liaison or thought it was a distinct probability, it could well drive them to conclude an alliance of their own with the Germans and Italians. Moreover, even if that did not occur, the chance of them continuing their forward policy in the Far East in an even more thoroughgoing fashion, with the maximum of disruption to British interests, was certainly very possible. Under such circumstances it is not difficult to appreciate the apparent slothfulness of the British and their reluctance to grasp the nettle of Russian friendship more firmly than they did.

It was also another reason for trying to draw as close to the United States as possible in the months immediately following Hitler's coup in Prague. One method lay in the naval staff conversations which the President had agreed to in March. Although both the Admiralty and the Foreign Office would have preferred the discussions to have taken place in London for reasons of secrecy, Roosevelt was adamant in refusing such a

suggestion. While the British tried to change his mind, they were aware of the need to avoid antagonising the Americans. Stanhope remarked in a minute on 26 April that this was a point which should not be forgotten.

> Whilst I agree with D.C.N.S. that we must not allow it to be thought that we do not value these contacts, equally we must guard against any suggestion that we are endeavouring to rush U.S.A.[1]

Had the British been successful in getting the President to agree to conversations in London there might well have been an attempt to link these with the Anglo-French staff talks that were being held in Whitehall at this time. Roosevelt, however, had no intention of allowing the talks to take place outside the United States, where he believed elaborate security arrangements would forestall a premature disclosure of the planned discussions by the press.[2] It had been evident from the outset that he regarded secrecy as being imperative in establishing the naval liaison. After considering various possibilities the President eventually supported a suggestion put forward by Lindsay calling for a visit of a specially selected naval officer, travelling incognito, to the United States, and for meetings to take place at a secret location between the representatives of the U.S. Navy Department and the Admiralty delegate.[3] By 10 May

[1] Minute by Stanhope, P.D. 07577/39, 26 Apr. 1939, Adm 116/3922.

[2] All correspondence on this matter is contained within Adm 116/3922. Roosevelt's final refusal to hold conversations in London is recorded in Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 210, 11 May 1939, Adm 116/3922.

[3] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 131, 24 May 1939, Adm 116/3922.

1939 Commander Hampton had emerged as the ideal choice for this top secret mission and his appointment was confirmed twelve days later in a telegram sent by the Foreign Office to Lindsay.[1] On the same day Danckwerts sent Hampton his secret orders which he was instructed to destroy before setting sail for Canada. Hampton was told that after reaching Canada he was to proceed directly to Baltimore. On arrival he was to get in touch with the Naval Attaché in Washington who would inform him of the arrangements made for the naval conferences.

> The principal object of your conversations with the U.S.A. authorities will be to explain how the altered situation in Europe has affected our ability to send a large fleet to the Far East, if Japan intervenes in a war in which Germany and Italy are allied against us.
> The initiative for proposing any form of combined strategy must rest with the Americans. Should they raise this question you should point out:-
> (i) That we should prefer that their main naval pre-occupation should be in the Pacific; Singapore would be made available for their use if desired.
> (ii) That we should welcome such assistance from cruiser forces in the Western Atlantic as they can afford.[2]

Hampton was further instructed to make himself familiar with all matters in the Naval War Memoranda dealing with a Far Eastern war, and also with the arrangements made for the protection of Britain's transatlantic trade, before embarking on his secret mission.

While the Admiralty were engaged on completing the details of the naval staff conversations, a report on

[1] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 237, F4519/G, 22 May 1939, FO 371/23561.

[2] Danckwerts to Hampton, 22 May 1939, FO 371/23561.

American Defence Policies was being examined in the Foreign Office. In tracing the development of U.S. naval policy from the Washington Conference and the decision to create a 5:5:3 ratio of naval power, the author, David H. Popper, stated that it was a generally accepted axiom that a fleet loses as much as perhaps 40% of its effectiveness in operating across an ocean thousands of miles from its base. He asserted it was for this reason that the ratio had been selected in order to give Japan security in her Home waters against any possible enemy. Popper stated that the total strength, built, building and planned of the Axis powers was not greater than thirty capital ships, while that of the United States was twenty three. This suggested that although the United States would in the future possess sufficient capital ships to operate defensively in both oceans should the necessity arise, they would not command the 2:1 predominance necessary for reasonable expectation of successful single-handed offensive action against Japan. Leahy had already admitted that the new construction bill for 1938 would have had to be three times higher than it was in order for this to be achieved. In the absence of such a large two ocean navy the most vital mission of the fleet was considered to be the control of maritime communications and the conduct of operations, if necessary, as far as possible from the American coast in order to bring hostilities to a successful conclusion by defeating the enemy navy at sea. Popper considered that the proposal for a naval frontier in the mid-Pacific,

beyond which American forces would not be permitted to operate, would destroy the very basis of American naval policy and was resolutely opposed by the Navy Department.[1]

But at a time when the neutrality debate was gathering momentum in Congress and bringing forth further expressions of hostility from the isolationists, the constraints on building a large navy were obvious. Roosevelt, in particular, was careful not to draw the fire of his opponents by making extensive demands for naval construction. In requesting the allocation of funds for two battleships, two cruisers, eight destroyers and eight submarines, together with the modernization of five old battleships, he could reasonably claim that this programme was needed for the purposes of hemisphere defence rather than as the basis for any foreign expedition.[2]

In some ways the Japanese played into the hands of the President's opponents by trying to improve their relations with the Americans at the expense of driving a wedge between Britain and the United States. Craigie reported on 23 May that the plan was already beginning to show signs of succeeding, and that Ambassador Grew had recently become averse to putting pressure on the Japanese to improve matters in China. In a minute drafted in the Foreign Office on 25 May Dening wrote:

[1] D.H. Popper, American Defence Policies, Foreign Policy Reports, A3478/1292/45, 1 May 1939, FO 371/22830.

[2] S. Pelz, The Race to Pearl Harbor (Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1974), p.205.

> We can never be sure, therefore, however much we lag, that we may not eventually have to walk alone. It may not be nice to walk alone, and we would much prefer to have our American companion to hold our hand, to which end we will make every effort; but we must, I think, accustom ourselves to the possible necessity for an isolated step forward. It is curiously the most likely way of encouraging America to follow.[1]

N.B. Ronald agreed that the USA was like the Deity in that they both have a tendency to help those who help themselves. Halifax was certainly influenced by both these minutes as his message to Craigie shows on 1 June. In this cable the Foreign Secretary agreed with the British Ambassador that it would not impair the usefulness of the USA in preventing the deterioration in Anglo-Japanese relations, if the Roosevelt Government took a strong line in defending their interests in China. However, he stressed that if they did register a protest with the Japanese, it must be of their own volition and at a time convenient to them rather than as a result of any pressure applied by the British. This being so Halifax fully endorsed Dening's minute and using the same simile remarked that the British must accustom themselves to having to take any future initiative on their own.[2] Craigie did not agree that this was the best policy to follow at a time when the official American attitude to Japan was weakening. He thought that if it hardened again in the near future a step forward could be risked

[1] Minute by Dening, F4981/1236/23, 25 May 1939, FO 371/23568.

[2] Halifax to Craigie, No. 135, 1 June 1939, D.B.F.P., 3, IX.

with a reasonable expectation that the United States would follow the lead given them by the British.[1] Despite the signs that American participation in a future war was as remote a possibility as ever, Ambassador Bruce, who had just returned from a visit to the United States, thought that there would be a much better chance of obtaining it if the situation in the Far East deteriorated badly and resulted in war between Japan and the allies. In his opinion, the strength of isolationism would prevent the Americans from entering a purely European affair, but whether it would do so in the Pacific was another matter. This was traditionally an area of American interest and involvement and war in this theatre could impel the Americans to enter it immediately or soon after the commencement of hostilities.[2]

Judged from the mood of Congress on the neutrality bill, this conclusion seemed unduly optimistic, even though the unqualified success of the Royal visit undoubtedly served to increase sympathy for the allied cause. Ronald summed up the Foreign Office view in a message to Louis Roché on 10 June 1939. He explained that the U.S. Government had repeatedly made it clear that in view of the isolationist opposition they had to confine themselves to parallel rather than joint action on Far Eastern affairs. Ronald described how the British

[1] Craigie to Halifax, No. 150, 5 June 1939, D.B.F.P.,3,IX.
[2] Minute by Ronald, F4981/1236/23, 26 May 1939, FO 371/23568.

had reduced to a minimum the number of formal approaches to the State Department on these matters and how they had come to rely instead on securing American support through informal exchanges between the U.S. and British Ambassadors at Tokyo and Shanghai and between the United States and British naval commanders on the China Station.[1]

Meanwhile in the United States an exception to this local liaison was about to be set in motion. In accordance with his instructions, Commander Hampton had slipped unobtrusively into Canada over a week before and only after the departure of the Royal couple were arrangements made for his meeting with Admiral Leahy, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Ghormley, the American Director of Plans, and Captain L.C.A. Curzon-Howe, the British Naval Attaché at Washington. Such were the demands of secrecy that to Hampton's knowledge only two other American officials knew of his visit in addition to those present at the meetings, the two in question being the President and Sumner Welles.[2] At their first meeting on 12 June Hampton gave Leahy, Ghormley and Curzon-Howe a full account of Cunningham's paper on the despatch of a fleet to the Far East which had been considered by the Strategic Appreciation Committee on 14 April. He repeated the conclusion reached

[1] Ronald to Louis Roché, F5329/4027/61, 10 June 1939, FO 371/23568.

[2] Hampton to Danckwerts, P.D. 07577/39, 27 June 1939, Adm 116/3922.

by the D.C.N.S. that it was not possible to state at what stage a fleet would be sent to the Far East, if Japan intervened in a war on the side of Germany and Italy, nor to enumerate precisely the number of capital ships that could be spared for this purpose.[1] It was pointed out that the strategical situation was different from that under discussion when Ingersoll had visited London in January 1938. Leahy, in reply, confined his remarks to the situation which would arise if Britain and France were engaged in a European war in which the United States remained neutral.

> He said that in the event of war in Europe he thought that it was the present intention of the President that the U.S. Fleet should be moved to Hawaii as a deterrent to Japan. He expressed the opinion that the Japanese would be unlikely to embark on large scale operations against either Australia or New Zealand while the United States Fleet based on Hawaii was in a position to interrupt their lines of communication. He agreed, however, that the U.S. Fleet at Hawaii was not in a position to conduct naval operations in the vicinity of Japan.[2]

It became clear that it was the United States' intention to establish air patrols for the protection of neutral shipping in the Caribbean and in the approaches to the Panama Canal, together with a naval patrol of four long range cruisers between the East coast of South America and the USA.[3] The importance of this disclosure lay in the possibility that information

[1] Hampton to Danckwerts, P.D. 07577/39, 27 June 1939, Adm 116/3922.
[2] Hampton to Danckwerts, Appendix 1, P.D. 07577/39, 27 June 1939, Adm 116/3922.
[3] ibid.

gleaned by these patrols might be passed on to the British naval forces in the Atlantic via the Navy Department in Washington.

Hampton felt that Leahy was reluctant to commit himself beyond this and did not press him for a statement about the naval plans of the United States in the event of an Anglo-American alliance being arranged in the future. He suspected that Leahy's hesitancy and unwillingness to put anything into writing in the form of a record of their meeting was due to the fear of compromising himself and to the difficulty of evading any future Congressional interrogation which might take place.[1]

At their second meeting on 14 June Hampton distributed signal books, together with codes and cyphers used by the Royal Navy. This would enable the Americans to cooperate with their British counterparts throughout the world in case of future necessity. Despite his earlier reluctance to be drawn on any naval cooperation with Britain which might occur in the event of war against a Triple Alliance, Leahy was asked for his personal view of what steps the United States might be prepared to take in supporting Britain and her allies in warfare.[2] Stressing that his opinion should not be considered as part of any settled war plan, Leahy said that he believed the U.S. Fleet should control the Pacific and the British and French Fleets should control European waters, the Medi-

[1] Hampton to Danckwerts, Appendix 1, P.D. 07577/39, 27 June 1939, Adm 116/3922.
[2] ibid.

terranean and the Atlantic. He went on to say that those American naval units already in the Atlantic should be allowed to remain there and cooperate with the British Navy.[1] According to Hampton, Leahy proceeded to explain his ideas about the U.S. Navy's role in the Pacific:

> The U.S. Fleet should move to Singapore in sufficient force to be able to engage and defeat the Japanese Fleet if met with on passage. Admiral Leahy considered that at least 10 capital ships would be required in the Far East. He was strongly opposed to the despatch of small or weak forces to Singapore. In his opinion the question of whether the U.S. Fleet would actually be despatched depended to a certain extent on the size of the fleet which we could spare to cooperate with them. Public opinion in the United States would, he thought, be adverse to sending the Fleet to assist us unless we could despatch an adequate token force to cooperate. He could not define in detail what would be considered an "adequate token force" since it must depend on circumstances at the time, but he was of the opinion that some capital ships would be expected.[2]

Leahy stated that the U.S. Naval Staff had no detailed plans for such an eventuality although the matter was under examination. He felt that the period before relief of 90 days for Singapore was insufficient and suggested that it should be at least 120 days, if the relief of the fortress was to depend upon the arrival of the U.S. Fleet. As far as the unification of the two forces under a single command structure was concerned, with British forces in the Far East being under the strategical control of the U.S. Commander-in-Chief, Leahy agreed that this would have to be decided by the two Governments at

[1] Hampton to Danckwerts, Appendix 1, P.D. 07577/39, 27 June 1939, Adm 116/3922.

[2] ibid.

the time. He also said that convoy coordination would be another topic which could usefully be deferred until the United States entered the war.[1]

In discussing other matters of interest to the British, Leahy referred to the fact that an arrangement existed whereby the most important countries of South America would simultaneously declare war together with the United States, if ever the President was driven to take such a step. He also disclosed that the Americans regarded the Philippines in much the same way as the British thought of Hong Kong. In other words, while they intended to hold on to the islands for as long as possible, they realised the difficulty of relieving them in the event of war. For this reason, if for no other, the U.S. Navy did not expect to be able to base its fleet at Manila.[2]

In commenting upon the exchange of information, Hampton wrote in his report to Danckwerts that though the practical results of his mission were disappointing, he was convinced that Leahy was warmly appreciative of the action taken in sending a naval officer to Washington to inform him personally of the latest developments in British naval strategical thought.[3] While it was evident that the U.S. Navy had no detailed plans prepared for active cooperation with the British Fleet in war, the

[1] Hampton to Danckwerts, Appendix 1, P.D. 07577/39, 27 June 1939, Adm 116/3922.
[2] ibid.
[3] ibid.

Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff thought that the idea that an American Fleet would go to Singapore was a great advance on the discussions he had had with Captain Ingersoll in January 1938.[1] Leahy's suggestion that the British would need to send a token fleet to Singapore to satisfy the requirements of U.S. public opinion was considered by Phillips to mean a force of two or three battleships. If the Americans would be prepared to go as far as their C.N.O. had gone on this issue, it would clearly be a powerful endorsement of the flying squadron concept and a real incentive to implement such a scheme. As a committed Anglophile, Leahy was well known for his attachment to the British and support for a more forceful policy against the Japanese in the Pacific. His retirement as C.N.O. was imminent, however, and so what influence he would have on U.S. naval policy was strictly limited. Despite the fact that no commitments had been made as a result of the Hampton mission, Danckwerts still regarded the visit as being a valuable exercise in furthering Anglo-American naval relations.[2] Nonetheless, it is difficult not to reach the conclusion that because of the strength of isolationism the Roosevelt Administration would be unable to offer the democracies any direct assistance in the foreseeable future.

Unbeknown to the British, however, the U.S. Joint

[1] Minute by T.S.V. Phillips (D.C.N.S.), P.D. 07577/39, 29 June 1939, Adm 116/3922.

[2] Minute by Danckwerts, P.D. 07577/39, 28 June 1939, Adm 116/3922.

Planning Committee were soon to make amends on this score. On 23 June 1939 they proposed another Rainbow War Plan, later to be called Rainbow No. 2, which sought to provide for a situation in which the United States would be fighting a war on the same side as Britain and France, possibly with Russian participation as well, against Germany, Italy and Japan combined. The Joint Planning Committee noted that in such a war the USA would have to assume the greater part of the naval and military effort required in carrying out the tasks of the democratic powers in the Pacific. It was believed that this would necessitate a major and immediate naval effort in the Pacific which would require very great logistic support. The aims of the new plan were to provide a limited participation of American forces in continental Europe, where the British and the French would be expected to shoulder the burden of fighting, but to concentrate largely U.S. forces in the Pacific so as to conduct offensive operations against the enemy in order to defeat and prevent them from taking allied possessions. This proposal was submitted to the Joint Board and was approved on 30 June. It was only in July, therefore, that a war plan emerged which dealt with a situation of the United States actually acting in concert with another major power to resist the Axis.[1] There is no evidence to suggest that Hampton's mission was instrumental in repairing what was clearly a

[1] J.B. Serial No. 642, J.B. File No. 325, 1938-39.

deficiency in the war plans which had been devised or were evolving prior to his visit. On the contrary, the Joint Planning Committee seem to have found that the directives which they had been given were too narrow for the purpose of formulating a comprehensive and effective series of war plans. They had been hampered by the Joint Board's basic assumption that in every contingency the democracies would be sympathetically neutral and that the United States would, therefore, be obliged to act alone in resisting the combined might of the Axis forces. It is clear from the available evidence that the J.P.C. had tried to work within the framework of the Joint Board's directives before seeking permission from them to make the substantial amendments necessary to create the Rainbow 2 War Plan.[1] In retrospect, it appears rather naive and unrealistic to have believed that the British and the French would not have gone to the aid of the Americans had they been engaged in a war against the Axis. Moreover, the situation in Europe was such that the allies were much more likely to become involved in war against Germany and Italy before any American entry would occur. Consequently, the original frame of reference was too restrictive. It was only after Rainbow 2 had been developed that the USA possessed a strategic war plan which took account of the sort of assistance that they could currently expect to receive from their potential allies.

[1] J.B. Serial No. 642, J.B. File No. 325, 1938-39.

The French were most keen to clear up any misunderstandings on this issue and suggested to the Admiralty that they ought to consider inviting the Americans to send a delegation to the Anglo-French staff conversations which were set to take place at Singapore on 22 June. In a minute drafted by the Director of Plans, the point was made that though desirable, American representation at the talks was politically impossible at this stage.[1] Support for the presence of an American warship at Singapore for the duration of the conference, however, was canvassed by both Danckwerts and T.S.V. Phillips and approved by Stanhope, who added cautiously that it would be unwise to press the Americans strongly for fear that they might abandon their more helpful attitude if they thought the British were expecting too much from them.[2] In a letter to Victor Perowne of the Foreign Office, Danckwerts wrote:

> I do not imagine, however, that it would be possible to ask U.S.A. authorities to send a ship to Singapore at a particular date without explaining the reason for selecting that date, which might make the proposition repugnant to the U.S.A. Government for the same reasons that participation in staff conversations is not politically acceptable to them. Nevertheless, we would not like to leave any stone unturned to demonstrate in the Far East the essential friendliness of our relations with the U.S.A.[3]

Perowne telegraphed Lindsay on 14 June referring to

[1] Minute by Director of Plans, M. 05370/39, 10 June 1939, Adm 116/3767.

[2] Note by D.C.N.S., 12 June, and First Lord of the Admiralty, 13 June 1939, on Director of Plans minute M. 05370/39, Adm 116/3767.

[3] Admiralty Plans Division to Perowne (Foreign Office), 13 June 1939, Adm 116/3767.

the conference on local defence measures at Singapore and the possibility of obtaining American participation with a view to impressing the Japanese with what would look like Anglo-American-Franco solidarity in the Far East. Failing this, the British Ambassador was asked to consider suggesting to the United States Government whether they would agree to arrange for a warship and preferably a cruiser to pay a naval visit to Singapore.[1] Lindsay took up the suggestion at once and saw the Under-Secretary of State about the possibilities of an American show of support for the allies at Singapore. Welles thought the offer would be rejected because it would have a fatal effect on Congress. He consented, however, to inform the President and agreed to let Lindsay know within twelve hours if Roosevelt thought something could be done about it. Not surprisingly, the Ambassador heard nothing more from Welles before the time limit expired.[2]

Although nearly six weeks had elapsed since the C.I.D. had advised the Government to keep the Americans fully informed about their Far Eastern naval plans a cable was eventually sent on 14 June to Lindsay for communication to the Roosevelt Administration. It was designed to demonstrate the extent of the problem facing the British in deciding upon the balance and order of priorities in their naval policy.[3] Although Hampton's discussions with

[1] Perowne to Lindsay, No. 263, 14 June 1939, Adm 116/3767.
[2] Lindsay to Halifax, No. 261, 15 June 1939, Adm 116/3767.
[3] Ashton-Gwatkin to Lindsay, No. 585, 14 June 1939, Adm 116/3767.

Leahy were to cover much the same ground, the Foreign Office telegram was not entirely superfluous. Apart from repeating the fact that the British were not equipped to deal with three naval powers simultaneously, the cable went on to state that the Government had reached the conclusion that in a war against Germany, Italy and Japan they would be obliged to maintain a sufficient force in Home and Mediterranean waters to give them a margin of superiority over the joint fleets of their two European enemies. In addition, they would still endeavour to despatch a fleet to the Far East, but the size and timing of the operation would have to be decided in the light of the strategical situation.[1] In these circumstances the attitude and naval dispositions of the American Fleet would be of cardinal importance. This was why they were taking the trouble of informing the United States Government confidentially of the difficulty which they would face if they were involved in a three front war. By the time Lindsay had received this message Hampton had already succeeded in gathering a fair amount of privileged information from his conversations with Leahy and Ghormley. Lindsay was to make an oblique reference to this fact later in the month when explaining why he was not prepared to raise the matter once again

[1] Ashton-Gwatkin to Lindsay, No. 585, 14 June 1939, Adm 116/3767.

with the Americans for fear of embarrassing them.[1]

Despite the formation of the Pact of Steel between Germany and Italy in May 1939, the European situation was overshadowed by the crisis which broke out in the Far East in the middle of June. Matters had been growing steadily worse since the murder of a Japanese appointed official at Tientsin on 9 April. Although four Chinese suspects had been detained in connection with the murder, the British had consistently refused all requests to hand over the men to the Japanese military unless prima facie evidence of their complicity in the crime had been established. While the British diplomats bickered amongst themselves on what was the best policy to pursue on this issue, the frustration and hostility of the Japanese increased as the deadlock continued. Eventually the Japanese seized the initiative and on 14 June began their blockade of the entrances to the International Concession at Tientsin. Few incidents could have illustrated the plight of the British more vividly than this action in China. By failing to satisfy the Japanese, the British were now exposed to danger of war in both the Far East and in Europe simultaneously. It was this critical threat which the Prime Minister had striven for so long to avoid. While he reacted to the news with dismay, blaming the Foreign Office for allowing the crisis

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 286, 28 June 1939, Adm 116/3767.

to develop, Chamberlain admitted that the behaviour of the Japanese had been increasingly insolent and aggressive for a long time, and the Tientsin incident was only the culmination of successive acts of provocation. As for seeking a resolution of the crisis, he thought that if the Americans would consent to join the British in dealing with the matter it would be swiftly and successfully concluded. Unfortunately, he saw little chance of the Roosevelt Government agreeing to any joint policy at a time when their attention was concentrated upon the revision of the U.S. Neutrality Act.[1]

Although the outcome may have been predictable, there was no harm in trying to enlist American support and Halifax wasted no time in asking Lindsay to discover what the Roosevelt Administration's policy would be in the Tientsin dispute.[2] Since the United States had no vital interests in this city and as they were already struggling to convince the Congress of the wisdom of amending the existing neutrality legislation, the Foreign Secretary did not really expect them to come to the aid of the British actively in the Far East. The most he could have hoped for was an agreement to move the U.S. Fleet

[1] For Chamberlain's personal opinion about the Tientsin crisis see his letters to his sisters Hilda and Ida and especially those classified as NC 18/1/1103, (17 June 1939), NC 18/1/1104, (25 June 1939), NC 18/1/1105, (2 July 1939), NC 18/1/1107, (15 July 1939) and NC 18/1/1110, (30 July 1939).

[2] Halifax to Lindsay, No. 210, 15 June 1939, D.B.F.P.,3,VIII.

from its present base at San Diego to Honolulu, in the expectation that this sign of American concern would not be lost on the Japanese and might even possibly deter them launching any full scale attack on foreign interests. It was reasoned that if the Japanese suspected that the Americans were not indifferent to the fate of other nations, and could intervene at any stage to prevent them from securing a military domination of the entire region, they would be far more restrained than if no such implicit threat to their ambitions existed. Sound though the theory may have been, the chance of success was contingent upon the Americans being willing to undertake this task of transferring their fleet and virtually putting it on a limited mobilization footing.

At a meeting on 16 June to discuss the Far Eastern policy of the United States, the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull was informed that in the opinion of the leading military and naval authorities the foreign concessions in China could not be defended, if the Japanese chose to force the issue. They also agreed that if the British were the first to be pushed out of China it would not be too long before the Japanese dealt with the French and the Americans. Although aware of the dangers of failing to respond positively to the increasing Japanese pressure on Tientsin, the Americans appreciated the enormity of tackling the crisis. They knew, for instance, that the British could not afford to send a large capital ship fleet to the Far East without incurring grave risks to their position in Europe and that they would only decide

upon the composition of the force to be sent when war with Japan became unavoidable. This meant, in effect, that the British looked to the Americans to police the Far East on their behalf. Although the Americans may have suspected as much, Hampton's mission and the latest Foreign Office cable had confirmed it beyond all reasonable doubt. Several objections could be raised against such a policy, however, the principal one being that it might easily involve the United States in fighting virtually a single-handed war against Japan, a commitment which many felt the American public would not be prepared to support at this time. Hull's natural impulse was to prefer caution to adventure and this sentiment was echoed within a few days by the newly appointed Chief of Staff, General Marshall. An agreement was quickly reached, therefore, that the United States would politely resist any invitation given them by the British to conduct affairs in the Far East in favour of maintaining their current posture as sympathetic onlookers.[1]

Despite their obvious reluctance to become engaged in controversy or in potential sources of conflict, the Americans were not prepared to be treated with impunity by the Japanese and refused to comply with a request for all foreign warships to leave the port of Swatow after its fall to the Japanese on 21 June. Admiral Yarnell made it clear that U.S. warships would remain in China as long

[1] W.L. Langer & S.E. Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation 1937-40 (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1952), pp.152-3.

as American citizens were in need of protection and assistance.[1]

In Britain the Chiefs of Staff were called upon by Lord Chatfield to draw up a paper for urgent consideration by the Foreign Policy Committee of the Cabinet on the naval implications of a war with Japan arising out of the current unrest in Tientsin. Their message made depressing, if familiar, reading. Because of the unsettled European situation and the need to retain a large proportion of the fleet in Home and Mediterranean waters, the COS declared that the British could only afford to send a maximum of two capital ships to the Far East. This limited token force was advocated despite the acknowledgement that a fleet of eight capital ships would be necessary if it had to contend with and resist the anticipated southward offensive by the Japanese Navy. Since the despatch of such a large force was believed to be quite unacceptable in the light of the existing threat formed by the European Axis, the Cabinet was advised to refrain from provoking the Japanese into declaring war. If this advice went unheeded and war resulted, the British would have to despatch the small and inadequate capital ship contingent to Singapore; where, without active American naval cooperation, it could do little, if faced by the whole weight of the enemy's fleet, to prevent the fall of the fortress.

1 Lindsay to Halifax, No. 258, Footnote 3, 24 June 1939, D.B.F.P., 3, IX.

It was admitted that the situation would be completely altered, if the United States were willing to provide active support for the British. If this occurred the Chiefs thought that the reinforcement of the China Fleet by two capital ships would be a proper strategic measure to adopt.[1]

When the Foreign Policy Committee met on 19 June the strategic situation dominated their discussions. Chatfield pointed out that on no account should Britain do anything to endanger her position in the decisive home theatre where she must retain at least six capital ships. He thought it was possible, however, to approach the United States with the suggestion that they were prepared to send four capital ships to the Far East but would like to know what action the Americans would take if the British got into trouble. In discussing the possibility of American support, Halifax mentioned that he had telephoned Kennedy before coming to the meeting telling him that in view of the uncertainty of the European situation there seemed little that the British could do in the Far East unless the United States joined in with them. Kennedy had promised to contact Roosevelt and let the Foreign Secretary know what, if anything, the President was willing to do to help in resolving the Tientsin dispute. The Prime Minister, however, held out little hope that the Americans would feel able to assist the

[1] COS Paper 928, The Situation in the Far East, 18 June 1939, Cab 27/627.

British in mediation at this time and urged his colleagues to reach a settlement with the Japanese on the most favourable terms obtainable.[1] His statement seemed to imply an acceptance of some measure of appeasement providing not too much had to be given up to satisfy the Japanese. This was in line with the recommendations of the service chiefs who recognised the danger of taking retaliatory action against Japan with only eleven capital ships in full commission and who had themselves judged as doubtful the chances of receiving help from the U.S. Navy in the Far East. Even so Halifax was not prepared to accept the argument that there was no solution available other than appeasement or military action. His point was that just because the Americans might reject the request for a mediatory role in the crisis over Tientsin it was not certain they would also refuse to participate in a future war against Japan. This new found confidence in the Americans stemmed largely from his conversations with Kennedy which had led him to expect that an American entry into war was not as remote a possibility as many of his colleagues seemed to think. While it is true that he did not expect them to come in on the allied side immediately hostilities began, he believed that action by the Japanese could draw them into it subsequently. In the meantime he considered that they still held the key

[1] Foreign Policy Committee 52nd meeting, 19 June 1939, Cab 27/625.

to Britain's strategic problems in the Far East. Cooperation, if only of a passive nature, would help strengthen the chances of avoiding hostilities with Japan and thus prevent Britain from having to choose between despatching a large capital ship fleet to Singapore and virtually denuding the Mediterranean, or sending a much smaller force with the possibility that it might prove to be insufficient to prevent the loss of her position in the Far East.

If all this seemed like wishful thinking, Kennedy's reply did not help to correct the impression. Chamberlain was not unduly surprised by the negative response of the Roosevelt Administration on the question of mediation and at the Foreign Policy Committee meeting on 20 June he took up Chatfield's gloomy assessment that the British could send an effective fleet to the Far East only at the cost of abandoning their position in the Mediterranean. He believed this was a conclusive argument in favour of reaching an early settlement of the Tientsin crisis and remained convinced that the British should only be prepared to run the risk of sending a fleet to the Far East if Japan made their position in the area quite intolerable.[1] He made his attitude clear in a letter to his sister Ida on 25 June 1939.

[1] FP(36) 53rd meeting, 20 June 1939, Cab 27/625.

> It is maddening to have to hold our hands in face of such humiliations but we cannot ignore the terrible risks of putting such temptations in Hitler's way.[1]

His proposal for what amounted to qualified appeasement had been decided upon at a Cabinet meeting on 21 June in response to the refusal of the United States to undertake any joint initiative with Britain in the Far East and in view of the fact that embarking on any measures of retaliation might involve them in having to send out a battle fleet to Singapore at a time when it could be strategically inadvisable.[2]

This decision was supported by Ambassador Kennedy in conversation with Halifax a few days later. While applauding the Cabinet's wisdom in coming to what he saw as a realistic conclusion, Kennedy was careful not to rule out the possibility of active mutual assistance in the future. He thought that much would ultimately depend upon the extent to which the United States were either directly affected by any serious event happening in the Far East or indirectly threatened as, for example, in a German attack on Britain. In conveying the essence of the interview to Lindsay, Halifax wrote:

> As things stood today, Mr. Kennedy had no doubt in his mind that we should be wrong to weaken our position in Europe by sending a substantial fleet to the Far East, though he did not in any way underestimate the damage that was being inflicted on our prestige by the present state of affairs,

[1] N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Ida, 25 June 1939, NC 18/1/1104.

[2] Cab.meeting 33(39), 21 June 1939, Cab 23/100.

> for which it was obviously not in our power to find direct remedy.[1]

Despite his ambassadorial status, Kennedy was hardly the most reliable or satisfactory spokesman for his Government. His sympathies were often at variance with official policy and his trenchant support of appeasement and close association with the Cliveden Set made him a distrusted and somewhat isolated figure in the Roosevelt Administration. His support for what in the interests of short term expediency could easily become a high cost settlement, if the Japanese behaved as the Germans had done over Czechoslovakia, was countered by the warning delivered by Lindsay against indulging in another bout of appeasement.

Lindsay had wired the Foreign Secretary with the news that not only were the United States most inclined to help those who were self-reliant; they would also be strongly opposed to the British reaching a settlement with the Japanese on the principle of peace at any price.[2] Lindsay's advice reflected the current dilemma which the British faced in trying to gain the support of the United States for their policy in the Far East. It appeared that the Roosevelt Government expected the British to take a strong stand against the Japanese, despite the fact that this policy was potentially hazardous for them.

[1] Halifax to Lindsay, No. 270, 27 June 1939, D.B.F.P.,3,IX.
[2] Lindsay to Halifax, No. 264, 26 June 1939, D.B.F.P.,3,IX.

He inferred that should Chamberlain's Government decide in the absence of United States support to cut their losses temporarily in the Far East and concentrate instead on European problems, American foreign policy might revert to its earlier extremely isolationist position. There seemed little room for the British to manoeuvre in this situation. The crux of the problem was that the British could not afford to do nothing and yet whatever they did would stand the chance of offending the very powers they wished to placate.

American unwillingness to become actively involved with the British Navy in the Far East had already been reluctantly accepted as an established fact by the Chiefs of Staff. They had worked on this premise in preparing their material for the C.I.D. meeting on 26 June. In their paper the C.O.S. had come out against sending only a flying squadron to the Far East and had asserted that for the purposes of supporting any measures of economic retaliation which the Government might be forced to implement, seven capital ships would have to be despatched to Singapore to cover the possibility of a future naval action against the full Japanese Fleet.[1] Chamberlain had no hesitation in accepting this recommendation or their assumption that neither the USA nor Russia were likely to supply any ships for the naval

[1] C.I.D. 362nd meeting, 26 June 1939, Cab 2/9.

force which would have to be established at Singapore. In his opinion, experience had taught him that the best way of obtaining anything from the Americans was not to ask for it.[1]

For once even the French were prepared to accept that American policy was too passive and inert to do anything towards assisting the allies in any attempt they might make to reinforce Singapore. At the Anglo-French Naval, Military and Air Force Conference at Singapore the delegates agreed that in the event of war breaking out either in Europe or in the Far East or both, the United States would probably maintain an attitude of benevolent neutrality unless provoked in some way to cast aside this role in favour of direct intervention. Admiral Decoux, the French Naval Commander-in-Chief in the Far East, did not despair of their eventually honouring their obligations under the Washington Treaty of 1922, especially if the Japanese attitude became more offensive, but he acknowledged the likelihood that at least initially the allies would have to do without the Americans.[2]

It was fortunate that the British did not expect a great deal of help from the Americans, because the idea of sending the U.S. Fleet from San Diego to Pearl Harbour, a suggestion being canvassed by the Minister for Coordination of Defence, was to be rejected by the State

[1] C.I.D. 362nd meeting, 26 June 1939, Cab 2/9.
[2] Report on Anglo-French Naval Military and Air Force Conference at Singapore, 22-27 June 1939, Adm 93/1939, Adm 1/10128.

Department.[1] President Roosevelt eventually disclosed how far the United States were prepared to go in assisting the British at a secret meeting to which Ambassador Lindsay was summoned on 30 June. The President began by stating that in the event of war in which the United States would be neutral, he believed his Government should establish a naval patrol in the Western Atlantic with a view to denying this part of the ocean to the war-like operations of belligerent powers. He went on to explain that the U.S. naval manoeuvres of the previous winter had been designed on this basis. As a scheme it was thought to have one obvious benefit for the British, namely, the release of a number of their ships from convoy work for reassignment to other duties. For this the Americans hoped to secure the use of British bases in Trinidad, St. Lucia, Bermuda and Halifax upon whose facilities, it was argued, the patrol's efficiency would depend to a significant extent. Roosevelt even suggested that the bases should be made available to the U.S. Navy in peacetime so as to reduce the element of controversy, if and when war came.[2] This was a typical piece of contorted Roosevelt logic. His point was unconvincing and looked as though it had been made in order to secure a definite short term advantage in return for the implementation of a scheme which he could not even guarantee would take place. Once the news became known, whether in peacetime

[1] Langer & Gleason, op.cit., p.153.

[2] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 293, 30 June 1939, Adm 116/3922.

or in war, there was bound to be heated argument and considerable criticism from the isolationists, who would see the use of non-American bases as forming a clear association with a likely belligerent, while at the same time endangering and infringing the neutrality of the United States.

Nevertheless, the British Government rapidly agreed to the American proposal, although it was not the first time that the use by the U.S. Navy of British possessions in the West Indies and the Caribbean had been requested. Roosevelt had discussed the possibility with King George VI earlier in the month and Ambassador Lindsay had raised the matter with the Foreign Office a few weeks before the Royal Visit, when proposing a possible transfer of some islands to the Americans in settlement of the outstanding War Debt. A minute written on 11 May records the Foreign Office asking for the Admiralty's comments on such a proposal.[1] In reply, the Director of Plans had written that the surrender of any territory, even to a friendly power, would be most undesirable. He thought that it would lead to a considerable loss of prestige and act as a direct incentive to the Axis Powers to press their colonial demands on both the British and the French. If these were considered insufficient grounds for refusal, Danckwerts believed that the demands of strategy should

[1] Minute by C. Wallworth, M05537/39, 11 May 1939, Adm 1/9784.

be such as to rule out the idea of giving up either Trinidad or Jamaica, both of which were islands of real value.[1] S.H. Phillips, a Principal Assistant Secretary at the Admiralty, recalled in a minute written on 7 June that Lindsay had originally mentioned the proposal because of the fear felt by some Americans that the British Empire might be destroyed in a European war. It was thought that if this happened those possessions it held off the coast of the Americas could fall into the hands of an aggressive power and so become a source of menace to the security of the Panama Canal. This in turn had bred the disquieting feeling among members of the Administration that the United States were not perhaps as safe as they had been in the past or so immune from events going on elsewhere. Lindsay had suggested that this sense of insecurity might lead to the transfer proposal being considered in what were termed responsible circles. Phillips concluded:

> This is all exceedingly problematical, and if there is a likelihood of the United States attempting to continue an isolationist policy even in such circumstances, there is no reason why we should make it easier for her by ceding our West Indian and West Atlantic bases to her beforehand. One would hope, however, that if matters came to such a pitch that British overseas possessions were in danger of falling into enemy hands, the United States would feel constrained to step into the war in order to meet what must be a growing threat to herself; failing this, if we still hold our possessions or the greater part of them in the West Atlantic and West Indies, we should hope that the

[1] Minute by Director of Plans, M05537/39, 17 May 1939, Adm 1/9784.

United States would feel herself compelled by the Monroe Doctrine to step in and prevent any occupation of them by the enemy, which would probably come to the same thing in the end.[1]

Phillips' view was supported by his namesake, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, who emphatically agreed that islands of real strategical value should never be given up. Nevertheless, he saw no particular objection to the cession of other less important territory, if it would help to settle the divisive question of Britain's long standing War Debt.[2] Despite the fact that the matter was finally rejected by the Colonial Office only in August, it is clear that President Roosevelt had reached the same conclusion at least two months before. Instead of linking the islands to a settlement of the War Debt, at what was evidently a highly inopportune moment, the Americans, and Roosevelt in particular, sought to modify their proposal to the extent of dropping the War Debt connection altogether in favour of requesting naval rights in the islands for the purpose of assisting the British in a future war. This alteration proved to be very much more acceptable to the British Government than the original suggestion had been and the Foreign Office confirmed this in a cable to Lindsay on 6 July.[3] Since the British still required further details about the

[1] Minute by S.H. Phillips, M05537/39, 7 June 1939, Adm 1/9784.
[2] Minute by T.S.V. Phillips, M05537/39, 13 June 1939, Adm 1/9784.
[3] Foreign Office to Lindsay, No. 321, P.D. 07796/39, 6 July 1939, Adm 116/3922.

patrolling system, Lindsay took up the matter with Welles on the following day. The result was a disappointing anti-climax. Despite the necessity for Anglo-French co-operation, the Under-Secretary of State made it clear that the Americans distrusted the French capacity for maintaining secrecy and therefore were completely opposed to any message about the President's proposal being passed on to the Government in Paris. Moreover, as the House of Representatives was doing its best by passing the Vorys Amendment to hamper Roosevelt's efforts to amend the U.S. Neutrality Act, it was obviously not the time for Welles to be more specific about a plan that went much further than Congress seemed prepared to go in supporting the democracies. After consulting the President, Welles revealed that Roosevelt was emphatically against informing the French about the patrol system.

> At present he is willing to take the first preparatory and requisite steps of requesting facilities in the three ports, but he is not now prepared to make any commitment with regard to the patrol, which would only be brought into existence as a result of some event which would have the requisite effect on public opinion here.[1]

Welles said that belligerent action against commerce carried out close to the American continent by either German surface raiders or Italian submarines would constitute such an event and have an effect on public opinion sufficient for the President's scheme to go into operation. In concluding his interview with Lindsay,

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 304, P.D. 08027/39, 8 July 1939, Adm 116/3922.

Welles handed back the written notes of the questions which the British Ambassador had raised and asked him to promise to burn them and any other copies that might exist so as to minimise the chance of discovery or leakage.[1]

What these interviews at the State Department had exposed was that in barely a week a sudden and dramatic transformation in the President's scheme had occurred and that the British Government could no longer rely on receiving the type of assistance from the Americans at the outset of war that they might have been expecting. At this meeting with Lindsay on 30 June it seemed as if Roosevelt intended to implement his patrol scheme at the beginning of war. But the message which the British Ambassador conveyed to the Foreign Office on 8 July was notably less strident and emphatic in tone and more non-committal and cautious in outlook than his previous despatch on the subject had been. This was not the only time in Roosevelt's second Presidential term that a major foreign policy initiative had undergone such swift change, but it did nothing to reduce the prevailing sense of déjà vu which the British found unmistakably present on these occasions.

It is evident that Roosevelt was prone to making grandiose plans on what seemed to be the spur of the moment and was perhaps guilty of being alternately over-

[1] Lindsay to Foreign Office, No. 304, P.D. 08027/39, 8 July 1939, Adm 116/3922.

enthusiastic and ultra-cautious. He has been accused, quite rightly in my opinion, of occasionally not thinking things through in sufficient detail before speaking his mind and of making a premature disclosure of his plans, with the result that after close scrutiny some had to be substantially modified or dropped altogether. Whether the vague aspects of his naval patrolling system could be attributed to this reason or seen as a deliberate ballon d'essai is difficult to assess. I suspect, however, that Roosevelt, angry and upset by the passing of the Vorys Amendment on the previous evening, was in a determined mood on 30 June, keen to show the British Government that even though the United States would have to remain neutral they would not hesitate to do as much as they could to assist the democracies in the event of war. Unfortunately, his scheme, which bears all the hallmarks of the top secret Rainbow 1 War Plan, while not being scrapped was reshaped and limited to take account of the attitude of Congressional isolationism which threatened to upset the President's plans to aid the Anglo-French forces with all aid short of war.

Whatever the motive for the change in the patrol scheme the likely effects were not lost on the Director of Plans. He drafted a minute on 10 July warning the Admiralty that they would probably have to do without American help at the outbreak of hostilities.[1] Despite

[1] Minute by Danckwerts, P.D. 07796/39, 10 July 1939, Adm 116/3922.

this setback, he still remained relatively optimistic about the long term chances of securing Anglo-American naval collaboration. His contention was that if the British Government permitted the U.S. Navy to use the bases they had requested in Trinidad, St. Lucia and Bermuda the odds were good that should war with the Axis break out an incident would eventually force the Americans to become drawn into the fighting on Britain's side.[1] A week later Welles telephoned Leahy to say that the British authorities in Trinidad and Bermuda were agreeable to the use by the U.S. Navy of the seaplane landing facilities in their jurisdiction.[2]

At another time and if things had been less critical the British might have allowed themselves a measure of righteous indignation over the unimpressive performance of the Roosevelt Government on this issue. On this occasion, however, the departmental castigation is missing. In fact, the Chamberlain Cabinet had already been briefed about the discouraging prospects for a revision of the U.S. neutrality laws before they had replied to the President's offer on 6 July.[3] They knew that the chances of Roosevelt getting his own way on this issue were no better than even and they could not have been very surprised when the crucial Senate Foreign

[1] Minute by Danckwerts, P.D.07796/39, 10 July 1939, Adm 116/3922.
[2] Leahy Diary, Entry for 17 July 1939.
[3] Cab.meeting 35(39), 5 July 1939, Cab 23/100.

Relations vote on 12 July suspended discussion on the neutrality revisions until the next session of Congress.[1] Though they may have been expecting the worst, the British Cabinet were clearly disappointed by the reaction of Congress in defeating both Bloom's and Pittman's attempts to seek a revision of the Neutrality Act. In killing both bills Congress had shown the strength of isolationism that could be amassed on Capitol Hill to restrict the President's power to wage war or to support countries engaged in it.

Three days after the Senate vote had been taken, conversations began in Tokyo between Craigie and Arita aimed at settling the deadlock over Tientsin. Craigie began these discussions knowing that the British Government's Far Eastern naval commitment was expendable, if circumstances deemed it to be so. He also assumed that there was little prospect of receiving any support from Australia or New Zealand and none at all from the United States for implementing any naval measures which could lead to war with the Japanese. In a letter to Halifax, the British Ambassador complained:

> A further important factor is general assumption that in no circumstances can Great Britain hit back - assumption which is above all nurtured by our failure to recover our naval strength in the Far East.[2]

[1] The Admiralty's opinion of the U.S. neutrality legislation is covered in depth by Adm 116/4103.

[2] Craigie to Halifax, No. 322, 15 July 1939, D.B.F.P.,3,IX.

Craigie's point was certainly applicable when Backhouse had been First Sea Lord. He had definitely favoured knocking out Italy before sending the fleet east and his endorsement of the flying squadron principle had confirmed this impression. His successor as Chief of the Naval Staff, Sir Dudley Pound, was noticeably less enthusiastic and more critically sceptical about the plan for dealing with Italy first. In his opinion, without American assistance, Britain could not afford to risk losing any capital ships by engaging Italy in a fleet action, as this would seriously reduce her chances of resisting Axis domination in both Europe and the Far East. He hoped instead that the Cabinet would adopt a policy which would enhance Britain's strategic position by keeping Italy neutral for as long as possible.[1] His lack of sympathy with the Italian plan did not make him any more amenable to the type of policy in the Far East which Craigie had been advocating. Maintaining a capital ship squadron east of Suez at a time of great uncertainty in Europe merely for the purposes of deterrence, when four battleships of the British Fleet were still not fully operational, was tantamount to suicidal folly. This scheme had already been rejected by both the Admiralty and the Cabinet earlier in the year and was hardly likely to be revived by either of them unless

[1] British Museum, MSS. 52560 (Cunningham Papers), Dudley Pound to Cunningham, 24 July 1939.

something went drastically awry in the Far East or if the European situation settled down once again.

On 26 July 1939, shortly after Craigie and Arita had decided on a formula as an interim settlement of the Tientsin crisis, President Roosevelt confounded critics of American policy in the Far East by giving six months' notice of the termination of his country's trading agreement with the Japanese.[1] This unexpected denunciation was said to have reflected the President's concern about the shifting balance of power in the Far East and his thorough disenchantment with Congress and their efforts to limit the focus of American foreign policy and its role overseas. Lindsay was quick to point out, however, that Welles had said it was premature to think that the Roosevelt Administration were considering the implementation of blockading measures against the Japanese or planning to invoke any further drastic action against them. Therefore, rather than being the first in a series of moves designed to impress the Japanese with the strength of United States opposition to their policy in China, Lindsay was left with the feeling that the denunciation could be an end in itself.[2] The problem was that no one could be quite sure what the President's decision actually meant in practice and whether its effects would only be confined to commercial matters or lead to a fundamental change in Far Eastern

[1] The Times, p. 14, 27 July 1939.
[2] Lindsay to Halifax, No. 405, 28 July 1939, D.B.F.P.,3,IX.

affairs with the prospect of an active U.S. presence in the area. It took several days before it became clear that Roosevelt's initiative was intended as a gesture of moral support for those nations resisting the Japanese in their steady encroachment and domination of the Far East.[1]

While the British Government waited for confirmation on this point, Craigie and Arita began the second and more difficult stage of their discussions in Tokyo. By early August these talks had become bogged down and the Americans reacted violently to rumours that the British might be willing to do a deal with the Japanese to break the deadlock and reduce the threat of a Far Eastern war. The British response was swift. Lindsay was instructed on 4 August to refute the allegation that the Government had thought of closing the Burma Road and on the same day Chamberlain took occasion publicly to warn the Japanese Government that the despatch of the British Fleet to the Far East was not out of the question.[2] This in turn drew a sharp retort from Sumner Welles, who was anxious to assure the isolationists that no understanding had been reached between the United States and Britain for joint action in the Orient.[3]

By 7 August Halifax had sufficient information to allow him to make a reasonably accurate summary of American

[1] Lindsay to Halifax, No. 431, 31 July 1939, D.B.F.P., 3,IX.
[2] Hansard (Commons) 5th Series, 1939, col. 2863, 350.
[3] Lindsay to Halifax, No. 468, D.B.F.P., 3, IX.

policy. In a telegram to Craigie the Foreign Secretary stated:

> I share Sir R. Lindsay's doubts as to United States Government having worked out any far-reaching plan or their being ready to contemplate any coercive measure at this moment, but I agree with him that they are likely in the near future to decide their course according to circumstances as they arise, having all the time as a general background a strong anti-Japanese and moderately pro-British bias (provided that our own attitude shows some firmness in dealing with the present situation.)[1]

American perceptions of what was best for the British and acceptable to themselves was bound to complicate the Craigie-Arita negotiations. These already dealt with sufficiently complex and potentially intractable themes that additional considerations were an unwelcome intrusion. Frustrated by the series of setbacks and occasional deadlock which his talks with Arita suffered from, Craigie was to try yet another bold initiative. On 9 August, in a wire to the Foreign Office, the British Ambassador proposed the release of a battle fleet adapted for service in the Far East.[2] He believed that the naval staff arrangements with France, which had been extended to cover the Far East, would put the British in a position to extract the full value from the numerical superiority of the Anglo-French battle fleets over those of Germany, Italy and Japan combined and to assert this superiority in Far Eastern as well as in European waters.

[1] Halifax to Craigie, No. 488, D.B.F.P., 3, IX.
[2] Craigie to Foreign Office, No. 572, F 10045/471/61, 9 Aug. 1939, FO 371/23544.

> I appreciate of course the absolute necessity of maintaining an adequate fleet in being, in view of German air strength and the danger that it might be used in an attaque brusquée, but I cannot help feeling that this object would more probably be achieved if a substantial part of our fleet were maintained in Australian waters or even at Singapore than if our entire strength were to remain concentrated in European waters and exposed to all the dangers of a comparatively short-range air attack.[1]

Resisting the suggestion that Britain concert sanctions or economic reprisals against Japan, Craigie proposed instead that the departure of the Duke and Duchess of Kent for Australia in the autumn could be used as a pretext for sending a battle squadron or, if this was too extreme a measure, a battle cruiser to the Pacific. He also believed that arrangements should be made to prepare Singapone for the eventual reception of a battle fleet.

> Some action on the above lines seems more than ever necessary in view of the denunciation of United States - Japan Trade Agreement. In my considered opinion fleet movements represent in the circumstances of the moment, the only practicable means by which His Majesty's Govemmment can without landing themselves in further serious difficulties with the Japanese Government, demonstrate that they are not lagging behind the United States Government and so take the wind out of those inveterate American critics who proclaim that over Tientsin, as over Manchuria, His Majesty's Government are betraying, in the cause of appeasement, the common interests of both countries in the Far East.[2]

On 9 August, the day that Craigie proposed the sending of a battle fleet to the Far East, the United States Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan, known as

[1] Craigie to Foreign Office, No. 572, F 10045/471/61, 9 Aug. 1939, FO 371/23544.

[2] ibid.

Rainbow 1, was approved by the Joint Board for submission to Acting Secretary of the Navy Charles Edison and Secretary of War George Marshall.[1] Rainbow 1 was one of the five specific plans which had been developed by the Joint Planning Committee to cater for a variety of situations in which the United States might be confronted, if they were engaged in a war against the Axis nations.[2] Rainbow 1 envisaged the USA fighting alone against the combined fighting strength of Germany, Italy and Japan. According to the directives given to the Joint Planning Committee, it was assumed that Japan, supported by her two allies, would attempt to violate by armed aggression the vital interests of the United States in the Western Pacific and that this aggression would be resisted by the USA, thus creating the war situation with which the Rainbow plans were expected to deal. The main objective of Rainbow 1 was to prevent any breaching by enemy forces of the Monroe Doctrine by defending the Western hemisphere north of latitude 10° south. As an additional task, the United States would be expected to protect their seaborne trade and their possessions in both the Pacific and the Caribbean.

In Britain, the Cabinet faced by almost certain war in Europe, was also being advised of the steps it could take in the Far Eastern crisis, which had reached

[1] J.B. Serial No. 642-1. J.B. File No. 325.
[2] ibid.

yet another impasse on 21 August. While the Government were deliberating on this problem the eventual decision was somewhat fortuitously taken out of their hands by the surprise announcement on 22 August of the impending signature of the Nazi-Soviet Non Aggression Pact. This diplomatic move completely transformed the situation in the Far East. The Japanese heard the news with astonishment, resentment and outrage.[1] It meant that the Anti-Comintern Pact was a worthless anachronism. Japan certainly had no intention of becoming allied to or even friendly with the Soviet Union and their dismay at the German decision to reach an accommodation with the Russians effectively ended all possibility of the Japanese entering a war in alliance with Hitler and Mussolini in the immediate future. Ribbentrop's expedient coup had several other repercussions; it led to the fall of the unstable Hiranuma Cabinet on 28 August and the establishment of a new Government under General Abe.[2] This Administration contained a number of pro-British officials who were anxious to improve Anglo-Japanese relations, providing some form of compromise agreement could be reached between the two nations on the outstanding questions that divided them.[3]

[1] Craigie to Halifax, No. 584, 25 Aug. 1939, D.B.F.P.,3,IX.
[2] Craigie to Halifax, No. 606, 30 Aug. 1939, D.B.F.P.,3,IX.
[3] J.W. Morley, ed., Deterrent Diplomacy: Japan, Germany and the USSR 1935-1940 (Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1976),pp.193-194.

On 4 September Abe's Government announced that instead of entering the war it would be concentrating its own efforts on consolidating its hold over China.[1]

This decision was undoubtedly the single most important development favourable to the British that had occurred in the Far East during the inter war period. It meant that at least in the short term the British Fleet could be concentrated in Home and Mediterranean waters without the additional worry or necessity for the Government of having at any time to send off a substantial part of it to deal with the Japanese in the Far East. While the British were immensely relieved that the Nazi-Soviet Pact had estranged the Japanese, the Americans had misgivings about the alleged neutrality of the Government in Tokyo. They were concerned that giving the Japanese virtually a free hand in the Far East might result in them extending their influence not only in China but throughout the region at the expense of the colonial powers. Roosevelt told Lord Lothian, the new British Ambassador in Washington, that he thought the Anglo-American attitude to the reorientation of Japanese foreign policy should be friendly but that neither country should display any eagerness in coming to terms with them over China. In the event of the Japanese becoming hostile again, Roosevelt intimated that he was prepared to send aircraft carriers and bombers to the Aleutian Islands

[1] Morley, op.cit., p.194.

and move the American Fleet to Hawaii.[1]

It is, of course, not difficult to understand the dilemma facing the Americans at this time. They were loth to see the Chinese sacrificed so that the British could improve their relations with the Japanese; but the alternative, if they did not like what was happening in China or South East Asia, was intervention by themselves to check any extension of Japanese influence or domination. They could either resort to economic measures, which tended to be essentially long term in effect, or direct military and naval presence in the area. Roosevelt had already embarked upon the former and Congress was evidently strongly opposed to the latter. Roosevelt could not fail to appreciate the significance for the United States that recent events had had upon the situation in the Far East. By this time it had become evident that the Americans could no longer sit back and allow the British to do their work for them in China. Instead, if something was needed to be done in the future they would be the ones who would have to do it.

[1] Lothian to Halifax, No. 391, 30 Aug. 1939, Adm 116/4103.

Chapter Nine: The Changing Face of Anglo-American Relations (Sept. - May 1940)

After Britain and France had declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, the character and scope of Anglo-American relations began to change fundamentally. This chapter will describe what effects the European war had upon naval relations between the two powers and the search for a common strategic policy in the Far East during the last few months of Chamberlain's premiership.

Within a week of the British declaration of war, the dominions of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa had announced their intention of joining the allied war effort. It was evident that when taken together with Japan's neutrality and Italy's non belligerency, these decisions had contributed to a dramatic improvement in Britain's strategic situation. Instead of confronting a triple alliance of Germany, Italy and Japan in three war theatres simultaneously, which had at one stage seemed likely, the allies were faced by only one major enemy. It meant that they could concentrate the bulk of their forces where they were most needed without having to worry about immediately reinforcing their units in either the Far East or the Mediterranean. Even so Chamberlain entered the war with regret.

Whatever personal shortcomings he may have had as a war leader, Chamberlain was aware from the outset that

his ministerial team needed more thrust and dynamism than could be supplied from the existing members. In recalling both Churchill and Eden to office, the former to become First Lord of the Admiralty, with a seat in the War Cabinet, and the latter as Secretary of State for the Dominions, the Prime Minister undoubtedly strengthened his Government and helped to unify his party. His choice was also to have an important effect upon Anglo-American relations. While Eden's involvement with the United States was initially limited by virtue of his ministerial responsibilities, his past record as Foreign Secretary had supplied eloquent proof of where his sympathies lay. In his capacity as First Lord Churchill was now in a position to make the greater impact upon relations with Roosevelt's Administration and he used the opportunity to encourage the Americans to extend and broaden their level of cooperation with the allies. Apart from his unique 'naval person' correspondence with Roosevelt, which was started by the President with a congratulatory note on 11 September, Churchill also looked to widen the extent of Anglo-American naval cooperation in a number of different ways.[1] Although his plans did not always meet with unqualified success and on some occasions actually did more harm than good, Churchill's pugnacity and singleminded devotion to ridding the world of the Nazi menace was

[1] Chartwell Trustees, (W.S. Churchill Papers), Roosevelt to Churchill, 11 Sept. 1939, 20/15.

respected by the President even when relations between the old wartime allies were not as good as they might have been.

Although the period before the German attack upon Scandinavia in early April 1940 has become known as the Twilight or Phoney War, the same description cannot be applied to the war at sea which began with the sinking of the British liner, the S.S. Athenia, by a German U-boat in the North Western Approaches on the night of 3 September. This incident suggested that the enemy had already embarked upon a campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare and did much to prompt the Admiralty to review their plans for the implementation of a convoy system designed to protect allied merchant shipping and keep open the critically important supply routes to the British Isles. They were assisted in this by President Roosevelt's decision on 5 September to commence a United States patrol of the Western Atlantic ranging up to 300 miles out to sea off the Newfoundland banks. The First Sea Lord, Sir Dudley Pound, sent the details to Churchill on 7 September observing that it should help the British in the Caribbean, the terminal for their convoys, and also in the dangerous area between the American ports and Halifax, the convoy assembly port. In view of Roosevelt's decision, Pound began looking into the possibility of beginning the Jamaican and Halifax convoys at once.[1]

[1] Pound to Churchill, P.O. 07892/39, 7 Sept. 1939, Adm 116/3922.

Churchill replied later that day:

> I agree this looks very healthy. The King spoke to me about the plan of President Roosevelt's to control a 500 mile area east of the United States shore, and mentioned Bermuda and Trinidad as bases for fuelling which the American Fleet might require. Of course we should welcome any such scheme, and it would be of the highest importance to our safety and success. By all means endeavour to begin the Jamaica and Halifax convoys, and I should be ready to see the American Ambassador if you would give me the necessary information.[1]

On 8 September Churchill met the U.S. Naval Attaché, Alan Kirk, and discussed the sinking of the Athenia, which he thought had been deliberate, and the establishment of a convoy system at Halifax. Kirk had in fact already been informed about the Admiralty's plans for the organization of convoys and the conduct of naval operations in the Atlantic and had reported these details in August to the new Chief of Naval Operations in Washington, Admiral Stark.[2] Nonetheless, his interview with Churchill was important in setting the tone for the close naval cooperation desired by the First Lord. Apart from conceding that it would take time to deal with the submarine menace, Churchill had stressed the need for the Americans to repeal their arms embargo in order to enable the allies to purchase supplies of war material ordered before the war began but which had been

[1] Churchill to Pound, P.O. 07892/39, 7 Sept. 1939, Adm 116/3922 The Bermuda base facilities had been leased from 28 August 1939 to 30 June 1940 renewable annually until 1945 at the rate of one dollar per annum terminable at thirty days notice on either side.

[2] Tracy B. Kittredge, United States-British Naval Cooperation, 1939-42, Unpublished Historical Monograph available on microfilm from the Operational Naval Archives in Washington, D.C., p.69.

cancelled as a result of the President issuing the Neutrality Proclamation on 5 September.[1] His call for changes in the United States Neutrality Act was taken up by both Chamberlain and Hore-Belisha in the next few days in meetings with Ambassador Kennedy.[2] Churchill returned to the theme at the War Cabinet meeting on 18 September. He drew attention to the shortage of destroyers from which the navy was suffering and remarked that once the Americans had repealed their neutrality legislation the British should do everything possible to purchase at least twenty of the older type of vessel from the United States Navy.[3]

Churchill's optimism about the outcome of the President's attempts to amend the Neutrality Act, was shared by Roosevelt himself. After having little option but to enforce the existing neutrality legislation, even though he had done so reluctantly, Roosevelt hoped that Congress would agree to repeal the arms embargo in favour of including a provision allowing belligerents to purchase arms and munitions on a cash-and-carry basis.[4] Although he spoke of his determination to avoid involving the United States in war, there was little doubt that the terms of the proposed bill were weighted in favour of

[1] U.S. Embassy(London) to State Department, Telegram 1518, 8 Sept. 1939, in Kittredge, op.cit., p.69.

[2] U.S. Embassy(London) to State Department, Telegrams1666, 15 Sept., 1708, 18 Sept. 1939, in Kittredge, op.cit., p.69.

[3] W.M.(39) 19th Conclusions, 18 Sept. 1939, Cab 65/1.

[4] Roosevelt's speech at opening of special session of Congress, 21 Sept. 1939, in The Public Papers of F.D.R., Vol.1939, pp.512-525.

the allies, providing they retained control of the Atlantic trade routes. After debating the measure at great length in both houses of Congress, the Pittman Bill eventually became law shortly before midday on 4 November 1939 when the President signed the Neutrality Act. Chamberlain regarded the measure as a tremendous boost for Britain and France because they could once more draw upon the Americans as a source of supply in their war against Germany.[1]

While promising developments had been made in this field, the degree of Anglo-American cooperation possible in the Far East was in some respects rather unsatisfactory. The lack of a common or united front was not particularly surprising given previous unsuccessful attempts to establish one and the policies embarked upon by the British and the United States Governments merely underlined the differences in emphasis, methods and direction between them. Whereas the British, faced with the probability of a long European war, were prepared to go to quite considerable lengths to satisfy the Japanese and prolong their neutrality, the Americans, without the same strategic problems, were less inclined to fall over themselves in an effort to appease them or acquiesce in their planned conquest of China. This meant that Chamberlain's Government were forced to base their policy on maintaining a delicate balance of interests

[1] Chamberlain to Roosevelt, 8 Nov. 1939, Prem 1/366.

between reassuring the Americans that they were not making too many sacrifices in order to obtain Japanese goodwill and conceding enough to the Japanese in return for their continued neutrality. In some ways the policies were mutually exclusive because the Americans were apt to take a far stronger line with the Japanese in this period than the British were now disposed to do. The switch in roles had begun in the immediate pre-war period when the British commitment to a Far Eastern naval strategy had given way in terms of priority to that of the Mediterranean. In July 1939 the Committee of Imperial Defence had raised the period before relief at Singapore from 70 to 90 days.[1] But this relatively modest increase was soon the subject of further discussion. The First Sea Lord thought it insufficient and informed Cunningham on 18 August that it was unlikely that the Admiralty would be sending a fleet to the Far East in the near future.[2] He went further at a Chiefs of Staff meeting on 7 September by stating that the formation of a fleet of sufficient strength to proceed to the Far East and its passage to Singapore would be more difficult and would take far longer than had usually been envisaged. He thought relief might well be delayed for six months.[3] The C.I.G.S., General Ironside, had resisted Pound's

[1] C.I.D. 364th meeting, 6 July 1939, Cab 2/9.
[2] Cunningham Papers, Pound to Cunningham, 18 Aug. 1939, 52560.
[3] COS memoranda (39)16, 7 Sept. 1939, Cab 80/1.

suggestion to double the period before relief to 180 days. The most he had been prepared to concede was that reserves could be built up to a six month scale without raising the official period of relief.[1] Nevertheless, on 4 October 1939 the Foreign Office admitted in a message to Craigie that even before the outbreak of war it had been considered vital in the interests of containing Italy and retaining Britain's Near Eastern friendships that she should keep all her available naval strength that was not required in Home waters in the Mediterranean.[2] This meant, as Howe confided to Sir Archibald Carter, that any naval reinforcements for the Far East were probably out of the question. Howe continued:

> Lord Halifax trusts however that the desirability of reinforcing the British Fleet in the Far East, if and when this becomes practicable, will be borne in mind, not only from the point of view of reassuring the Dominions of Australia and New Zealand but of convincing the Japanese that His Majesty's Government do not intend to relinquish their interests in the Far East.[3]

Because the strategic position was incomparably better than they could have had any right to expect only a few weeks before the outbreak of war, the British had no wish to compromise themselves or worsen the existing situation by following an aggressive policy in the Far

[1] COS memoranda (39)49, 25 Sept. 1939, Cab 80/3.
[2] Howe to Craigie, F10045/471/61, 4 Oct. 1939, FO 371/23544.
[3] Howe to Secretary of the Admiralty, F10045/471/61, 4 Oct. 1939, FO 371/23544.

East. On the contrary, the short term practical benefits of improved Anglo-Japanese relations far outweighed any considerations they may have had for the Chinese Government's predicament or their dislike of the new order in East Asia which the Japanese were pledged to establish. They were not, for instance, opposed in principle to a reduction in their naval and troop strength in China and had in fact already made arrangements for the reassignment of some of their fleet for active service overseas before the Japanese issued their Aide Memoire on 5 September advising the belligerent powers to withdraw voluntarily all their forces from those areas of China under Japanese control.[1] While deprecating the threats and intimidation used by the Japanese in driving home their point the British wished above all to avoid any incident which would disturb the precarious peace that existed between them.

If, as one suspects, the British cherished the wish that the United States would consent to look after their interests in their absence, they were quickly disabused of this notion. It soon became apparent that the Americans neither intended to fill any void left by a British withdrawal from China nor were they willing to become guardians of British interests in that country. Instead dark hints were given by the President and State Department officials

[1] Craigie to Halifax, No. 618, 5 Sept. 1939, D.B.F.P., 3, IX.

that should the British pull out and leave the United States in the lurch, the Americans might themselves withdraw from the area.[1] Although the American threat was extremely unlikely to be carried out and appears to have been merely a diplomatic device to prod the British in the direction they wished them to take, the loss of American friendship was of real concern. Accordingly, the War Cabinet, at their meeting on 23 October, demanded, in deference to the wishes of the Roosevelt Administration, that rather than make a complete withdrawal from Northern China they would leave token force contingents in both Peking and Tientsin.[2] But even before they had reached this decision, however, Grew had informed Craigie that American public opinion at all levels was hardening against Japanese policy in China and its repeated interference with American interests. In mentioning the possibility of an embargo being imposed on essential Japanese imports after the Commercial Treaty had expired in the New Year he implied that the Roosevelt Government were undeterred by the fact that these measures could lead to war.[3]

Although the British Government were anxious to improve their relations with the Japanese, they were still forced to consider the Far East as a future theatre of war and Japan as a potential enemy. In carrying out a

[1] Lothian to Foreign Office, No.511, F10253/G, 17 Sept. 1939, FO 371/23551.
[2] W.M.(39) 57th Conclusions, 23 Oct. 1939, Cab 65/1.
[3] W.M.(39) 50th Conclusions, 17 Oct. 1939, Cab 65/1.

strategic review at the end of October the Chiefs of Staff indicated that the Japanese were unlikely to be quiescent and must be expected to exploit the European situation for their own ends.[1] Whether this meant an expansion of Japanese imperialism or not in the immediate future or even what direction this active policy would take could not be identified with any certainty. The Chiefs thought, however, that the danger of a Japanese threat to Australia or New Zealand was remote at this stage.[2] Craigie also thought that there was no immediate cause for concern.

> Japan has her hands far too full in China and is too apprehensive of the United States in its present mood to think seriously of any move involving danger to Australia and New Zealand.[3]

Churchill agreed with this assessment and in a memo outlining proposed British policy for Australian naval defence, he gave a clear indication of what he thought the Far Eastern strategy should be.

> Although it is not at present within our power to place a superior battlefleet in the Home waters of Japan, it would be possible, if it were necessary, to place a squadron of battleships at Singapore, sufficient to act as a major deterrent on Japanese action so far from Home, or to send capital ships to Australian waters. This would, of course, be done from the moment that the danger to either Singapore or Australia developed in a manner which made their protection a real and practical war need.[4]

[1] COS (39)101(JP), printed in DMV (39)1, 31 Oct. 1939, Cab 99/1.

[2] ibid.

[3] DMV (39)2, 15 Nov. 1939, Cab 99/1 & WP(G)(39)92, Cab 67/2.

[4] Memo by Churchill on Australian Naval Defence, WP(39)125, 17 Nov. 1939, Cab 66/1.

Churchill did not suggest that any help could be expected from the U.S. Navy in defending the Australian dominions against a Japanese attack. This was in line with the advice offered by Lothian in a message to Halifax on 10 November.

> There is not, I think, any particularly strong feeling in the United States for Australia and New Zealand, though they are popular as young democracies. The action that would be taken by the United States in the Pacific would be governed in the main by its attitude to Japan and the consequences to America of Japanese expansion in the Pacific.[1]

Lothian thought that though the United States Government had long made up their minds not to interfere on the mainland in Asia, American dislike of the Japanese war against China had reached a level at which an intensification of economic pressure could well be demanded. Despite what the Administration said about not protecting British interests in the Far East, the British Ambassador believed that ultimately they would be forced to do so.

> If the United States is to rely upon Great Britain to prevent totalitarian Europe from entering the Atlantic through the Straits of Gibraltar and the exits from the North Sea, the United States must themselves underwrite the security of the British Empire in the Pacific because they cannot afford the weakening of Great Britain itself which would follow the collapse of her dominions in the Pacific.[2]

In his opinion, the United States had come to see the Central Pacific as a kind of American preserve and that any Japanese expansion in this area, particularly at the

[1] Lothian to Halifax, 10 Nov. 1939, WP(G)(39)92, Cab 67/2.
[2] ibid.

expense of the Philippines, was likely to be resisted. Moreover, Lothian assumed that if the Japanese were allowed to increase their sphere of operations unchecked by the western powers, their territorial objectives would eventually lead to them challenging the Monroe Doctrine. For these reasons, and partly because prevention would necessitate naval as opposed to massive army intervention, he thought that long before Japanese action threatened either Australia or New Zealand the United States would be at war. This probability was, he believed, enhanced by the fact that the U.S. Army and Navy recognised that American security and the Monroe Doctrine were in the long run just as dependent upon the British as on the U.S. Navy.[1]

Lothian's analysis, though comforting to the British, was somewhat at variance with the conclusions drawn by Mallet, his counsellor at the British Embassy in Washington, in a paper on United States policy in the Far East.[2] In this report of the impressions gained from his discussions with State Department officials at the end of November, Mallet warned the Foreign Office that they must neither expect the United States to act as Britain's trustee in the Far East nor suggest to the United States, either publicly or privately, that they

[1] Lothian to Halifax, 10 Nov. 1939, WP(G)(39)92, Cab 67/2.
[2] Memo by V.A.L. Mallet, United States Policy in the Far East, F12709/4027/61, 8 Dec. 1939, FO 371/23551.

should do so. He admitted, however, that the British would automatically become the beneficiaries of any strong action that the United States might take.

> While, therefore, we must not expect open collaboration or joint action, we shall find that the United States can at times find a good excuse for parallel action with us, and she will not refrain from pulling her own chestnuts out of the fire merely because of a few British or French chestnuts happen to be there too. The United States will act as a watchman who by patrolling his own house also acts as a deterrent to the burglar who might otherwise approach the house next door.[1]

This summary suggesting that the Americans did not really approve of current British policy in the Far East, and particularly its emphasis on improving relations with the Japanese, may have been something of a blow to the Foreign Secretary who less than two weeks before had told Kennedy that Britain had no intention of getting out of step with the United States Government on matters of Far Eastern policy.[2]

Further proof that the Roosevelt Administration were considering adopting more rigorous methods against the Japanese came with the President's proposal for economic cooperation in depriving Germany, Italy and Japan of essential war materials.[3] While the British Government recorded their appreciation of the President's initiative it was clear that they feared an embargo as

[1] Memo by V.A.L. Mallet, United States Policy in the Far East, F12709/4027/61, 8 Dec. 1939, FO 371/23551.

[2] Halifax to Lothian, No.1295, F12177/4027/61, 27 Nov. 1939, FO 371/23551.

[3] WP(6)(40)14, Cab 67/4.

opposed to a system of rationing could complicate rather than simplify matters for them and estrange the Italians and the Japanese both of whose continued non-involvement in war was of enormous benefit to Britain.[1] The Foreign Office also received a warning from Craigie that too severe pressure from the United States might have the more immediate effect of bringing a Japanese extremist Government into power whose intention would be to carry out a re-orientation of Japanese foreign policy.[2] R.A. Butler, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, minuted a familiar sentiment: "We are in danger of counting on the Americans & then being let down. But I agree that an act of desperation would not solve Jap(anese) problems."[3] Sir George Sansom also referred to the possible use of an embargo against Japan and noted that Britain could not hope, even if she wished, to dissuade the United States Government from a course upon which they had already embarked. He said that though the British might not be able to support American policy towards Japan, there was nothing to be gained from running counter to it.

> Even though American pressure may not succeed in righting the wrongs already done to China by Japan, it should, if judiciously exercised, restrain Japan from further excesses, moderate her plans of economic and political dominance and preserve a greater proportion of our interests in China than we can otherwise secure. This purpose will be best

[1] WP(G)(40)14, Cab 67/4.

[2] Foreign Office minutes on Craigie to Foreign Office, No. 1 Saving, Amended Copy, F297/193/61, 1 Jan. 1940, FO 371/24708.

[3] Minute by R.A. Butler, F297/193/61, 1 Feb. 1940, FO 371/24708.

> achieved if all the international powers show firmness in the greatest measure allowed by their respective situation.[1]

On the whole, however, as the Chiefs of Staff had correctly predicted, the Japanese were inclined to base their actions upon the state of the European situation. While that remained relatively stable the Japanese were fairly accommodating. Once the phoney war had ended, though, and the allies began to suffer an increasing number of military setbacks, the Japanese again became more threatening, seizing the initiative by exploiting allied difficulties and the lack of an effective response by the United States to make further demands upon the hapless European powers.

Despite their apprehensiveness about American policy in the Far East, and where it could lead them, Chamberlain's Government were grateful for a gradual improvement in naval and economic relations with the United States during the Phoney War period. Even so, progress was at times slow and painful. Neither side wished to give away more than was necessary and the old, if understandable, desire for a suitable quid pro quo often frustrated attempts that were being made to improve and extend the degree of involvement between the Admiralty and the U.S. Navy Department.

[1] Minute by Sir G. Sansom, F924/193/61, 6 Feb. 1940, FO 371/24708.

One of the most influential figures in Anglo-American relations at this time was Captain Alan Kirk the U.S. Naval Attaché in London. Shortly after taking up his duties in June 1939 he had met the Admiralty's Director of Naval Intelligence, Rear Admiral John H. Godfrey, and had gained the impression that the British were prepared to cooperate with the Americans on technical matters. In his report to Rear Admiral W.S. Anderson, the U.S. Navy's D.N.I. in Washington, Kirk pointed out that close liaison with the British could be established, if it was desired.[1] Although it had been clear from the outset that the Admiralty were intent upon cultivating his friendship, the outbreak of war helped to consolidate the link between the Naval Attaché and themselves. It was a relationship which yielded results from the very beginning.

After discussing the matter at some length, Godfrey had come out in favour of allowing a U.S. naval observer to embark in the Home Fleet under Sir Charles Forbes at Scapa Flow. Kirk sent details of the plan to Washington on 29 September with the recommendation that it be approved as it would be advantageous for the Americans, providing them with a constant source of information not only about the conduct and progress of the war but also invaluable operational experience.[2] But in the end

[1] Operational Naval Archives, (Kirk Papers), Kirk to Anderson, 20 June 1939.

[2] Operational Naval Archives, Alusna (Naval Attaché, London) to Opn. (Chief of Naval Operations), 291700, 29 Sept. 1939.

after fears were expressed by the Americans that it could lead to demands for reciprocity upon which they could not consent, a feeling shared by both the British and the French, the plan was quietly dropped. Nonetheless, the Naval Attaché made arrangements with the Admiralty to obtain the latest reports on naval developments and operations and an almost daily stream of cables were sent to Washington transmitting the information received.

As part of the technical exchange of information embarked upon in the period before the outbreak of war, two American Naval Officers, Commander Nelson, the Assistant Naval Attaché, and Captain Fischer were shown over the boom defence facilities at Rosyth.[1] In his letter of 10 October to Anderson, Kirk pointed out that the Americans had lessons to learn from the British in such things as fleet anchorage.

> I think we will gain a great deal from the exchange now in progress, and that the information being obtained by Fischer and Nelson ought to enable us to provide safe harbors for our Fleet.[2]

This now sounds somewhat ironic in view of the fact that only four days later a German submarine, the U.47, penetrated the Navy's submarine defences at the fleet base at Scapa Flow and sank the battleship Royal Oak,

[1] Fischer's visit took place over the period 11-14 August 1939.
N.I.D. 2204/39, Adm 116/4302.

[2] Kirk Papers, Kirk to Anderson, 10 Oct. 1939.

before escaping unharmed from the scene of its triumph. Undeterred, Kirk followed this up on 3 November by drawing Anderson's attention to the lead in the technical field which the British would gain as a result of their war experience, a lead which he felt would gradually increase as time went on, unless something was done by the Americans to learn about the advances made by the British on some of these subjects. In his opinion it was beneficial for the Americans to seize any opportunity that might arise for making exchanges of technical information with the Admiralty.[1] To this end Kirk was given top-secret details about the devastating effects of the German magnetic mine and the research which was being carried out by the Admiralty on developing an effective counter measure against it.[2] This was to lead later in 1940 to cooperation between the two navies on perfecting the degaussing method of protecting ships against mines and improving mine sweeping techniques pioneered by the Admiralty.

While the range of technical cooperation was steadily growing, problems still remained, as became evident in the wake of Churchill's letter to Roosevelt on 16 October offering to provide the Americans with details of the

[1] Kirk Papers, Kirk to Anderson, 3 Nov. 1939.

[2] Alusna reports 141960, 241330, 271800, 281300 (Nov. 1939), 211430 (Dec. 1939), 061615 (Jan. 1940). Kirk sent such a continuous stream of cables that these reports are only a selection of the most important on this subject.

Asdic method for underwater submarine detection.[1] Although the First Lord had not asked for anything in return it soon became obvious that the Admiralty were unwilling to comply unless the U.S. Navy Department offered something in exchange. Rather than obtain details of the American equivalent, Sonar, which was thought to be inferior to its own design, the Admiralty began to press for the Norden bombsight.[2] Unimpressed by the barter arrangement that was involved, the Americans politely refused to take up the offer. They were also to decline the British suggestion of sharing all the cryptographic information on Japanese codes that had been compiled in both countries.[3] In fact as the winter drew on the degree of mutual exasperation increased. The British, perhaps not unnaturally, were loth to provide the Americans with their most valuable information unless they could obtain something positive in return, and the Americans were as equally determined not to lose out on any inequitable exchange that might be proposed. This caution, while understandable, contributed little to improving Anglo-American relations at a time when the British blockading tactics were responsible for increasing hostility and aggravation within the

[1] Churchill Papers, Naval Person to President Roosevelt, 16 Oct. 1939, 20/15.

[2] Kirk Papers, Kirk to Anderson, P-39, 5 Jan. 1940.

[3] Alusna to Opn., 311725, 31 Oct. 1939, 271715, 27 Nov. 1939.
Opn. to Alusna, 28 Nov. 1939.

United States.

In February Kirk was moved to tell Godfrey that he thought the British were making a great mistake in not furnishing the U.S. Navy freely and without any quid pro quo all the information in their possession concerning German war methods, material and operations.

> I said it seemed self-evident that while no one could or should count on the United States entering the war on the Allies side, it would certainly be most difficult to visualize our being in the war as an enemy of Great Britain and France.[1]

Although agreeing in principle with the need for cooperation, Godfrey was not confident that his colleagues and superiors within the Admiralty felt the same way. The Director of Naval Intelligence added that the case for closer cooperation in technical matters at least would be stronger if the Americans could give the British something they needed.[2] In a memo on 26 February he outlined the advantages and disadvantages of giving the Americans technical information and concluded:

> It is to our advantage that the U.S. Navy should be as efficient as possible in case they come into the war; and it may, therefore, be considered desirable to give them the information they require subject to the possibility that there may be a leakage back to Germany.[3]

He proposed, therefore, that in future the Admiralty should be more magnanimous in complying with the U.S.

[1] Kirk Papers, Kirk to Anderson, P-45, 6 Feb. 1940.

[2] ibid.

[3] Memo by Godfrey (D.N.I.), N.I.D. 0806/40, 26 Feb. 1940, Adm 116/4302.

Naval Attaché's requests for information.[1] In a minute drafted on 28 February S.H. Phillips, though not disagreeing with Godfrey's argument, was neither entirely convinced by it. He qualified his acceptance of the proposal by re-emphasising the need for Britain to retain the type of information which would be invaluable to her in the post-war world, when it was hoped she would keep her place as a leading force in naval ship building. Phillips concluded that perhaps the best course to follow would be to take action as Godfrey had proposed but to limit it to the shorter term prospects.[2] The Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff rejected this by stating:

> It occurs to me that if we intend to go as far as this we might well go the whole way. We have spoken for many years of the possibility of war with the United States as unthinkable and if that be so - as I believe it to be - I would prefer to see a deliberate pooling of all our knowledge with that of the United States.
> Such a proposal on our part - particularly when we have probably got more to give than to receive - might initiate a liaison between the two countries, which would encourage mutual trust and form in time very strong bonds. Moreover, such an association would in all probability be more likely to ensure secrecy than the present grudging exchange of information on a quid pro quo basis.[3]

Conceding, however, that the time might not have arrived for such an association, the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff concluded by suggesting that the action proposed by Godfrey should be confirmed as the least that could be

[1] Memo by Godfrey (D.N.I.), N.I.D. 0806/40, 26 Feb. 1940, Adm 116/4302.

[2] Minute by S.H. Phillips (P.A.S.(S)), N.I.D. 0806/40, 28 Feb. 1940, Adm 116/4302.

[3] Minute by A.C.N.S., N.I.D. 0806/40, 1 Mar. 1940, Adm 116/4302.

done under the circumstances.[1]

Admiralty willingness to be more cooperative coincided with an improvement in Anglo-American relations. Churchill and Pound signalled their acceptance of the need for even closer cooperation on technical matters by agreeing to allow U.S. naval officials to make inspections of British ships that had suffered war damage. Although no strings were attached to this decision, the Admiralty hoped that they would receive some information in return. It was stressed, however, that these contacts should not be seen as bargaining ploys but purely as gestures of goodwill.[2] Despite this overall improvement in Anglo-American relations, however, the U.S. Navy Department were still not prepared to consider having Admiralty officials as observers at their fleet manoeuvres. Anderson informed Kirk on 1 April that his proposal for a British naval officer to be invited to witness Fleet Problem XXI was unacceptable.[3] In making his original suggestion, Kirk's contention had been that such an invitation would not only make a favourable impression with the Admiralty and result in opening more avenues to the Americans, but it would also enable the British to understand more fully the U.S. naval situation.[4]

1 Minute by A.C.N.S., N.I.D. 0806/40, 1 Mar. 1940, Adm 116/4302.
2 Kirk Papers, Kirk to Anderson, P-53, 21 Mar. 1940.
3 Kirk Papers, Anderson to Kirk, 1Apr. 1940.
4 Kirk Papers, Kirk to Anderson, 29 Mar. 1940.

Apart from the purely technical aspects of his communications, the U.S. Naval Attaché was also able to provide his superiors in Washington with general information and assessments of the overall military and naval position. These messages did not diverge significantly from those relayed by Ambassador Kennedy and reflected a rather forlorn and depressing outlook for the allies. On 13 December, for example, Kirk claimed that as a result of adopting a defensive strategy in the war the allies were not putting any definite pressure on Germany, anywhere. He also believed that even the naval position was worse than Churchill admitted and gave cause for serious concern.

> It is currently said here that time operates to the advantage of the Allies. Of this I am not sure. Several of my foreign colleagues are persuaded that the reverse is true.[1]

He felt talk of peace when war was so far from being won was premature. It was this optimism of the British which could not really be put down to solid material fact that reminded him of Isaac Walton's famous recipe for jugged hare. Its instructions had been simple. 'First catch your hare'![2] Kirk was to become extremely critical of the British war effort and very despondent about the eventual outcome. On one occasion shortly after the Italians had entered the war on 10 June he

[1] Kirk Papers, Kirk to Anderson, P-33, 13 Dec. 1939.
[2] ibid.

admitted that he expected the Germans to invade Britain by 1 August 1940.[1] As an Anglophile, his observations were not intended to dissuade the U.S. Navy Department from helping the British. On the contrary, his aim seems to have been to convince the Americans of the desperate plight of the allies unless they received ever increasing material assistance from the United States.

It was a message that the British were anxious to make repeatedly throughout the winter and with even more conviction once the Germans had begun the European war in earnest. Whether the British were being unduly optimistic in believing that they could eventually defeat the Germans, their refusal to parley with Hitler and the Nazis was a factor of some importance in convincing the Americans that, despite appearances to the contrary, they might not after all be wasting their money and effort in providing the allies with vital war supplies.[2] This was also the verdict that could be drawn from the abortive Welles peace mission to Europe in February and March 1940 and from the activities of the Anglo-French Purchasing Commission and the President's Liaison Committee which had been set up to coordinate and facilitate the despatch of those items ordered by the allies in the United States.[3]

The same uneven development which characterised their

[1] Kirk Papers, Kirk to Anderson, P-78, 11 June 1940.

[2] Alusna to Opn., 201830, 20 Sept. 1939, 191800, 19 Mar. 1940.
This commitment to carry on the fight was displayed even more rigorously once Churchill had become Prime Minister as his messages to Lothian and Roosevelt demonstrated.
(cont.)

technical cooperation was also present in other aspects of Anglo-American naval relations. Churchill had reacted to the Declaration of Panama and the implementation of a 300 mile maritime security zone by the twenty-one American republics on 5 October by pointing out the crucial drawbacks to the system. Apart from the need for effective enforcement, the allies clearly wished to retain the right of pursuit of enemy vessels within the prescribed zone and to have continued freedom of access to allied territories lying off the coast of the Americas. He was also very concerned that the area should not become a safe haven for German submarines. Providing these conditions were met, he was prepared to give the new arrangement a cautious welcome in the hope that it would lead to even closer Anglo-American cooperation and within time to active participation of the United States in war on the allied side.[1]

Lord Lothian had reached a similar conclusion. While setting out the disadvantages of the Declaration

---

(cont.)
Evidence of this attitude is available in W.S. Churchill, The Second World War Vol. II, Their Finest Hour (Cassell, London, 1951), pp.22-24,49-51,116,163,166-7,201,353-368.

3 For details of the Welles mission see Sumner Welles, The Time for Decision, pp.61-118 and FO 414/277.
The Treasury Papers contain an immensely detailed record of the work of the Anglo-French Purchasing Commission and the President's Liaison Committee, see T160/1088/F16041/1-6.

1 Churchill Papers, Naval Person to President Roosevelt, 5 Oct. 1939, 20/15.

to Welles, the British Ambassador privately admitted, in a message to the Foreign Office on 12 October, that it seemed designed to provide the United States Navy with an excuse to maintain its existing duties, which meant that their scouting forces would continue to act on the allies behalf in what he described as a thoroughly unneutral fashion. As the Cabinet had already announced that the Government's plans were based on the assumption that the war would last at least three years, Lothian's desire to retain the goodwill of both the President and the U.S. Navy Department was understandable. This was why he hoped that the British press would not be too critical of the Panama Declaration and sour the existing state of improving Anglo-American relations.[1]

Despite the need for caution, there were various instances in the first few months which showed a conscious and deliberate flouting of the Declaration and the security zone by both Britain and Germany. Undoubtedly the most famous example of this type of violation occurred when a British naval hunting group sighted the German pocket battleship, the Admiral Graf Spee, off the South American coast and gave chase forcing it to seek shelter and eventually scuttle itself in Montevideo harbour.[2] This action roused some of the signatories to the

[1] Lothian to Foreign Office, The Panama Security Zone, M08079/40, Adm 116/4107.

[2] Churchill sent the details of the action to the President on 7 January 1940. For further details see Churchill, The Second World War, Vol.I, The Gathering Storm (Cassell, London, 1948), pp.402-419.

Panama Declaration to an unbridled fury. Churchill was, however, quite unrepentant as his Christmas message to Roosevelt showed, claiming that as a result of the action off the River Plate the whole of South America was now clear and might continue to be clear of warlike operations. After detailing the extent to which the navy was stretched at this time, Churchill ended his message with a warning that if the British should be defeated the Americas would soon have worse worries than the sound of one day's distant seaward cannonade.[1] Despite his message to Roosevelt, the First Lord did not appear to hold out much hope of obtaining any active help from that quarter. He told Chamberlain that though Roosevelt was the best friend they had, his reelection in November might depend upon his willingness to adopt isolationism at least as a temporary measure.[2] He went further in a draft paper which was to be circulated to the War Cabinet. Asserting that the trend of American opinion since the war had been disappointing, he recalled that the movement to interpret neutrality in the strictest manner had gathered unexpected strength.

> United States warships are shadowing ours inside the wide zone that has been proclaimed by the Panama Congress, and in one case at least the position of a British cruiser has been disclosed by broadcast. The reactions in the case of the ARUCA have been distinctly unfavourable, and the interview between Mr. Welles and Lord Lothian reveals a critical and even a captious attitude

[1] Churchill Papers, Naval Person to President Roosevelt, 24 Dec. 1939, 20/15.

[2] N. Chamberlain Papers, Churchill to Chamberlain, 25 Dec. 1939, NC 7/9/69.

> towards us. At any time fresh incidents, which we are of course endeavouring to avoid, may occur.[1]

It was clear that the measures which the British had insisted upon in an effort to blockade Germany had created a good deal of hostility in the United States. American vessels had not been exempt from the stop and search procedures and consignments of U.S. mail addressed to neutral countries had been seized and censored by the British authorities. American public opinion had been outraged by these acts which were seen as being wilful examples of an infringement of the neutral status of the United States.[2] Things had not improved during the new year as could be gauged from Lothian's interview with Hull on 22 January. Speaking on behalf of the President, Hull complained about the delays and discrimination in the transit of U.S. ships that were taking place at Gibraltar and the operations of the Navicert system.

> He said he and the administration were strongly on the Allied side in the war and were doing all they could to damp it down. He asked His Majesty's Government, however, to consider whether the advantages they could gain by some of these interferences with American neutral rights were worth the price they might have to pay in alienating American sympathy. He said that unless more consideration could be shown for American interests he did not know what might happen.[3]

Lothian thought that the diplomatic protest was part of

[1] N. Chamberlain Papers, Draft paper by Churchill, Palestine Policy and American Zionists, 25 Dec. 1939, NC 7/9/69.

[2] Lothian to Halifax, No.87, 22 Jan. 1940, T160/1089/F16041/5.

[3] ibid.
Much the same was said by Roosevelt in his message to Churchill on 1 Feb. 1940. Churchill Papers, 20/15.

the President's plan to reduce this opposition by proving that his Government was a vigilant protector of American interests. He believed that the result would not affect the amount of assistance that the United States were already providing the Allies within the framework of the Neutrality Act. Nonetheless, he recommended certain modifications to British policy in the hope that the storm of controversy would soon pass.[1]

In a further message to Halifax on 27 January Lothian stated that the criticism levelled at the British for their interference with American rights had not diminished the desire that the allies should win the war.

> The United States feels acutely that she is now a sea power equal to ourselves, and must be treated with the consideration due to this power. She knows, too, that, if she chooses to put her foot down by threatening retaliation, she can probably compel us. I think, therefore, that you must face the fact that the period of easy going we have enjoyed over here in the past has come to an end, and that the United States, while anxious to do nothing to impede our war effort, will assert itself a good deal more vigorously and will expect to be consulted a good deal more about our policy on all matters which affect her trade and her interests. The essence of the case is this. We have got to prove to the U.S.A., which includes public opinion as well as the Administration, that any action we take affecting them is really necessary for the winning of the war.[2]

Churchill, alive to the susceptibilities of the Americans on this matter, ordered the fleet on 29 January to refrain

[1] Lothian to Halifax, No.87, 22 Jan. 1940, T160/1089/F16041/5.

[2] WP(G)(40)30, Anglo-American Relations, Lothian to Halifax, 27 Jan. 1940, Cab 67/4.

in future from bringing any American ships into the combat zone which Roosevelt had drawn around the British Isles.[1] This did not mean that he was abandoning a practice which the Government felt was essential to their prosecution of the war, but it demonstrated that he was prepared to look for an alternative control base outside the combat zones.[2] It was a decision that was to prove popular with Roosevelt and lead to a message from him on 6 March deeply appreciating Churchill's efforts to remove the sources of friction caused by the blockading measures.[3]

Whatever the current state of Anglo-American relations, Churchill ensured that his highly unorthodox line of communication with the President was kept open. He used it to create a diplomatic bridgehead which could be used to explain policy and make requests for assistance. By strengthening the link between Roosevelt and himself Churchill undoubtedly laid the basis for what later became a deep personal friendship and close working relationship. He supplemented the naval person correspondence with the more conventional method of using Ambassador Kennedy to pass on information or sound out

[1] Churchill Papers, Naval Person to President Roosevelt, 28 Feb. 1940, 20/15.

[2] Lothian urged the use of St. Johns, Newfoundland instead of Kirkwall.

> In my opinion it would be far better to open St. Johns at once, and run the risk of some things escaping censorship to begin with, than to allow neutral opinion to believe our control system was breaking down, or to antagonise American opinion by compelling American ships to go into Kirkwall.

Lothian to Foreign Office, No.254, 8A, 22 Feb. 1940, Adm. 199/1928.

(cont.)

the State Department on some of his ideas.[1] In these ways the Americans were kept abreast of all major developments in the war and British strategic thinking. In maintaining an element of continuity in his dealings with the United States, the First Lord was able to prevent a total breakdown in communication between the Admiralty and the U.S. Navy Department.

It was perhaps just as well that Anglo-American relations had improved by the spring of 1940 because on 8 April the Germans eventually brought the Phoney War to an end by mounting an offensive against Denmark and Norway. Far from being downcast by the German attack, the Admiralty initially regarded it as the first serious strategic blunder made by the enemy.[2] Within a month, however, this jubilation and confidence had collapsed as the allied counter offensive floundered and effective resistance petered out. As the first major test of the allied governments' ability to wage war, the Norwegian debacle proved to be a conclusive failure by any standards.

In the United States, the Administration's criticism

(cont.)

3 Churchill Papers, President Roosevelt to Naval Person, 6 Mar. 1940, 20/15.

1 Churchill used Kennedy to ask the President for his opinion of the possibility of mounting Operation Catherine. See the esoteric messages which passed between them in Adm 199/1928.

2 Kirk Papers, Kirk to Anderson, P-60, 11 Apr. 1940.

of British ineptitude in conducting the ill-starred Norwegian campaign, was accompanied by an increasing public awareness that the traditional feelings of security synonymous with isolationism were no longer valid and that even though they might not wish to intervene in war they might eventually be compelled to.[1] The Joint Board and its planning staffs were taken by surprise by the launching of the Scandinavian offensive and the rapidity with which the allied counter measures had proved so ineffective. On 10 April they had been practically unanimous in assuming that the most immediate danger of conflict was in the Pacific where Japan, supported by Germany and Italy, might decide at any moment to begin aggressive action against the Far Eastern interests of the western democracies.[2] Although giving priority to planning for joint offensive operations in the Pacific, the Joint Board had the good sense to recognise that unfavourable developments in the European war could well force the Americans in the future to alter their strategy completely in favour of concentrating their forces in the Atlantic while remaining on the defensive in the Pacific.[3] It was assumed that if the allies appeared to be heading for defeat in Europe the United States might decide to

[1] F.D.R. Library, (Morgenthau Diary), Diary entry for 29 Apr. 1940, Diary 2.

[2] J.B. Serial 642, J.B. File 325.

[3] ibid.

intervene. It would then be necessary, even if Japan chose this moment to strike in the West Pacific, for the United States to take action in conjunction with the British and French to bring about the defeat of Germany. However desirable this plan may have been in theory, the practical difficulties of coordinating these operations with the other allies were apparent.

> Each nation involved will be willing to assist the others only when it will clearly gain by doing so, and when such action will not jeopardise other important interests. . . until Japanese (or Axis) aggression threatens United States interests, it is unlikely that the United States will assist the other democracies, and then only by such measures as are consistent with its National Security.[1]

Nonetheless, the Americans readily appreciated that they did not possess sufficient naval forces to become involved in any simultaneous two or three front war without incurring very grave strategic consequences for themselves. In other words the Americans needed the allies almost as much as the allies needed them. When this realisation dawned, the Roosevelt Administration became more amenable to approaches from the British Government designed to facilitate a larger measure of cooperation than had existed hitherto. The Joint Planners had pointed out that the Americans could only achieve a swift decisive victory over the Japanese, if

[1] J.B. Serial 642, J.B. File 325.

allied bases could be provided for their use in the South West Pacific together with an undisclosed margin of military, naval and air strength in that region.[1] The British were more than willing to comply with the former, if less able to fulfil the latter requirement. They had demonstrated their intent in mid-April shortly after it had been announced that the Japanese had secured a special economic relationship with the Netherlands East Indies. Halifax had wasted no time in asking Churchill to make arrangements for Kirk to inform Roosevelt that if the United States Fleet was moved from its Hawaiian base, where it was on manoeuvres, to the Philippines, the British would gladly provide docking and repair facilities for the force at Singapore.[2] At this stage, however, the Americans were unwilling to go beyond retaining the fleet at Pearl Harbor as a possible deterrent to any further Japanese advances in the South Western Pacific.[3]

Once the phoney war had ended, though, there was little chance of the British being able to supply much active assistance for the Americans in the Far East. Indeed after the German blitzkrieg offensive had been launched against the Low Countries and France, the

[1] J.B. Serial 642, J.B. File 325.

[2] War Cab. meetings 95(40), 17 Apr., and 96(40), 18 Apr. 1940, Cab 65/6.

[3] Kittredge, op.cit., pp.159-160.

Oversea Defence Committee agreed at its meeting on 16 May that in view of the general war situation there was nothing in the way of land or air forces which could be sent to the Far East.[1] Once the French had collapsed in June the British were faced with the choice of leaving the Mediterranean to the Axis Navies in favour of supplementing their existing force at Singapore, or of surrendering their Far Eastern strategy, which had virtually lapsed in any case, in order to retain allied control of the Mediterranean. It was a decision which the Chiefs of Staff at the time had little difficulty in recommending or the Churchill Government in confirming. In choosing to relinquish their Far Eastern commitment the British were merely putting into practice a policy which had been foreshadowed for at least two years and was at last an honest, if belated, gesture to the dominions and an invitation to the Americans to assist in policing this part of the world on their behalf.

What had begun as an attempt by Eden to concert moves with the Americans in the Far East had, after much effort and numerous failures, reached a stage where the initiative for joint or parallel action now lay firmly with the Americans. If they wished to oppose further Japanese encroachment in China or expansion elsewhere, it would be up to them to take responsibility for organising these measures. Assailed in Europe and

[1] Oversea Defence Committee meeting, 16 May 1940, Cab 94/1.

fighting for her continued existence Britain was manifestly unable to do anything about the Far East even if she had wanted to.

In fact, if the Norwegian campaign was anything to go by it was doubtful whether the British could do anything to help themselves in Europe let alone elsewhere. After spending months in discussing and deferring action in the north, the British had soon discovered to their cost that they had been outplanned and outmanoeuvred by the Germans. As the startling nature of the British failure in Norway came to be fully realised, a growing tide of hostile criticism came to be expressed in both parliament and in the country at large, blaming bad leadership and direction for the comprehensive defeat suffered by the allies. Much of the burden of these complaints came to rest upon the Prime Minister. It was he who was blamed almost exclusively for the humiliating withdrawal from Norway and he who became the target of those wishing to bring about changes in the leadership and structure of the Government. His parliamentary critics had their way. After a month in which little or nothing had gone right for the allies, the House of Commons provided a perfect forum for expressing this personal hostility. Keyes, Amery and Lloyd George did not waste their chances and with devastating effect rounded on the Prime Minister and virtually hounded him from office.[1] Such was the level of antipathy

[1] Hansard(Commons), 5th Series, 360, cols.1124-1130, 1140-1150, 1151, 1271, 1277-1283, 1353.

expressed in this now famous two day debate and such was the clamour for change that Chamberlain was eventually forced to resign as Prime Minister on 10 May in favour of Winston Churchill.[1]

[1] Churchill, The Gathering Storm, pp.523-527.

Conclusion

Basil Liddell Hart believed that successful strategy depends to a large extent upon sound calculation and the coordination of the objective and the means of securing that end.[1] It is clear from the early months of Chamberlain's premiership that Eden ignored these criteria when making his repeated attempts to induce the Americans to agree to a common naval policy with the British in the Far East. There is little doubt that when Foreign Secretary he committed rash errors of judgment in striving to secure close harmony and cooperation with the United States in the Far East. Despite his good intentions, Eden's efforts to construct such a working partnership not only failed in their main objective but also did little to improve Anglo-American relations. It could also be argued that he had adopted an unrealistic attitude throughout and had set British foreign policy a task which it simply could not accomplish at this time.

Chamberlain, on the other hand, while not disputing the theoretical value of American assistance in the Far East, seriously doubted whether the Roosevelt Administra-

[1] B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy: The Indirect Approach (Faber & Faber, London, 1967), pp.335-338.

tion would agree to join in any scheme of naval action against the Japanese. Although he was widely suspected of being anti-American, a charge which seemed to be sustained by some of his cutting references about the United States and his rejection of the President's peace initiative, his antipathy towards them has probably been exaggerated and confused with his feelings about the level of practical assistance which they were likely to render to the British in time of trouble. Unlike Eden, who saw Anglo-American relations as being an effective alternative to the policy of European appeasement, Chamberlain tended to see United States help as only an adjunct to his plans for improving relations with Germany and Italy. He shared the feelings of many other members of his Government who were wary of placing too much reliance upon the Roosevelt Administration in strategic matters for fear that they would be let down by them at the last minute. Nonetheless, it should be noted that despite hating war and viewing the prospect of involvement in the Far East with alarm, Chamberlain was still prepared to cooperate with the Americans in joint or parallel action against the Japanese.[1] On some occasions he appeared to ignore his

[1] His letter to Hilda on 17 December 1937 reveals this attitude unmistakably. Writing of the Panay incident, Chamberlain described it as the fortunate misfortune on the Yangtse.

> It seems to me just a Heaven sent opportunity and you can bet your bottom dollar I am making the most of it. It is always best & safest to count on nothing from the Americans except words (cont.)

own warnings about the strategic problems of becoming involved in the Far East and even took the initiative in seeking an active Anglo-American naval policy which, if it had been implemented, could have led to hostilities with the Japanese.[1] In fact there is a thread of inconsistency and ambivalence which runs throughout the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War, reflecting as it does a basic lack of agreement within the British Government on what constituted their most effective Far Eastern policy.

By the time the bankruptcy of appeasement had been made manifest by Hitler's action against Czechoslovakia in March 1939 an active east of Suez policy on a large scale, with or without the assistance of the United States, seemed a remote contingency. Even so the issue was clouded with uncertainty and the problem of what strategy would be approved for use in a Far Eastern emergency was not simplified by the confusing decision of the Admiralty apparently to contradict themselves on the virtues of maintaining a flying squadron principle as opposed to operating on the traditional basis of a despatch of the grand fleet to Singapore on the out-

---

(cont.)
but at this moment they are nearer to 'doing something' than I have ever known and I cant altogether repress hopes!
N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C. to Hilda, 17 Dec. 1937, NC 18/1/1032.

1 Supra, pp.121-123, 144-145.

break of war.[1] In the end the failure to obtain American strategic assistance in the Far East was more than compensated for by the events of August 1939 and the decisions of both the Japanese and the Italians not to enter the war at this stage. This unexpected development radically improved Britain's strategic situation and helped to resolve successfully a dilemma which had plagued Chamberlain's Administration from the outset.

It also altered the nature and shape of Anglo-American naval cooperation, changing its emphasis from one of hoping for strategic assistance in the Far East to greater involvement on detailed day-to-day technical matters related to the war in Europe. Despite the lack of a common naval strategy with the Americans, a fact which did not surprise the Admiralty unduly, relations between the U.S. Navy Department and themselves continued to improve, subject to periodic bouts of strain and stubbornness, in the three year period that Chamberlain remained Prime Minister. In so doing they laid the groundwork for what was to become infinitely more important tactical and strategic cooperation in the future. Therefore, in the context of the wider implications to be derived from them in the longer period, the

[1] The discrepancy between the First Sea Lord's support for the flying squadron concept and the Admiralty's response to the Fitzmaurice memo on 29 March 1939 suggested that the policy was unsettled and Admiral Cunningham's paper of 5 April 1939 fully confirmed this impression.
Supra, pp. 237-242, 246-248, 257-259, 263-266, 270-271.

history of Anglo-American naval relations in the Chamberlain premiership is neither a study in total failure nor can it be seen as an irrelevant and utterly worthless exercise.

Indeed the results do much to reinforce the belief that the two powers already shared a basic community of interest which was strong enough to overcome their various and occasionally substantial differences in policy. In other words, a mutual desire to defend democracy and prevent the dictatorships from achieving world domination was always likely to be a decisive factor in favour of securing closer cooperation in Anglo-American relations. Lindsay had said as much in a message to Eden on 7 February 1938 when predicting that the actions of the totalitarian powers would eventually do more to convince the Roosevelt Administration that their own foreign policy objectives were interwoven with those of Chamberlain's Government than anything which the British could do by themselves.[1] This was to be sound and accurate advice as the events of the next few years would prove conclusively.

Although it is a temptation to regard Chamberlain's resignation as being a watershed in Anglo-American relations, it would be a mistake to think that from 10 May 1940 Churchill's policy towards the Americans

[1] Avon Papers, Lindsay to Eden, 7 Feb. 1938, US/38/11.

changed fundamentally from the course which his predecessor's administration had followed from the opening of the Second World War in September 1939. On the contrary, it was principally the developments in the war which were to force the two countries to depend upon one another more and make them appreciate the ambiguities of their former relationship, a fact vividly demonstrated in the aftermath of the French collapse in June 1940.

Considering the strength of American isolationism, the prevailing economic depression which militated against the use of trade sanctions against the Japanese, and the fact that the U.S. Navy was ill equipped and unprepared to fight a war in 1937 and 1938, it is hardly surprising that the British failed to obtain the President's consent for a common naval strategy and had to be content with more limited achievements of a technical and tactical nature. But bearing in mind the enormous difficulties with which the British were faced and the large potential strategic benefits which could have resulted from an agreement with the Americans, it is equally obvious why leading members of Chamberlain's Government were prepared to invest so much time and effort in seeking to grasp the often elusive hand of American friendship. For Eden, Halifax, Stanhope, Chatfield, Churchill and even Chamberlain himself the relationship between naval strategy and foreign policy in Anglo-American relations was necessarily a close one, although individuals differed from one another on what

the fundamental core of that policy should be. Whether the British could have been any more successful had they adopted a prudent, candid and tactful approach from the beginning is debatable. As a Foreign Office paper pointed out in February 1939, American foreign policy on any particular issue, large or small, was always difficult to appraise and, evaluating the influences which went to determine it was as harrowing a task as attempting to weigh a wild cat on a pair of kitchen scales and for the same reason--that the wild cat would never remain still long enough to be weighed![1]

[1] Foreign Office memo of a lecture read at a Far Eastern lunch, American Policy in the Far East, F 1162/G, 3 Feb. 1939, FO 371/23547.

Bibliography

(A) MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

1. British Empire

a) Official Records

Public Record Office, London.

Admiralty

Adm. 1 Papers of the Admiralty and Secretariat.

Adm. 116 Cases of the Admiralty and Secretariat.

Adm. 167 Board of the Admiralty: Minutes and Memoranda.

Adm. 181 Navy Estimates.

Adm. 182 Confidential Admiralty Fleet Orders.

Adm. 199 War History: Cases and Papers.

Adm. 205 First Sea Lord: Papers.

Air Ministry

Air 8 Chief of the Air Staff: Records.

Air 9 Director of Plans: Records.

Air 19 Correspondence.

Cabinet Office

Cab. 2-5 C.I.D: Minutes and Memoranda.

Cab. 16 Ad Hoc Sub Committees of Enquiry: Proceedings and Memoranda.

Cab. 21 Cabinet Registered Files.

Cab. 23-24 Cabinet Minutes and Memoranda.

Cab. 27 Committees: General Series.

Cab. 29 Anglo-French Staff Conversations.

Cab. 32 Imperial Conference 1937: Minutes and Memoranda.

Cab. 53 C.O.S. Committee: Minutes and Memoranda

Cab. 54 Deputy C.O.S. Committee: Minutes and Memoranda.

Cab. 55 C.I.D. Joint Planning Committee: Minutes and Memoranda.

Cab. 57 Sub-Committees.

Cab. 63 Correspondence and Memoranda.

Cab. 64 Minister for Coordination of Defence: Registered Files.

Cab. 65 War Cabinet: Minutes.

Cab. 66-68 War Cabinet: Memoranda.

Cab. 79-80 War Cabinet Chiefs of Staff Committee: Minutes and Memoranda.

Cab. 82 Deputy Chiefs of Staff Committee: Minutes and Papers.

Cab. 83 Ministerial Committee on Military Co-ordination: Minutes and Papers.

Cab. 84 Joint Planning Committees: Minutes and Memoranda.

Cab. 85 Anglo-French Liaison: Minutes and Papers.

Cab. 92 Committee on Allied Demands: Minutes and Papers.

Cab. 94 Oversea Defence Committee: Minutes and Papers.

Cab. 99 Supreme War Council 1939-1940: Minutes and Memoranda.

Cab. 100 Summaries of Information: Central War Room.

Cab. 103 Cabinet Office Historical Section: Periodical Progress Reports.

Cab. 115 Central Office for North American Studies.

Cab. 118 Various Ministers: Files.

Dominions Office

DO 3 Registers of Correspondence.

DO 35 Original Correspondence.

DO 114 Confidential Print - Dominions.

DO 121 Private Office Papers.

Foreign Office

FO 115 Embassy and Consular Archives, United States of America Correspondence.

FO 371 Foreign Office General Correspondence: Political 1937-1940: Minutes and Memoranda for American Department (A files), Central Department (C files) and Far Eastern Department (F files).

FO 414 Foreign Office Confidential Prints, North America.

FO 436 Far Eastern Affairs: Further Correspondence.

FO 800 Foreign Office Personnel:-
Sir A. Cadogan - /293-294.
Viscount Cranborne - /296.
1st Earl of Halifax - /309-328.
Sir Orme Sargent - /272-279.

Prime Minister's Office

Prem. 1 Correspondence and Papers to 1940.

Treasury

T160 Treasury Correspondence and Finance 1937-1940.

T172 Chancellor of the Exchequer Office: Miscellaneous Papers.

T175 Sir Richard Hopkins Papers.

T177 Sir Frederick Phillips Papers.

War Office

W.O. 33 Committees: Reports and Papers.

W.O. 190 Appreciation Files.

b) Private Papers

Birmingham University Library

Earl of Avon Papers.

Neville Chamberlain Papers.

Cambridge University Library

Viscount Templewood Papers.

Churchill College, Archive Centre, Cambridge

Admiral Sir R.A.R. Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax Papers.

Sir Thomas Inskip (Viscount Caldecote) Extracts from Diaries 1938-1940.

Sir H.M. Knatchbull-Hugessen Diaries and Correspondence.

Sir V.A.L. Mallet Memoir.

Sir E.C.E. Phipps Diplomatic Papers.

Baron Vansittart Cabinet Papers.

National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh

Arthur Murray, Lord Elibank Papers.

Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh

Lord Lothian Papers.

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

Baron Chatfield Papers.

British Museum, London

Admiral Sir A.B. Cunningham Papers.

Naval War Library, Ministry of Defence, London

Rear Admiral J.H. Godfrey Papers.

Kent County Council Archive Office, Maidstone

7th Earl of Stanhope Papers.

Bodleian Library, Oxford

Chartwell Papers (W.S. Churchill)

York City Library

1st Earl of Halifax Papers.

Interviews

Lord Birkenhead (Charlton, 1975-76).

W.R. Emerson (Hyde Park, New York, 8 February 1978).

Dr. T. Gibson Smith (Washington, D.C., 27 January 1978).

Dr. M. Lowenthal (Washington, D.C., 30 January 1978).

Rt.Hon. Malcolm MacDonald (London, 10 October 1978).

Lady Vansittart (London, 20 April 1978).

Lecture

D.N. Dilks, 'Appeasement Revisited', Inaugural lecture at the University of Leeds, December 1971.

2. United States

a) Official Records

National Archives, Washington, D.C.

RG 38 Office of Chief of Naval Operations.

RG 59 General Records, Department of State (Decimal File).

RG 80 General Records, Department of the Navy.

RG 165 War Department General Staff and Special Staffs.

RG 218 Joint Chiefs of Staff.

RG 225 Joint Board and Committees.

Operational Naval Archives, U.S. Navy, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.

Comnaveu Series: Commander, Naval Forces Europe.

C.N.O. File (Secret): Chief of Naval Operations.

Navy War Plans Division.

Strategic and Operational Planning Documents.

b) Private Papers

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York

A.A. Berle Papers.

R.T. McIntire Papers.

R. Walton Moore Papers.

Henry Morgenthau,Jr., Papers.

F.D. Roosevelt: Official File, President's Personal File, President's Secretary's File, Press Conferences.
S.I. Rosenman Papers.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Norman Davis Papers.
Cordell Hull Papers.
Admiral W.D. Leahy Papers.
Admiral H. Yarnell Papers.

Operational Naval Archives, Washington, D.C.

Admiral Alan G. Kirk Papers.

(B) PRINTED SOURCES

1. Primary Sources

Official Papers.

Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937-49
Edited by R.G. Neale (vols. I-II), H. Kenway, H.J.W. Stokes, P.G. Edwards (vol. III). (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975-79).

Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939
Third Series, vols. II-IX. Edited by E.L. Woodward & Rohan Butler (H.M.S.O., London, 1949-55).

Documents Diplomatiques Français 1932-1939
2^{E} Series (1936-1939), vols. VII-XIII. Compiled by

Ministère Des Affaires Étrangères (L'Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1972-79).

Foreign Relations of the United States
Vols. 1937-1940 (Department of State, Washington, D.C., 1954-1958).

Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy 1931-1941 (Department of State, Washington, D.C., 1943).

Roosevelt's Foreign Policy 1933-1941: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Unedited Speeches and Messages (Wilfred Funk Incorporated, New York, 1942).

The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt
Vols. 1937-1940. Edited by S.I. Rosenman (Macmillan, London, 1941).

The Roosevelt Letters, Vol. III (1928-1945)
Edited by Elliott Roosevelt (Harrap & Co., London, 1952).

Parliamentary Debates.

Official Report, 5th Series, Commons, 1937-1940, vols. 324-360.
Official Report, 5th Series, Lords, 1937-1940, vols. 105-116.

Diaries and Papers.

Avon, Earl of, The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators (Cassell, London, 1962).

Avon, Earl of, The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning (Cassell, London, 1965).

Berle, B.B. and Jacobs, T.B. (eds.), Navigating the Rapids 1918-1971: From the Papers of A.A. Berle (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1973).

Blum, J.M., From the Morgenthau Diaries: Years of Crisis, 1928-1938 (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1959); Years of Urgency, 1938-1941 (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1965).

Bullitt, O.H. (ed.), For the President, Personal and Secret (Andre Deutsch, London, 1973).

Chatfield, Lord, It Might Happen Again. Vol. 2. The Navy and Defence (Heinemann, London, 1947).

Churchill, W.S., History of the Second World War: The Gathering Storm (Cassell, London, 1948); Their Finest Hour (Cassell, London, 1949).

Cooper, A.D., Old Men Forget (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1957).

Craigie, R., Behind the Japanese Mask (Hutchinson, London, 1946).

Cunningham, A., A Sailor's Odyssey (Hutchinson, London, 1951).

Dilks, D. (ed.), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945 (Cassell, London, 1971).

Grew, J.C., Turbulent Era. Vol. II (Hammond, Hammond, London, 1953).

Halifax, Earl of, Fulness of Days (Collins, London, 1957).

Harvey, J. (ed.), The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey 1937-40 (Collins, London, 1970).

Hooker, N.H. (ed.), The Moffat Papers (Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1956).

Hull, C., The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1948).

Ickes, H.L., The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The Inside Struggle 1936-1939 (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1955); The Lowering Clouds 1939-1941 (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1955).

King, E.J. &
Whitehill, W.M., Fleet Admiral King (W.W. Norton, New York, 1952).

MacLeod, R. &
Kelly, D., The Ironside Diaries 1937-1940 (Constable, London, 1962).

Millis, W.C. &
Duffield, E.S. (eds.), The Forrestal Diaries (Viking Press, New York, 1951).

Rosenman, S.I., Working with Roosevelt (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1952).

Templewood, Viscount, Nine Troubled Years (Collins, London, 1954).

Welles, Sumner, Seven Decisions that Shaped History (Harper & Bros., New York, 1951).

Welles, Sumner, The Time for Decision (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1944).

Newspapers.

Daily Telegraph
Manchester Guardian

New York Times

The Times

2. Secondary Sources

Books.

Abbazia, P., Mr. Roosevelt's Navy (U.S. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1975).

Adam Smith, J., John Buchan (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1965).

Alsop, J. &
Kintner, R., American White Paper (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1940).

Barnet, C., The Collapse of British Power (Eyre Methuen, London, 1972).

Baruch, B.M., The Public Years (Odhams Press Ltd., London, 1961).

Beard, C.A., American Foreign Policy in the making, 1932-1940 (Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1946).

Birkenhead, Earl of, Halifax (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1965).

Borg, D., The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938 (Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1964).

Borg, D. &
Okamoto, S. (eds.), Pearl Harbor as History (Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1973).

Brice, M.H., The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident 1937-41 (Ian Allen, London, 1973).

Burns, J.M., Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., New York, 1956).

Butler, J.R.M., Grand Strategy. Vol. II. Sept. 1939-June 1941 (H.M.S.O., London, 1957).

Butler, J.R.M., Lord Lothian (Macmillan, London, 1944).

Challenor, R.D., From Isolation to Containment (Edward Arnold, London, 1970).

Clifford, N., Retreat from China (Longmans, London, 1967).

Colvin, I., The Chamberlain Cabinet (Victor Gollancz, London, 1971).

Colvin, I., Vansittart in Office (Victor Gollancz, London, 1965).

Cosgrave, P., Churchill at War: Alone 1939-40 (Collins, London, 1974).

Craig, G.A. &
Gilbert, F. (eds.), The Diplomats 1919-1939. Vol. 2. The Thirties (Atheneum, New York, 1968).

Davis, F. &
Lindley, E.K., How War Came (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1942).

Davis, V.E., Origin of the Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff (Historical Section, Washington, 1953).

Divine, R.A., Roosevelt and World War II (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1969).

Divine, R.A., The Illusion of Neutrality (Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1962).

Divine, R.A., The Reluctant Belligerent (John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1965).

Drummond, D.F., The Passing of American Neutrality 1937-41 (Univ. of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1955).

Duroselle, J.B., From Wilson to Roosevelt (Chatto & Windus, London, 1964).

Feiling, K., Life of Neville Chamberlain (Macmillan, London, 1970).

Feis, H., The Road to Pearl Harbor (Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, 1950).

Gardner, L.C., Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin, 1964).

Gibbs , N.H., Grand Strategy. Vol. I. Rearmament Policy (H.M.S.O., London, 1976).

Gilbert, M. &
Gott, R., The Appeasers (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1967).

Grenfell, R., Main Fleet to Singapore (Faber & Faber, London, 1951).

Hancock, W.K. &
Gowing, M., British War Economy (H.M.S.O., London, 1953).

Hasluck, P., The Government and the People 1939-1941 (Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1952).

Heinrichs, W.H., American Ambassador (Little Brown & Co., Boston, 1966).

Hoehling, A., America's Road to War 1939-1941 (Abelard & Schuman, London, 1970).

Howard, M., The Continental Commitment (Temple Smith, London, 1972).

Jonas, M., Isolationism in America 1935-41 (Cornell Univ. Press, New York, 1966).

Jones, F.C., Japan's New Order in East Asia: Its rise and fall (O.U.P., London, 1954).

Kimball, W., The Most Unsordid Act: Lend-Lease 1939-1941 (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1969).

Kittredge, T.B., Evolution of Global Strategy (MS). In the Modern Military Division, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Kittredge, T.B., U.S.-British Naval Cooperation 1939-42 (MS). In Operational Naval Archives, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.

Koginos, M.T., The Panay Incident: Prelude to War (Purdue Univ. Studies, Lafayette, Indiana, 1967).

Langer, W.L. &
Gleason, S.E., The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940

(Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1952).

Lash, J.P. Roosevelt & Churchill 1939-1941 (Andre Deutsch, London, 1977).

Lee, B.A., Britain and the Sino-Japanese War 1937-1939 (O.U.P., Oxford, 1973).

Leuchtenburg, W.E., Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (Harper & Row, New York, 1963).

Leutze, J.R., Bargaining for Supremacy (Univ. of N. Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1977).

Liddell Hart, B.H., Strategy: The Indirect Approach (Faber & Faber, London, 1967).

Louis, W.R., British Strategy in the Far East 1919-1939 (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971).

Lowe, P., Great Britain and the origins of the Pacific war (O.U.P., Oxford, 1977).

Lu, D.J., From the Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor: Japan's Entry into World War II (Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1961).

Mansergh, P.N., Survey of Commonwealth Affairs:

Problems of External Policy, 1919-1939 (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1952).

Marder, A.J., From the Dardanelles to Oran (O.U.P., Oxford, 1974).

McLachlan, D., Room 39 (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1968).

Morison, S.E., The Rising Sun in the Pacific 1931-April 1942 (Little Brown & Co., Boston, 1948).

Morley, J.W. (ed.), Deterrent Diplomacy (Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1976).

Nicholas, H.G., Britain and the United States (Chatto & Windus, London, 1963).

Northedge, F.S., The Troubled Giant (G. Bell & Sons, London, 1966).

Offner, A.A., American Appeasement (Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1969).

Offner, A.A., America and the origins of World War II (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1971).

Ovendale, R., Appeasement and the English Speaking

World (Univ. of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1975).

Parkinson, R., Peace for our Time (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1971).

Pelz, S., Race to Pearl Harbor (Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1974).

Perry, H.D., The Panay Incident: Prelude to Pearl Harbor (Macmillan, New York, 1969).

Pratt, J.W., The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy. Vols. 12 & 13. Cordell Hull (Cooper Square, New York, 1964).

Pratt, L.R., East of Malta, West of Suez (Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1975).

Preston, A. (ed.), General Staffs & Diplomacy Before World War 2 (Croom Helm, London, 1978).

Rauch, B., Roosevelt from Munich to Pearl Harbor Creative Age Press, New York, 1950).

Richardson, J.O., On the Treadmill to Pearl Harbor (Naval History Division, Washington, D.C., 1973)

Robertson, E.M. (ed.), Origins of the Second World War (Macmillan, London, 1971).

Roosevelt, E., As He Saw It (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, New York, 1946).

Roskill, S., Hankey: Man of Secrets. Vol. III. 1921-1963 (Collins, London, 1974).

Roskill, S., Naval Policy between the Wars. Vol. II. The Period of Reluctant Rearmament (Collins, London, 1976).

Roskill, S., The War at Sea, 1939-45 (H.M.S.O., London, 1954).

Shai, A., Origins of the War in the East (Croom Helm, London, 1976).

Tansill, C.C., Back Door to War (Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, 1952).

Taylor, A.J.P., The Origins of the Second World War (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1969).

Thorne, C., The Approach of War 1938-39 (Macmillan, London, 1967).

Watson, M.S., Chief of Staff: Pre war Plans and Preparations (Dept. of Army, Washington, D.C., 1950).

Watt, D.C., Personalities and Policies (Longmans, London, 1965).

Whalen, R.J., The Founding Father (New American Library, New York, 1964).

Wheeler-Bennett, J., King George VI (Macmillan, London, 1958)

Wiltz, J.E., From Isolation to War (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1969).

Woodburn-Kirby, S., History of the Second World War: The War against Japan (H.M.S.O., London, 1957).

Woodward, Sir L., British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Vol. 1 (H.M.S.O., London, 1970).

Articles.

Adams, F.C., "The Road to Pearl Harbor: A Re-examination of American Far Eastern Policy, July 1937-December 1938," Journal of American History, LVIII (1971), 73-92.

Borg, D., "Notes on Roosevelt's Quarantine Speech," Political Science Quarterly, 72 (Sept. 1957), 405-433.

Callahan, R., "The Illusion of Security: Singapore 1919-42," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 9, No. 2 (April 1974), 69-92.

Clifford, N.R., "Britain, America and the Far East 1937-1940: A Failure in Cooperation,"

Journal of British Studies, 3 (1963-64), 137-154.

Dallek, R., "Franklin Roosevelt as World Leader," American Historical Review, Vol. 76, No. 5 (Dec. 1971), 1503-13.

Elibank, Viscount, "Franklin Roosevelt: Friend of Britain," Contemporary Review, CLXXXVII (June 1955), 362-8.

Esthus, R.A., "President Roosevelt's Commitment to Britain to Intervene in a Pacific War," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, L, 1963 (June), 28-38.

Haight, J. McVickar,Jr., "Roosevelt and the Aftermath of the Quarantine Speech," The Review of Politics, 24 (April 1962), 233-59.

Haight, J. McVickar,Jr., "Franklin D. Roosevelt and a Naval Quarantine of Japan," Pacific Historical Review, 40 (May 1971), 203-26.

McIntyre, W.D., "The Strategic Significance of Singapore 1917-1942. The Naval Base and the Commonwealth," Journal of South East Asian History, 10, No. 1 (Mar. 1969), 69-94.

Morton, L., "War Plan ORANGE: Evolution of a Strategy," World Politics, XI (January 1959), 221-50.

Pratt, L.R., "The Anglo-American Naval Conversations on the Far East of January 1938," International Affairs, 47 (October 1971), 745-63.

Tamchina, R., "In Search of Common Causes. The Imperial Conference of 1937," Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 1 (1972), 79-105.

Wallace, W.V., "Roosevelt and British Appeasement in 1938," British Association for American Studies, Bulletin No. 5 (Dec. 1962), 4-25.

Watt, D.C., "Appeasement: The Rise of a Revisionist School?" Political Quarterly, XXXVI (1965), 191-213.

Watt, D.C., "Imperial Defence Policy and Imperial Foreign Policy 1911-1939 - A Neglected Paradox?" Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, 2, No. 4 (May 1963), 266-281.

Watt, D.C., "Roosevelt and Neville Chamberlain: Two Appeasers," International Journal, XXVIII (1973), 185-204.

Theses.

Haggie, P., 'The Royal Navy and the Far Eastern Problem 1931-1941' (Unpublished Ph.D., Manchester University, Sept. 1974).

Hamill, I., 'The Strategic Illusion: The Singapore Strategy and the Defence of Australia and New Zealand 1919-1942' (Unpublished Ph.D., Leeds University, 1975).

Hemmings, W., 'Australia and Britain's Far Eastern Defence Policy 1937-1942' (Unpublished B.Litt., Oxford University, Sept. 1977).

Kawai, A., 'Anglo-Japanese Relations 1937-41' (Unpublished B.Litt., Oxford University, 1965).

Lippincott, J.M., 'The Strategy of Appeasement: The Formulation of British Defence Policy 1934-1939' (Unpublished D.Phil., Oxford University, 1975).

Lowenthal, M.M., 'Leadership and Indecision: American War Planning and Policy Process 1937-1942' (Unpublished Ph.D., Harvard University, Sept. 1975).

MacDonald, C.A., 'The Roosevelt Administration and British Appeasement 1936-39' (Unpublished D.Phil., Oxford University, 1974).

McCulloch, T.K., 'Anglo-American economic diplomacy and the European crisis' (Unpublished D.Phil., Oxford University, 1978).

Neidpath, J. Lord, 'The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Eastern Empire 1919-1941' (Unpublished D.Phil., Oxford University, 197

Nottage, R.F., 'Japan's Political Failure in China 1935-40' (Unpublished B.Litt., Oxford University, 1965).

Tipping, P.J.A., 'Naval Strategy and the Pacific area 1920-41' (Unpublished B.Phil. (Politics), Oxford University, 1968).

+ + +