

ABSTRACT

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF LORD ROBERT CECIL'S VIEWS ON THE SECURING OF A
LASTING PEACE 1915-19

(D. Phil thesis 1971)

Lord Robert Cecil's fame rests on his work in creating and promoting the League of Nations. This thesis is an analysis of the motives and personal attributes which caused him, a Tory politician, to lead a radical movement in foreign policy; it is also an account of his work as a foreign policy maker in this period. Such studies of Cecil as have appeared deal only with his League work; this thesis covers the whole field of his foreign policy work and is based on a detailed study of Foreign Office and Cabinet documents from 1915-19. It has also drawn largely on Cecil's papers at the British Museum, on the Lloyd George papers at the Beaverbrook Library, and on American documentary sources.

The first chapter describes Cecil's upbringing and political life. It shows that he was inspired by the attempts of his father, Lord Salisbury, to find alternatives to war in settling international disputes. It also shows that his upbringing tended to cut him off, later, from political colleagues and caused him to pursue a line of his own, independent of party. His religious faith, also the result of his upbringing, was permanently to affect his political views.

The second chapter describes Cecil in office as parliamentary under-secretary for foreign affairs, minister of blockade and assistant foreign secretary, from 1915-18. Because of his decisiveness and readiness to initiate policy, he was effective in this work. For the same reasons, he could be hasty in his judgement. He finally resigned, after the Armistice, over the issue of Welsh Church disestablishment. His war work, involving the plight of British prisoners of war and of eastern European Jews, and the systematic starvation of the enemy, preyed on his mind and was a further incentive towards seeking an alternative to war in the future. But he was never a pacifist, was convinced that militarist Germany must be defeated, and was against a compromise peace.

His peace aims - other than the League - are analysed in the third chapter. He believed that the success of the League must depend on a just peace. Keeping agreements must be, he believed, the fundamental principle in international relations; first and foremost, therefore, he wanted, through an allied victory, to re-establish the sanctity of treaties which had been undermined by the German violation of the Belgian treaty. Secondly, he wished for increased American participation in the maintenance of world peace. Thirdly, he wished to see the militarist regime in Germany ousted, and the Kaiser punished for the German violation of international law. Fourthly, he wanted peace to be restored in post-revolutionary Russia through strong government; he did not believe that the Bolsheviks could achieve this and considered them internationally unreliable; he therefore at first supported Allied intervention against them after the Armistice; later, the wastage and inconclusiveness made

him favour a truce rather than military victory. Fifthly, he supported the liberation of subject nationalities in Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire, but only because it helped to undermine the enemy. He did not believe it would increase stability in Europe or that it was intrinsically just. He made an exception, however, in the case of the Jews and Armenians, because they were victims of religious persecution.

He was unsympathetic towards British plans to extend the Empire in the Near East and in Africa, and, with other Allies, to boycott Germany economically after the war. He believed his policy to be a continuation of Salisbury's - aiming at peace and justice abroad. He thought that the commercial element which had taken over from the landed interest in the Conservative Party in recent years and was exemplified by the tariff reform movement, made for a more selfish approach to foreign policy, likely to increase international tension.

The next five chapters are concerned with his developing ideas on the League during the war and Peace Conference, and with the reaction of members of the Allied governments to these ideas. He produced the first ^{/directly} influential paper on a League in British government circles. He pressed for an official British league scheme and for publicity for the idea before the war ended, because he wished to launch the League while an awareness of the horrors of war was at its height. He was partly thwarted by the attitudes of President Wilson and of the British government, but as a result of his efforts, much work was done in drafting League schemes at the Foreign Office. He was appointed official League delegate at the Conference.

He wanted a League of Nations based on the nineteenth century Concert of Europe system, but worldwide in scope, centred round the great powers meeting in conference when crises occurred, and, also, regularly. Like other pioneers of the League, he wished to ensure delay in a crisis when public opinion could be fully informed and could give its support to the right side in the dispute. Like others too, he wanted the League to have wide responsibilities - i.e. in dealing with problems arising out of the war and the Peace Treaty. He hoped that the mandate system, to be established in many of the ex-enemy territories, would set a new standard of justice in the administration of backward areas. He wished also to see international administration in China. More than others, he wanted to incorporate in the League Covenant a new understanding that treaties should be reviewed peacefully by conference at regular intervals, in order to prevent grievances from being embodied for all time in treaties, and thereby causing contempt for international law. He was prepared for a considerable surrender of national sovereignty - as far as this was compatible with the League's acceptability to the British and American legislatures. He was clearer and more consistent than Wilson about the League; he opposed Wilson's territorial guarantee article which was the principle reason why the U.S. Senate voted against American membership of the League. With the exception of this article, Cecil was very largely responsible for the final form of the Covenant.

In the ninth and tenth chapters, Cecil's work on European economic reconstruction at the Peace Conference is described. He agreed to be an economic delegate in 1919 but refused to come back into the government; this made his task hard, because the British Blockade Ministry and Foreign Office were suspicious of his authority. He knew that peace depended on economic recovery, and he soon realised that this in turn depended on the industrial revival in Germany and central Europe. Germany had to obtain food and raw materials; he joined the Americans in fighting for the relaxation of the blockade and for allowing the Germans to pay for food in gold, but he recognised that Europe could not recover without a major American loan, and he repeatedly supported efforts to secure this. He considered that Britain should make economic sacrifices; in particular he opposed Britain's demand for the full costs of the war from Germany, or for a large share of the reparations bill. He also opposed the decision of the Allies to leave the amount to be paid by Germany unsettled - which created uncertainty damaging to financial recovery.

In the eleventh chapter, Cecil's attitude to the completed Peace Treaty is described. He tried to have the Saar, reparations, Rhineland and Polish terms changed, and to introduce a provision whereby the Treaty could be reviewed after five years. His work in framing the mandates constitutions, on League organisation and in attempting to secure treaty revision and an international loan, later in 1919, is also described in this chapter.

In the final chapter, his responsibility as chief draftsman of the League Covenant, for the failures and successes of the League is discussed. The conclusion is that Cecil was responsible for the Covenant being on the whole sensibly conceived, though the League had little chance of ever succeeding in preventing major war. His political character is summarised, stress being laid, first, on his fundamentally British approach to international law and his intolerance of continental attitudes, and secondly, on his religious faith which coloured his League ideas in particular.

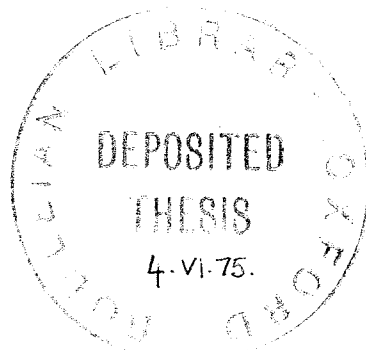
It is the conclusion of this thesis that Cecil's views were an interpretation of his father's ideas on achieving lasting peace, by a more optimistic character and in response to a catastrophic world war. A further conclusion has emerged from this study - that Cecil's views at the Paris Peace Conference show him to have been clear-headed and statesmanlike as well as simply idealistic. Had they been put into practice, they would have done much to bring about the success of the League. Finally, it is notable that with all his fine qualities Cecil failed to gain the effective political following necessary to get his way in foreign policy-making. This was largely due to his upbringing which gave him an unshakeable integrity and an independent point of view, but which tended to isolate him in political life.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF LORD ROBERT CECIL'S VIEWS
ON THE SECURING OF A LASTING PEACE, 1915-19

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(D. Phil Thesis 1971)



Preface

Lord Robert Cecil's fame rests on his reputation as a leading League of Nations statesman after the First World War. This thesis concentrates on the preceding period of his life and on the Peace Conference of Paris, when his thoughts on the achievement of a lasting peace were formed and expressed. Apart from a sketch of his youth and early political career in the introductory chapter and some remarks on his later career at the end, I have dealt with the years when Cecil was at the Foreign Office as parliamentary under-secretary to Grey and Balfour, from 1915-18, and when he was British League of Nations and Economic representative at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

There are two principal collections of the personal papers of Lord Robert Cecil (Viscount Cecil of Chelwood). These are the Cecil of Chelwood Papers at the British Museum and the Cecil of Chelwood Papers at the Cecil family archives at the library of Hatfield House. Though the extensive British Museum collection has been invaluable as a source of general information on Lord Robert Cecil's political character, it contains comparatively little material relevant to the period under study. There is one document there, however - Cecil's Peace Conference diary - which has been the key source for the later chapters; the most important single document used in the whole thesis. Another copy of this diary exists at Hatfield. In the Hatfield collection, again, the papers - which are mainly personal and contain little

important political material - have been valuable chiefly as background reading.

By far the greater part of the documentary material for the thesis comes from the Foreign Office and Cabinet records at the Public Record Office. The Lloyd George Papers at the Beaverbrook Library have also provided more valuable information over the whole period than the Cecil collections. The Bonar Law and Strachey collections at the same library have been useful, as have the Keynes Papers at the Marshall Library of the Faculty of Economics at Cambridge, the Gilbert Murray and Asquith Papers at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, the Lothian Papers at the Scottish Records Office, Edinburgh, the Lansdowne Papers at Bowood House, and the Papers of Sir James Butler, Trinity College, Cambridge (in his possession).

I wish here to thank the Library staffs in these places for their help and interest; in particular I am grateful to Miss Clare Talbot at the Hatfield Library; also to Sir James Butler, the Marquess of Salisbury, and the Marquess of Lansdowne for making their private manuscript collections available to me. I should like to thank Professor A. Headlam-Morley of St. Hugh's College, Oxford, for allowing me to see unpublished material from the papers of her father, James Headlam-Morley, Lord Kahn for permission to see the Keynes Papers, and Mark Bonham-Carter for permission to see the Asquith Papers, and the Librarian of New College for permission to see the Milner Papers. I would like here, too, to record my gratitude to the late Mrs. Isobel Henderson for giving permission to use the Gilbert Murray Papers, and

for her help and friendly interest.

Thanks to the generosity of the Harkness Fund, I was able to carry out further work for this thesis in the United States. The most useful information came from unpublished diaries in the House Collection at the Sterling Memorial Library of Yale University (Edward House, Vance McCormick and Sir William Wiseman Papers), in the James Shotwell Collection at the Butler Library, Columbia University (G.L. Beer Diary), and in the Bernard Baruch Papers at the Firestone Library of Princeton University. I have also used the Hugh Gibson and Herbert Hoover Papers at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University, the Walter Page Papers at the Houghton Library of Harvard University, the Thomas W. Lamont Papers at the Baker Library of the Harvard University Business School, the Woodrow Wilson and Norman Davis Papers at the Library of Congress and the Wolf-Movshovitch Collection at the YIVO Institute of Jewish Research. Nearly all this material has provided information for the Peace Conference chapters - in particular about the question of the economic settlement after the war. I would like to thank the library staffs in all these places for their help and friendly interest.

For the Peace Conference chapters concerning the League, I have drawn heavily on a published documentary source, David Hunter Miller's The Drafting of the Covenant. Any detailed account of the origins of the League of Nations must rely to a large extent on the narrative and analysis in Volume I, and on the comprehensive collection of documents in Volume 2, of that work.

I thank the following relatives and acquaintances of Lord Robert for personal information: The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, The Dowager Lady Harlech, The Marquis of Salisbury, Lord David Cecil, Professor Anne Lambton, Dame Kathleen Courtney, Charles Judd, Sir James Butler, Philip Noel-Baker, M. P., Raymond Fosdick, Lord Salter of Kidlington, Sir Owen O'Malley, Dr. Arnold Toynbee and the late Leonard Woolf. For help and advice, I am indebted to: Sir Isiah Berlin, Lord Blake, Dr. Martin Gilbert, Sir Roy Harrod (Oxford University); Professor James Joll (L.S.E.); Professor Keith Robbins (University of Bangor); Dr. Michael Ekstein (New University of Ulster); Dr. Richard Allison, Dr. David Harnett, Professor Kevin Starr, Professor Samuel Williamson (Harvard University); Professor Peter Stansky (Stanford University); Professor Alfred Gollin, Dr. Gary Ostrower, Dr. Forrest Robinson, Dr. Edward Segel (University of California); Sir John Wheeler-Bennett (University of Virginia) and Dr. Russell Bryant (University of Alabama). For secretarial and other aid I thank: Mrs. Freda Marsh, Mr. Robert Gray, Mr. Art Shinnings, Mrs. Charles Knocker, Miss D. Birkbeck, Mrs. Valerie Edwards and Miss Mirabel Walker.

Finally, above all, my thanks are due to my supervisor, Professor Agnes Headlam-Morley (St. Hugh's College, Oxford) for her invaluable help, advice and encouragement.

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Abbreviations used in text

A.J.B.	-	Arthur James Balfour
A.M.T.C.	-	Allied Maritime Transport Council
B.E.D.	-	British Empire Delegation
C.I.G.S.	-	Chief of Imperial General Staff
I.L.O.	-	International Labour Organisation
I.W.C.	-	Imperial War Cabinet
L.G.	-	Lloyd George
L.N.U.	-	League of Nations Union
S.E.C.	-	Supreme Economic Council
U.D.C.	-	Union of Democratic Control
U.N.O.	-	United Nations Organisation

Abbreviations and symbols used in footnotes

ARA	-	American Relief Administration
<u>A.T.W.</u>	-	<u>All The Way</u> (Autobiography of Viscount Cecil of Chelwood)
CAB	-	Cabinet Papers, Public Records Office
CHE	-	Cecil of Chelwood Papers, Hatfield
corr.	-	correspondence
ed.	-	editor
edn.	-	edition

<u>et seq.</u>	-	<u>et sequens</u> (and what follows it)
F.O.	-	Foreign Office; Foreign Office papers, Public Records Office
G	-	} War Cabinet Memoranda
GT	-	
<u>Ibid.</u>	-	<u>Ibidem</u> (from same source as cited in previous footnote)
IWC	-	Imperial War Cabinet
L. of N.	-	League of Nations
memo.	-	memorandum
<u>Op.cit.</u>	-	<u>opere citato</u> (in the last cited work by the same author)
O.S.	-	other side (where page is numbered on only one side)
P	-	Cabinet "Peace" documents, Public Records Office
P.I.D.	-	Political Intelligence Department of Foreign Office
P.R.O.	-	Public Records Office
PT	-	Peace Treaty
tel.	-	telegram
WC	-	War Cabinet

PART ONE

THE POLITICAL CHARACTER OF LORD ROBERT CECIL

Chapter One

Political Views and Conditioning

1864 - 1914

Lord Robert Cecil (Viscount Cecil of Chelwood)¹ was the chief British architect of the League of Nations and a prominent champion of the League and disarmament in the inter-war period. He was born in 1864, entered Parliament in 1906, served at the Foreign Office as parliamentary under-secretary in both the wartime coalition governments, and resigned from office after the Armistice. He represented Britain on the commission to draft the Covenant of the League of Nations at Paris in 1919, where he also was principal British delegate at the Supreme Economic Council. During the following years he had ambitions to be foreign secretary, but did not receive enough support. He served in the first Baldwin Conservative government as Lord Privy Seal, and in the second as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In these offices he devoted himself to British League of Nations policy, was a delegate to League meetings at Geneva, and was chief British representative at

¹Who Was Who, 1951-60 (3rd edn., London 1967) p.195: CECIL of Chelwood, 1st Viscount - Edgar Algernon Robert Gascoigne-Cecil (September 1864-November 1958)

See also: Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, All The Way (London 1949), in particular pp.242-8. (Hereafter to be cited as "Visc. Cecil, A.T.W.")

disarmament talks. He resigned from the government in 1927 over a difference of opinion on naval disarmament, which reflected a general disagreement with the Conservative party's attitude to the League. After that he decided to devote himself to the League without regard for party ties; in the Lords, he sat on the cross benches; and he worked with the 1929 Labour government on League and disarmament policy, though he did not join them. During the thirties he continued to be a British delegate to Geneva, and a leader of popular opinion for the League at home; out of office, his influence with Conservative governments diminished but he had a high reputation internationally. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1938. His active political life ended with the outbreak of war the following year. He died in 1958.

His ideas on the League of Nations were the product of his early conditioning and his experiences in office during the First World War. It is the purpose of this study to give an account of the development of his views on international relations and to describe his part in the foundation of the League and in other aspects of the peace settlement after the war.

Lord Robert Cecil was the third son in a large family most of whom grew up to have distinguished careers in public life. James,¹ the eldest, became a leading and influential member of the Conservative

¹Dictionary of National Biography, 1941-1950 (1st edn., London 1959) p.137: CECIL, James Arthur Hubert Gascogne-, Fourth Marquess of Salisbury (1861-1947)

party, William, Bishop of Exeter,¹ Hugh,² a brilliant parliamentary orator, Edward,³ the financial advisor to the Egyptian government, and Gwendolen, the author of an impressive biography of her father, Lord Salisbury.⁴

The children's interest in public affairs sprung directly from their upbringing. Their father, the third Marquess of Salisbury, was three times prime minister and four times foreign secretary in Tory governments. In his time, Hatfield House, the family home, became a centre of power and a meeting place for politicians from all over the globe. The children were thus early accustomed to living in a central position in the English political world.

Salisbury was anxious, too, that his children should avoid the unhappiness he had experienced as a boy; he had been lonely and distant in his relations with his own father.⁵ His wife, Georgiana Alderson, a woman of intelligence and vitality, created the close family life he

¹Who Was Who, 1929-1940 (2nd edn., London 1967) p.233:

CECIL, Rt. Rev. Lord William Gascogne- (1863-1936)

²Who Was Who, 1951-1960 (3rd edn., London 1967) p.898:

QUICKSWOOD of Clothall, 1st Baron - Hugh Richard Heathcote Gascogne-Cecil (1869-1956)

³Dictionary of National Biography, 1912-1921 (1st edn., London 1927) p. 101: CECIL, Lord Edward Herbert Gascogne- (1867-1918)

⁴Lady Gwendolen Cecil, Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury i. (London 1921), ii. (London 1921), iii. (London 1931), iv. (London 1932). Cited hereafter as "G. Cecil, Salisbury"

⁵G. Cecil, Salisbury, i. 1-18

desired. From their early years they were able to have friendly and informal discussion with their father.¹ Their mother encouraged political ambitions in them as she had done in her husband.²

Robert Cecil accepted at an early age that he would become a lawyer in preparation for a political career.³ Lord Salisbury took some of the children on his diplomatic travels - Robert went to Berlin in 1878.⁴ Later as young men he and other brothers acted in turn as personal private secretaries to their father.

Though Salisbury brought his children up to decide for themselves, he profoundly influenced their moral conduct and point of view. They generally followed the path of duty - for their parents, though they never punished their children, were incapable of hiding disapproval.⁵ Indeed, religious education was the strongest factor in the upbringing. Salisbury had had religious doubts as a young man; he had faced and accepted the paradoxes without rejecting the faith; this gave him a strength which was basic to the inner self-confidence Robert Cecil gained from him.⁶

Their religion was of immense importance to them as a sustaining force in their daily lives; the history of the Church, particularly

¹G. Cecil, Salisbury, iii. 11, 18.

²G. Cecil, Salisbury, i. 66

³Viscount Cecil, A Great Experiment. An Autobiography (London 1941) p.12

⁴Ibid, p.15

⁵Ibid. p.12; and: G. Cecil, Salisbury, iii. 16

⁶G. Cecil, Salisbury, i. 112-15

the Anglican Church, was equally living for them. In the frequent discussions of contemporary church issues, Cromwell or Cranmer were spoken of as though they were only recently dead.¹ Lord Salisbury believed that if Christianity was abandoned, the present Western civilisation, which had been founded on it, would lose its sustaining principles and would inevitably perish.² Robert Cecil later said: 'I was, and am, confident that no healthy political or international system can be built up except on a religious foundation'.³ It seems, however, that he did not feel, as did his father, the contradiction between practical political action, even of a principled kind, and Christian morality. His father saw Christianity as the basic foundation for a man's whole outlook, including his political outlook; he did not believe that it provided a detailed manual for political behaviour. Robert Cecil believed that it did; he frequently and vehemently emphasised the moral aspects of political issues.

The religious and moral upbringing combined with the confidence in his background to make him decisive and fitted for action. Unlike Lord Salisbury, he did not have a contemplative side to his nature - he was like his mother, whom he resembled in appearance, an enthusiast, mentally alert, but not an intellectual. Lord Edward's wife, later Lady Milner, blamed the Cecils' Anglicanism for an absence of curiosity about ideas:

'It was much more about the immediate practical side of politics than about ultimate aims and much more dialectical. The Cecils talked more for amusement

¹Private information

²G. Cecil, Salisbury, i. 108

³Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.73

than for the expression of opinion or for the probing of thought. They were all brilliant at scoring off their opponents and their jokes were first class, but they did not want to find out what they thought nor very much what other people thought, they were not getting down to the roots of things or trying to. They knew what they thought on fundamentals. Their excellent brains were full of interest in scientific facts, historical research, political experiments, but they were certain that they had the key to all essentials and that this lay in the Anglican Church. This attitude of certainty always brought them up with a round turn in all philosophical discussions, because if you know, you cannot speculate about knowledge, and if you have certainty you cannot feign interest in mere possibilities¹

This was certainly true of Robert Cecil. He took little interest in contemporary developments in political thought; he accepted his father's views on them. His later League and foreign policy views were based much more on these than on any private reading. Indeed though he had the high moral seriousness and the interest in church issues characteristic of the Victorian period, his political approach, like Lord Salisbury's, was founded on beliefs more characteristic of an earlier era.

Other aspects of the upbringing should be noted: there was in general at Hatfield a lack of interest in personal matters.² Though always a spontaneous and a private personality, Robert Cecil inherited this tendency from his father. It went with an absence of petty personal foibles; unfortunately it also led often to bad judgement about colleagues. He was particularly prone, outside his immediate ministerial work, to overvalue the judgement of those he felt to be 'on the right side' in political outlook. Thus he sometimes aligned

¹The Viscountess Milner, My Picture Gallery, 1886-1901 (London, 1951) pp.81-2

²Private information

himself with people who were insignificant or who brought little credit or help to his cause. He thought too highly of Colonel House, President Wilson's intimate aide.¹ He was an enthusiastic friend and admirer of Oswald Moseley at first; and he allowed himself to be surrounded after the War with League supporters, whose heads, as his brother Hugh put it, were 'stuffed with benevolent wool'.²

Further, the Cecil children lacked the quality of williness. Salisbury made up for it with wisdom; his frequent habit of brooding on policy, without consulting others, may have been taken as a sign of subtlety, but it was in fact a temperamental characteristic. The sons did not learn by instinct how to manoeuvre or how to understand the manoeuvres of others. They lacked the common touch, and made their effect by fervour and integrity.

This factor in their education was reinforced by another: Lady Salisbury kept her children around her all her life (she died in 1899). Even after many of them were married, they and their families were in attendance at Hatfield, and continued their energetic discussions of political and Church subjects.³ This constant intimacy with one another's views within the confines of their home made them exclusive. It was hard for most of them to adjust their outlook to that of others in public life. This was conspicuous in Robert Cecil's case, who was out of step with his own party during the whole of his political career, and never

¹Viscount Cecil, A Great Experiment, pp.62-63

²Private Information

³Hatfield House, Cecil of Chelwood Papers. CHE 51/30:
3rd Marchioness of Salisbury to Lady Robert Cecil, 25 Jan. 1899

thought much of the other parties. His brother James described him as having a 'cross bench mind'.¹

The Cecil family were taught to despise office seekers and professional politicians. Robert Cecil admired Edward Grey because he had no love of office;² and though ambitious in his own way, he was uninterested in the processes of acquiring political position; nor was he afraid of going out of power, partly because he had an established status and the loss could not appear to him so great as to those without position. He thought moral principles so much more important than office holding that he was always ready to resign for the sake of them, when he was in a government. He praised his father in a memorial article in 1903 for having resigned in 1867 over Disraeli's Reform Bill.³ This action had, he said, raised the whole tone of political life - it was: 'the greatest of all the services which he rendered to his country'. His father in fact discouraged the practice of resigning too often; but Robert Cecil took his own lesson from his father's conduct in 1867, and it was a contributory factor in his failure as a politician.

All this meant that he had an independent point of view. It meant that he had the confidence of family approval behind many of the policies or moral principles he propounded; this strengthened the

¹Private Information

²Visc. Cecil, A.T.W. p.136

³Monthly Review, October 1903. 'Lord Salisbury' - article by 'X' (Lord Robert Cecil), p.4

fervour of his utterances. But it meant that he was unwise where party politics were concerned; hence he diminished his chances of reaching a position in a British government where he could put into practice the League of Nations policy that he developed from 1916 to 1919.

On foreign affairs, Lord Salisbury greatly influenced his son. Indeed Salisbury's views were the very foundation of Robert Cecil's ideas on the League. To say so may seem paradoxical, because Salisbury was depressed about the future prospects of averting war in Europe. Robert Cecil, on the other hand, pinned all his hopes after 1916 on the possibility of achieving such an aim. There were reasons for the difference between father and son. Temperamentally, Robert Cecil was an optimist; moreover, the horror stirred in him by the First World War did two things - it made him determined that such a disaster should never occur again; and it unbalanced his judgement to some extent. It was unbearable for him to contemplate the recurrence of a world war. But the premises from which he started were Salisbury's.

Salisbury too dreaded war - increasingly as European nations became more powerful and their weapons more destructive; war, when it broke out, would be, he thought, 'a terrible effort of mutual destruction which will be fatal to Christian civilisation'.¹ Though he was against committing Britain in advance to assist other powers by treaty, this

¹The Times, 10 Nov. 1897 - Report on Lord Salisbury's Speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, 9 Nov. 1897. Press cutting in scrap book formerly belonging to Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, now in the possession of the author

did not come from a belief in a policy of total isolationism, but rather from his doubts about British public opinion supporting the government in military action when it came to the point.¹ In fact he believed that Britain should take an active part in European affairs to keep the peace: 'We belong to a great community of nations and we have no right to shrink from the duties which the community impose on us'.² To prevent catastrophe he relied on the system of the Concert of Europe or, as he preferred to call it, 'the federated action of Europe'³ - the meeting of the heads of the principle states to try to reduce conflict - based on a common understanding of the best interests of European peace; but he knew its limitations - the understanding was intermittent, and vanishing by the end of the nineteenth century; the powers could not be compelled to come together in a crisis, nor could decisions always be enforced. He dreamed of a more watertight system. He told his audience at the Lord Mayor's banquet in November, 1897:

'One hope we have is that the powers may be gradually brought together to act together in a friendly spirit on all questions of difference which may arise until at last they shall be welded in some international constitution which will give to the world as a result of their great strength a long spell of unfettered and prosperous trade and continued peace'⁴

Robert Cecil was much affected by this speech; and later he quoted it in his autobiography when speaking of his League ideas.⁵

¹See A.L. Kennedy, Salisbury 1830-1903 (London) 1953, p.331-333

²Viscount Cecil, A Great Experiment, p.22

³Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law (2nd edn., London 1939), pp.78-79

⁴The Times, 10 Nov. 1897, Lord Salisbury's speech, 9 Nov. 1897, Lord Mayor's Banquet

⁵Viscount Cecil, A Great Experiment, p.22, footnote 4, & p.59 (misquotation)

From the first, his League of Nations ideas were based on the Concert system. He attempted to deal with the problems that limited its effectiveness, by providing for the peaceful adjustment of treaties, and automatic conferences.¹ Sir Alfred Zimmern has described such a concept of a League as 'An improved and enlarged Concert of the Powers'.²

As a son of Lord Salisbury, too, Robert Cecil was well placed to learn the limitations and value of arbitration in international affairs. Salisbury had personally pioneered the use of this instrument and defended its use:

'All the great triumphs in the past have been in substitution of judicial doctrine for the cold, cruel arbitrament of war... and we are slowly, as far as we can, substituting arbitration for struggles in international disputes'³

In 1896, he had signed a general arbitration treaty with the United States, dealing with small pecuniary claims; it was not ratified, but was remarkable in being the first proposal made for a general arbitral agreement.⁴

He believed that it was not appropriate for dealing with vital interests, and that they should be kept in the political field for negotiation; but he tried to prevent lesser claims building up into

¹Viscount Cecil, A Great Experiment, pp.356-7

²Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, pp.271-3

³A.L. Kennedy, Salisbury, p.263

⁴James Headlam-Morley, The British Government and Arbitration
Chapter 2 of Studies in Diplomatic History (1st edn., London 1930), p.21

international disputes through arbitration. However he knew that there was much it could not solve; the Venezuela boundary dispute, for example, was really settled through diplomacy - agreement had first to be reached on the law on which the tribunal could base its award. Arbitration was impossible in a case where there was no agreement on the law.¹

Robert Cecil for these reasons later gave arbitration an important part in his League plans, but never expected that it could be more universally applied than his father had done.²

Salisbury also affected his son in his attitude towards the idea of national self-determination. He believed that a people had no intrinsic right to be independent of another on mere grounds of nationality, though there might be other more valid reasons:

'The modern theory of nationality is safe from refutation. The blows of argument fall harmlessly upon its unsubstantial forms. Controversy is waste labour in a domain of thought where no term is defined, no principle laid down, and no question propounded for investigation'³

Finally, Salisbury influenced Robert Cecil's attitude to the British Empire. Salisbury was not susceptible to the Imperial mystique typical of so many Conservatives in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods.

¹ Sir James Headlam-Morley, Studies in Diplomatic History, Ch. 2
See also: G. Cecil, Salisbury, iv. 267-8

² See Brit. Mus. Addit. MSS. 51094 (Cecil of Chelwood Papers), f.206: record - by Cecil - of interview with Col. House at Paris on 9 Jan. 1919, 10 Jan. 1919

³ Essays By The Late Marquis of Salisbury K.G., Biographical (London 1905), p.39. Reprinted from Quarterly Review, January 1862

He was intent on lessening rivalry between the Great Powers in Africa: he did not share the British expansionist mood as such, though deeply concerned with its consequences.¹

He believed that England did have an imperial responsibility - an obligation to abolish slavery, to spread Christianity and civilisation, and to give the natives good government. He knew that many of the British traders and colonists in Africa were lawless and brutal; he therefore approved the take-over of further territory by the Crown largely because it would make it possible to keep these people under control - and, partly, to prevent the inter-tribal strife that was prevalent in Africa.² It was this paternalistic aspect of the Empire that Robert respected.³

Many of his general views were closely similar to those of his father, whom he resembled in speech, and in style of comment and repartee. Like his father he was not a militarist; like him he was a High Tory - his political beliefs were based on loyalty to church and monarch - the latter representing the supremacy of the law. Though less of a natural conservative - indeed he was in some ways a natural rebel and reformer all his life,⁴ - yet it cannot be said that he ever rebelled against his father's fundamental views. Most of his rebelliousness

¹G. Cecil, Salisbury, iv. 336, 339

²Ibid. pp. 341-3

³P.R.O. Foreign Office Papers, Series 371, vol. 3191, f.175334.186939: minute by Cecil, undated, on tel. from Sir J. Jordan to F.O., 10 Nov. 1918

⁴Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.72

was based on them, against other institutions and policies. It is useless to speculate whether Salisbury might have agreed with Robert Cecil had he been alive in 1916; but what is certain is that they had in common a general view on the conduct of international affairs based on religious principles, on the law, and duty as a great power¹; the principle of nationality lay outside this view of things; so too did jingoistic bluster, white supremacy and breaking an agreement.

So much for Robert Cecil's home education - what of his later training? At Oxford he studied constitutional law² - which had some influence on his thoughts on the League and about a permanent international court subsequently. He compared the role of that court with those of the Prerogative Courts under the Tudors.³ After this followed a period of professional life as a lawyer. This reinforced his views on public affairs; it had an effect on the form of the League of Nations Covenant - partly owing to him it was very much a lawyer's document, rather than a statement of principles as President Wilson wished.

He entered parliament in 1906. During the next nine years before he took office in the Coalition government in May 1915, he gained a reputation as a powerful orator with independent views. He was uncompromising, combative and confident in argument; his themes, whatever

¹For general family approach, see Lord Hugh Cecil, M.A., M.P., Conservatism (Home University Library, London 1912)

²Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.25

³David Hunter Miller, The Drafting of the Covenant (New York 1928), i., 64 (cited hereafter as: 'D.H. Miller, Drafting')

the subject matter, were constant - there were tributes to the law, appeals for the triumph of Christian principles and for integrity in public life, calls for an election, vituperations against the spirit of selfish commercialism.¹ On one occasion, Mr. Asquith felt compelled to reply to a speech from Lord Robert Cecil: '... I thought that once or twice in the course of his speech, as when he told us that it was our business to change our hearts rather than our rules, he approached perilously near the tone and language of the pulpit'.²

Cecil later described his political standpoint as one of 'passive conservatism'.³ The country was prosperous, and though he warned the House often of the dangers of certain moral attitudes, no immediate political dangers were obvious to him. When he appealed for change he looked to the past - to the earlier freedom of the House of Commons, to the Rule of Law and the beneficial influence of Church on State. There was a ring of defiance as well as exhortation about his religious utterances. For those who adhered passionately to the religious tenets of their nineteenth-century upbringing this was a gloomy period. Cecil and his family saw Christianity in danger and the submergence of what they valued, in the future. They devoted themselves to the defence of the English Church - in education, in issues

¹ See Hansard, 4th series, 1906, vol. 162. 155.

² Hansard, 5th series, 1913, 1.608-9

³ Addit. MSS. 51085, f.91: Cecil to 4th Marquis of Salisbury, 18 May 1921

involving morality, and notably, over its disestablishment in Wales. There were many who supported the cause of the Welsh church; but none who carried their support so far, as Robert Cecil.¹

He was not attracted by the important innovations in the programmes of either of the two major parties:

'Even then a good deal of modern toryism was unattractive. The Commercialism of Tariff Reform, the blatancy of the new Imperialism, the indifference to Church questions, the sale of honours etc were repulsive...'²

But the liberals with their Home Rule, Constitutional and Land Tax policies, did not please him either. He stuck to the old-fashioned Tory position of loyalty to Church, the Union of Ireland and England, and the Bicameral Legislature.³ He fulfilled his taste for reform and experiment in this period over issues like female suffrage⁴ and 'abuses' in parliamentary procedure.⁵ He was fairly sympathetic towards the spirit of the Labour Party when they did not stir up class war; but he preferred co-partnership⁶ to nationalisation⁷ as a solution to the domination of large capitalist combinations;⁸ and he looked to

¹Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., pp.105, 146, 161

²Addit. MSS. 51085, f.91: Cecil to 4th Marquis of Salisbury, 18 May 1921

³Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.107

⁴Ibid., p.122

⁵Hansard, 5th series, 1913, 1.590-3

⁶Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.60-61

⁷Hansard, 5th series, 1913, 1.526

⁸Ibid., 1.531

the Law most of all to solve the problem; he defended his opposition to the Trades Disputes Bill on the grounds that the Bill set a precedent for putting trade combinations of workers or capitalists outside the law. '... do not diminish the control of the Courts over every individual in this country. That is the real security for liberty'¹

During this time, he made few pronouncements on foreign affairs. In view of Britain's increasing relative weakness in world affairs, he had come to agree with the policy of closer solidarity with France for the sake of security. In 1909 he attacked the Liberal government's naval policy.² The Conservatives were afraid that Germany was building ships with such vigour that by 1911 the British navy would possess only marginal superiority over the German, and national security would be in peril. The Liberals had decided not to build up to the full amount of Dreadnought battleships recommended in an Admiralty policy document - the Cawdor memorandum. Cecil argued the Conservative case: that the Liberal policy was the result of a compromise between factions in their party - not of careful consideration; he thought it weak, and dangerous.

'In this matter I am convinced that the path of safety lies in convincing the civilised world that the people of this country are in deadly earnest. I believe it is only in that way that there is any prospect of a limitation of armaments' ... 'If we once convince all rivals that competition with us on that matter is hopeless, if we insist ... on having this supremacy at sea, there is some hope that sooner or later they will abandon the effort to compete'³

¹Hansard, 5th series, 1913, 1.530

²Hansard, 5th series, 1909, iii. 70-78

³Ibid., p.77

He stressed that British and German naval policies were irreconcilable. The British felt they must have overwhelming superiority; the German government wanted a large enough fleet to fight Britain if necessary.¹

Thus Cecil at this stage was pessimistic about immediate arms limitation. This was an issue on which he was to waver in following years; but the view he held in 1909 was really fundamental; though he later deplored British naval rivalry with America² - and American competitive attitudes as well - because he placed great hopes on their friendship and saw no conflict of interests between the two powers, he always thought that Britain should be very careful not to diminish her capacity to defend herself. It is true that after the war he became a fervent advocate of disarmament and that he did not attack other British League of Nations supporters who took a more pacifist line; indeed he came to be identified politically with such people. The evidence appears to show however that this was because he did not wish to weaken efforts towards ultimate general disarmament, nor to discourage people who were among his friends and supporters - and were 'on the right side', even if their approach was basically different.³

Two other facts throw light on his later views on international questions. Though Cecil was in favour of firmness on Britain's part, he was against a policy of provocation. Tariff reform was to him a

¹Hansard, 5th series, 1909, iii. 75

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 419

³Private Information, and see: Viscount Cecil, A Great Experiment, pp. 338-342

policy based on commercial imperialism¹, and later he believed that it had given Germany a pretext for her naval building, because it gave colour to her accusation that Britain was a robber state, and that the Empire was a threat to other countries commercially.² Later, too, he explained that the Tariff policy expressed a general point of view in politics that he mistrusted:

'It is inevitable that the mercantile class whose training must be to attribute the greatest importance to commercial and financial considerations will bring the same point of view into the direction of external policy. The belief that by Tariffs the Empire can be cemented together is only an example of this attitude'

And speaking for himself, he said:

'... the belief that it would, in that sense, lower the standards of our public life was the foundation of my opposition to it'³

In the prewar period, too, he attacked, in parliamentary speeches against the government's Irish policy, the principle of nationality. He condemned the Government of Ireland Bill as 'insane' when the record of recent British administration had been, in his view, so excellent:

¹Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.107

²Ibid. p.87

³Visc. Cecil. A Great Experiment, p.34

'Is it not insane to upset this splendid result for no assigned reason, at any rate, except the sentimental desire of hon. Members to see their feeling of separate nationality gratified?'¹

Good speakers were at a premium in a small Conservative parliamentary opposition;² he made a name for himself, impressed people with his integrity³ and hard work, and despite the unorthodoxy of some of his views won the confidence of Bonar Law, the Tory leader.⁴ Thus he achieved office easily when the Conservatives joined the Liberals in a wartime coalition in May 1915. The war changed his views; it was as a result of his term of office that he ceased to be merely a 'passive Conservative' and found at last something to which he could dedicate his moral fervour in a positive way - the League of Nations.

¹Hansard, 5th series, 1912, xlii. 2281

²Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.104; and Philip, Viscount Snowden, An Autobiography (1st edn. London 1934), i.201-3

³Sir Charles Mallett, Lord Cave, A Memoir (London 1931), p.17 (Introductory chapter by Viscountess Cave of Richmond)

⁴Viscount Cecil, A Great Experiment, p.36

Chapter Two

In Office

1915 - 1918

At the beginning of the First World War, Cecil was nearly fifty. In addition to his parliamentary duties, he worked with the Red Cross in the 'Missing and Wounded' department¹ for a few months, before joining the Coalition Government in May 1915, as parliamentary under-secretary for foreign affairs under Sir Edward Grey.² In this capacity, his chief work was in the Contraband department of the Foreign Office. He was also responsible for prisoners of war.³ The Contraband department was concerned with the blockade of the Central Powers. The Foreign Office shared this work with a number of other ministries. Cecil's duties involved commercial relations with the neutrals - in particular the United States.⁴

In addition he took a keen interest in other questions of foreign policy - notably the Balkan diplomacy of 1915; in February 1916 the blockade was put under a single Ministry of Blockade in the Foreign Office with Cecil at its head.⁵ He held this office until July

¹Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.126

²Ibid., p.129

³Ibid., p.135

⁴Ibid., pp.131-5

⁵Ibid., pp.132-3

1918.¹ At the beginning this work and his prisoner of war duties took up nearly all of his time.² After December 1916 when the Lloyd George Coalition was formed, Cecil continued as parliamentary under-secretary for foreign affairs and Balfour his chief, who was often ill and absent, deputed much of his work to him.³ Thenceforward, Cecil was an important influence not only in blockade policy, but in relations with Russia, with Greece and with the Near East in particular. In July 1918, he became Balfour's assistant foreign secretary,⁴ and took his place in numerous Cabinet meetings. He also served on Cabinet policy committees - notably the Eastern Affairs Committee (from March 1918)⁵ and, earlier, the Economic Offensive Committee.⁶ In order to cope with his increased responsibilities, he relinquished the Blockade Ministry to Sir L. Worthington-Evans;⁷ but his experience made him of essential use in the

¹Public Records Office Handbook No. 11 - The Records of the Cabinet Office to 1922 (London 1966), p.13

²See YIVO Institute of Jewish Research, Wolf-Movshovitch Collection, 4327, Cecil to Lucien Wolf, 1 March 1916

³Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.139

⁴Beaverbrook Library, Lloyd George Papers, F/6/5/37: Lord R. Cecil to Prime Minister, 18 July 1918

⁵See P.R.O. Cabinet Office Papers, series 23, Vol. 5, W.C. 369, Item 11; 21 March 1918

⁶Lloyd George Papers, F/4/2/24: G.N. Barnes to Lloyd George, 8 March 1918

⁷Beaverbrook Library, Bonar Law Papers, 83/5/19: Cecil to Bonar Law, 19 July 1918

economic sphere and he continued to work on the Allied Maritime Transport Council¹ - the key interallied shipping control body which was at the centre of the Allies' supply organisation, and he was also on hand to give economic advice - i.e. for the Economic Defence and Development Committee of the Cabinet.² From 1916, he tried to promote a British League of Nations scheme, though he could give little time to the matter. On 25 November 1918, he resigned from the government on the issue of Welsh Church disestablishment.³ Until the general election in December however he continued as assistant foreign secretary⁴ and attended the Cabinet in Balfour's absence. His work on the League led to him being appointed as British League of Nations delegate at the Peace Conference at Paris in 1919.

As a result of his war career, Cecil greatly improved his political standing.

His management of the blockade, which was one of the key Allied war weapons, was successful; Lloyd George, when he came to power in December 1916, ignored advice that Cecil should be replaced.⁵ Cecil had most of the qualities necessary to a successful war minister -

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/5/40: Cecil to Lloyd George, 7 Sept 1918

²See CAB 27/44, p.16: Economic Defence and Development Committee, 6th meeting, 13 August 1918, 5.30 p.m.

³Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.146

⁴Ibid.

⁵Lloyd George Papers, F/22/4/1: H.A. Gwynne to Lloyd George, 8 Dec. 1916

innovative energy, a suitable sense of priorities, decisiveness, high morale and pugnacity in public defence of government action. Milner, suggesting Cecil for the Admiralty in November 1917, wrote, in a letter to Lloyd George:

'... you want somebody at the head, who is not easily satisfied, who is nimble-minded & critical & always ready to try new things. I don't say Cecil is ideal, but, as compared with the others, he has more brain-power, more drive, more restless eagerness to better things. He will keep his end up in Parliament..., & he will be a more vital force in his office'¹

Cecil's 'restless eagerness to better things' was a constant feature of his wartime term of office. He was not an expert on any of the countries he dealt with. He supported enthusiastically any new ideas which struck him as likely to be effective and time saving. From the start he launched confidently into suggestions for improvements in the running of the war. He presented Asquith with two plans in 1915 for a special war council, in preference to the existing cumbersome large cabinet.² Cecil wished to take the running of war policy out of Asquith's hands without dismissing him from the leadership of the government. Both Asquith and Austen Chamberlain to whom Cecil showed the plan were shocked - the latter by Cecil's presumption as an under-secretary in entering on such topics.³

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/38/2/24: Lord Milner to Lloyd George, 23 Nov. 1917

²F.O. 800/95, pp.316-9: memorandum by Cecil, 20 Sept. 1915; and F.O. 800/196, p.175: Cecil to Asquith, 22 Oct. 1915

³Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.136

Cecil pressed constantly for rationalisation, for elimination of inter-departmental wrangling.¹ He favoured reforms in the foreign service;² and he was always on the look-out for devices to supplement a diplomatic campaign - the use of 'other channels' - backstairs contacts with enemy legations,³ and special missions to foreign courts.⁴ He consulted journalists like Wickham Steed⁵ and Crawford Price,⁶ who were experts in certain fields of foreign affairs. He was a publicist by nature, and believed in the effectiveness of propaganda as a war weapon. He instituted a practice of giving regular interviews to American journalists at the Foreign Office, which had good results, usually.⁷ He could also urge the control of the press by the government - in August 1915, for example, to:

¹ See, for example: CAB 27/24, p.88: Eastern Affairs Committee meeting 13 Aug. 1918, 4 p.m.; and p.120: Cecil to Balfour 15 Sept. 1918

² Hansard, 5th series, 1918, vol. 109.564

³ F.O. 371/2282.f.189931. 189931: minute by Cecil, 20 Dec. 1915 about tel. Barclay to Nicolson 11 Dec. 1915; and F.O. 371/2282. f.195738. 196051: minute by Cecil 24 Dec. 1915 about tel. Barclay to F.O. 20 Dec. 1915

⁴ F.O. 800/196. pp.115-116: minute by Cecil for Grey, 30 Oct. 1915; and CAB 23/5 W C. 366. Item 10. 18 March 1918

⁵ F.O. 800/95, p.198-200: memo by Cecil, 19 July (date queried in files) 1915

⁶ F.O. 371/2274. f.154914. 154914: Crawford Price to Cecil, 18 Oct. 1915

⁷ Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.137
and: Lloyd George Papers, E/3/28/8: Spring-Rice to Lord Hardinge, 20 Oct. 1916

'prevent the appearance ... of any statements or reports of any facts, true or alleged, or opinions likely to produce the impression that this country is not in earnest, or is not doing its best to win the war'¹

He was anxious for a total mobilisation effort even before he took office, and attacked the 'business as usual' attitude, early in 1915.² In November 1916, he rejected a suggestion by Lord Lansdowne that the Entente Powers should make a compromise peace with their enemies. He urged rather increased mobilisation - rationing, industrial conscription and, in particular, greater sacrifices from the richer classes - reduction of ministerial salaries, closing of rich men's clubs, and nationalisation of the breweries.³

He was even prepared by September 1915 to accept the idea of military conscription, which was repugnant to him, though he stressed at that time to St. Loe Strachey, the editor of The Spectator, that he could do so only if it were intended as a temporary measure.⁴

Discussing the conscription issue the following year in a memorandum, he said he was opposed generally, but was prepared for that or almost anything which would help to win the war - provided that it was clear

¹F.O. 800/95, p.275: minute by Cecil for Grey, 17 Aug. 1915

²Hansard, 5th series, 1915, lxx.612

³Bowood House, Papers of 5th Marquis of Lansdowne, file: 'The War. Prospects of Peace 1916', folder (1)a: memorandum by Lord R. Cecil, 27 Nov. 1916

⁴Beaverbrook Library, St. Loe Strachey Papers, 5/4/4/9: Cecil to St. Loe Strachey, 6 Sept. 1915

that troops could not be obtained by other means and that the manpower needs of industry were fully considered. Whatever happened there must be no indecision:

'In time of war the most important quality of a Government is authority so that vital decisions can be made with rapidity and speed. A reputation for "flabbiness" is the most fatal reputation that a war Government can have'¹

He was a capable leader - quick and resolute in approving policies and making decisions; this was essential in a field like shipping control where priorities altered from day to day and changes of plan had to be made.² Moreover, he was ready to delegate authority where he trusted his assistants, and to take advice:

'As you talk to him, you become aware ... of the singular sincerity of the man, and of that other trait, so all important to a statesman, of the ability to recognize the fact that no human being knows everything, and that there are some people who may know the things you do not know yourself'³

He was loyal and fair-minded to colleagues. Grey paid tribute to these qualities when he urged him not to resign in October 1916⁴

¹Lloyd George Papers, D/24/10/15: memo by Cecil, 4 Apr. 1916

²Lord Salter, Interview, July 1967

³Addit. MSS. 51092, f.58: Cutting from Boston Christian Science Monitor enclosed with letter from Frederick Dixon to Cecil, 1 Feb. 1916

⁴CHE 93/148: Grey to Cecil, 24 Oct. 1916

' ... there is noone else who could run the Blockade part without risk of confusion. Anyone else would have to start without the confidence of Crowe and others - not an easy team to drive & without knowledge & thus at a disadvantage even if he were as free from personal foibles and as single-minded as you are'

However Cecil had the defects of his virtues. He was not an easy colleague. It was partly because he was so ready to put forward a new idea and was uncowed by higher authority or longer experience that there were complaints, particularly in the Foreign Office, that his indifference to accepted practice¹ amounted to arrogance². He was bad at concealing his dislike of bureaucracy. During the war this was of no consequence, but afterwards, at the Peace Conference, it meant that he no longer had the full confidence of the Foreign Office;³ nor did he have its support when later he hoped to be foreign secretary, in a postwar Conservative government.⁴ Moreover he was too ready to be

¹F.O. 371/2282.f.195738.196051: minute by Cecil, 24 Dec. 1915, about telegram from Barclay to F.O. 20 Dec. 1915; and: F.O. 371/2282.f.189931.189931: minute by Cecil, 20 Dec. 1915 about tel. Barclay to Nicolson, 11 Dec. 1915; and Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.138-9

²Information provided by Sir Owen O'Malley

³See Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/27: Cecil tel. to Lord Curzon, 10 Apr. 1919

⁴Information provided by Sir Owen O'Malley

exasperated about ^a policy or the behaviour of colleagues. He offered his resignation on numerous occasions¹ - nine instances are given below. Twice he did so on religious issues altogether unconnected with his official duties.²

Further, his judgement was sometimes marred by hastiness, and failing to size up the situation correctly. This was made worse by his ignorance of geography. He was reasonably well travelled, ^{and} had made many trips to the continent and one to the Far East.³ Nonetheless he shocked Lewis Namier at the end of 1918 when he revealed that he did not know the geography of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁴ On another occasion he spoke of geographical reasons why the Japanese should be encouraged to

- ¹(A) F.O. 800/96, pp. 362-3: Cecil to Grey, 27 Oct. 1916 (Prisoners of War)
- (B) Bonar Law Papers, 81/1/31: Cecil to Bonar Law, 9 Dec. 1916 (Blockade)
- (C) Bonar Law Papers, 82/7/8: Cecil to Bonar Law, 18 Dec. 1917; and Bonar Law Papers, 82/7/4: Cecil to Bonar Law, 16 Dec. 1917: (Dr. Henson's appointment as Bishop)
- (D) Addit. MSS.51093, f.45-51: Balfour to Cecil, 12 Sept. 1917 (Lloyd George's intrigues against the military chiefs)
- (E) Bonar Law Papers, 83/4/19: Cecil to Bonar Law, undated (June 1918) (Mistreatment of Leverton Harris)
- (F) Ibid., 82/9/6: Cecil to Bonar Law, 17 Feb. 1918 and enclosed memo. (Lloyd George's treatment of Sir William Robertson)
- (G) Ibid., 83/3/21: Cecil to Bonar Law, 8 May 1918 (Ireland and Conscription)
- (H) Lloyd George Papers, F/6/5/28: Cecil to Lloyd George, 7 June 1918 (The government's slackness about Allied intervention in Siberia)

²Visc Cecil, A.T.W., pp.160-161. (The disestablishment of the Welsh Church); and see preceding footnote, (C)

³See, for example: Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., pp. 18, 21, 47, 80, 92-8

⁴Arnold J. Toynbee, Acquaintances (London 1967), pp.65-6

intervene militarily in Siberia in 1918, in order to re-form an Eastern Front in Russia against the Germans after the Russians stopped fighting.¹ He was one of the most fervent supporters of this plan in the Government. In fact there were only strategic reasons for such a scheme; geographically it was unpractical. Ullman estimates it would have taken years to bring a good sized army over the vast distances to Cheliabinsk from Vladivostok.² Moreover Cecil made an error in assuming that the Japanese themselves were interested in undertaking such an operation so far in the west of Siberia.

Several other points are worth noting in this estimate of Cecil's qualities and views in wartime office: first, though he criticised military thinking often, he never ventured to criticise the generals' conduct of the campaigns on the Western Front. His connection with economic matters might well have led him to ask questions about the wastage of supplies and manpower. But in fact he told Lloyd George that the civil government should not interfere - that the military should be left to decide these matters. He followed his own party line in this; he believed mutual trust between the soldiers and the civilian government was so essential that it could not be put at risk.³

¹F.O.800/329, Russia, Rus/18/7: Draft message by Cecil for Lord Reading, Apr. 1918 (undated by Cecil)

²Richard H. Ullman, Intervention and The War - Vol. i of Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921 (Princeton 1961), p.332

³Bonar Law Papers 82/4/9: Cecil to Bonar Law, 10 Sept. 1917

Secondly, his realisation of the horror and cruelty of war was such as to affect his whole subsequent attitude to international affairs. Some of his tasks during the war were more disagreeable than those of many of his colleagues in civilian life. In the Red Cross, he visited hospitals near the front, and discovered the whereabouts of the missing and wounded. He witnessed mutilation and bereavement, and found his own nephew among the dead.¹ He had to deal with the painful details of the sufferings of prisoners of war and of the massacres of the Jews and Armenians.

Moreover the blockade which he administered was in many ways an inhumane weapon. German infants were said to be dying through lack of milk;² members of his own family expressed their fears of this to him.³ Cecil said the responsibility, if the accusation were true, must rest with the Germans who apportioned the country's supplies.⁴ But it did weigh on his conscience, and after the war he appealed to the government not to force the Germans to surrender milk cattle to Belgium and France under the reparations terms, until German babies were assured of a sufficient supply.⁵ The hope of a League of Nations kept him going. It was a lifeline for him;⁶ it led him to hope for a world in which the

¹Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., pp.126-8

²F.O. 371/2840. f.52581.52581. Interview in N.Y. World, by Lord R. Cecil 20 Mar. 1916

³Private Information

⁴F.O. 371/2840. f.52581.52581

⁵Hansard, 5th series, 1919, Vol. 118, pp. 985, 1810, 2107; and: Lansdowne Papers, Bowood, Correspondence files: After 1900 - C, Lord Robert Cecil: Lord Lansdowne to Cecil, 10 Sept. 1919.

⁶CHE 6/4: Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 14 Aug. 1918

militarists, bureaucrats and politicians who were likely to prevent the League from working were to be miraculously converted, or swept from power, by the force of anti-war public opinion.

Thirdly, though Cecil was to move politically to the left of his party as a result of the war, he was during the war a vigorous opponent of left wing foreign policy dissenters. Some of his fiercest parliamentary attacks¹ were made on them, and he invoked the Defence of the Realm Act to prosecute those who criticised British policy in their publications - notably, E. D. Morel, secretary of the Union of Democratic Control² - the leading foreign policy dissent organisation. The U.D.C. blamed the war on the irresponsibility of the unrepresentative and imperialistic groups in charge of foreign policy. The chief plank in their 1915 programme was for open diplomacy - there must be no secret treaties or secret negotiations.³ Cecil was not wholly opposed to their ideals in foreign politics - he agreed with many details of their programme, but he believed that their influence in war tended to be subversive,

¹Hansard, 5th series, 1918, vol. 106.622; and
Hansard, 5th series, 1917, c.2091; and
Hansard, 5th series, 1918, xcii. 1638

²F.O. 371/3443. f.116711.146603: minute by Cecil about U.D.C. pamphlets, undated (August?) 1918

³A. J. P. Taylor, The Trouble Makers. Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792-1939 (Panther edn., London 1969), pp. 123-124

and he resented their accusations that the Allies were not making an effort to conclude a peace with Germany¹ because they wished to achieve annexationist aims. He disliked being categorised as an opponent of peace because he was in favour of fighting the war for a reason which was not really much disputed by anyone - the restoration of Belgium - and on which the Allies were not offered satisfaction by the Germans. Writing of American opponents of Allied war aims in 1916, he told F.R. Coudert, the pro-Ally American lawyer whom he frequently consulted:

'I am, I hope, a pacifist in the sense that I regard war as the greatest blot on Christian civilisation, and would do anything in my power to diminish the chance of its recurrence. But I am quite sure of this, that nothing of any importance can be attained in this life unless you are prepared to make sacrifices for it'²

But such assertions of his peace-loving nature, even after his support for a League became generally known, and many foreign policy dissenters were drawing closer to him, did not prevent some of them from continuing to criticise him for his irritable attacks on them.

'Lord Robert is boosted in the press as though he were the friend of man, but in reality he is probably one of the most deadly enemies of the common people to be found elsewhere than among Russian Grand Dukes and German Junkers'³

Finally, he opposed compromise peace suggestions from the right

¹See Hansard, 5th series, 1917, c.2069

²F.O. 800/242, p.198: Cecil to Coudert, 18 July 1916

³A.J.P. Taylor, The Trouble Makers, p.143: F. Jowett in the Bradford Pioneer, 21 Feb. 1919

as well. In November 1916, Lansdowne favoured a negotiated peace, based on the status quo, except that Belgium, North France and Serbia were to be evacuated and restored. Cecil thought peace at that time would be disastrous. It would leave Germany powerful in the East, would be proof to her that Britain had been forced to make peace because of German submarines, and would make Britain's position in the next ten years very dangerous.¹ He joined in condemning Lansdowne's call for a negotiated peace the following November.² This he did because he thought it inopportune and he disagreed with some details.³ He did not disagree with Lansdowne's general proposition that the Allies might restate their war aims in the light of changed circumstances. After Austria had put out feelers, in December 1917, he contemplated, but without enthusiasm, the possibility of a compromise peace that would leave Austria more powerful in Eastern Europe and Germany dominating the Baltic.⁴ His interest in unofficial negotiations with contacts of the Central Powers during the next few months was more to counter a possible pacifist reaction than because he hoped for any particular result.⁵ He did not join Lord Milner

¹Lansdowne Papers, Bowood, file: 'The War. Prospects of Peace 1916', folder (1)a: memorandum by Cecil, 27 Nov. 1916

²Lansdowne Papers, Bowood, file: 'The War. Lord Lansdowne's Peace Letter', folder 4: Manchester Guardian cutting, 1 Dec. 1917, reporting Bonar Law speech at Unionist Conference, 30 Nov. 1917, and resolution on Lansdowne letter

³Lloyd George Papers, F/6/5/10: Cecil to Lloyd George, 5 Dec. 1917

⁴F.O. 371/3133. p.138, f.2002.3465: minute by Cecil for Headlam-Morley about Balfour draft tel . to President Wilson, 28 Dec. 1917

⁵Lloyd George Papers, F/3/3/26: minute by Cecil about Prof. Herron's report to the U.S. State Dept., July 1918

in supporting the idea of buying off Germany in Africa and the West by letting her dominate in Eastern Europe and Russia.

Such was Cecil's character in office - decisive, energetic, often over-impatient; he was wholeheartedly dedicated to an Allied victory. What results did he hope would come from it? His peace aims - exclusive of the creation of a League of Nations - will be discussed in the following chapter.

PART TWO

LORD ROBERT CECIL'S PEACE AIMS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Chapter Three
General Peace Aims
1915 - 1918

When war between France and Germany seemed inevitable in 1914, Robert Cecil, like his Conservative colleagues, thought that Britain should help France, if she was attacked, in the interests of British security.¹ He believed that the crushing of English power was part of Germany's plans after dealing with France.² The British government finally declared war on Germany over the violation of Belgian neutrality - which was guaranteed in a treaty to which Britain was a party. For Cecil this involved a principle almost as important to him as British security - the sanctity of international agreements. The violation of the Belgian treaty horrified him more than the atrocities attributed to the German armies. He later wrote to F.R. Coudert:

... 'I do in my heart believe that the entry of this country into war on behalf of Belgium was the greatest blow struck for the permanent interests of peace that has ever been struck yet in the world's history...

'Civilisation has succeeded savagery only by the establishment of the supremacy of the law, and that depends ultimately ... upon force. If we wish to get rid of international anarchy, we must be prepared to take similar steps'³

¹Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.125

²Ibid., p.124

³F.O. 800/242 p.199: Cecil to Coudert, 18 July 1916

For Cecil, lasting peace depended on nations keeping their word to one another. On 7 April 1916, he rejected the idea of a peace that did not involve the restoration of Belgium to its prewar state:

'What would such a peace mean? It would mean the triumph of the German idea of international morality, the triumph of the system which regards treaties as "scraps of paper" and which finds everything as permissible in war provided only that it is successful'¹

Cecil laid more stress on the need to defend the treaty system than many of his colleagues in the government. The secretary of the War Cabinet, Sir Maurice Hankey, for example, expressed the view that it was no longer practical to regard international treaty agreements as sacred. If the English continued to hold that view, they would merely, he believed, play into the hands of unscrupulous enemies in the future.² Lloyd George, too, did not put the principle as high as Cecil did; this is evident from his speech to the Trades Unions on 5 January 1918, which he delivered to rally war weary British labour in support of his war policy.³ He based his speech on two memoranda by Cecil and Smuts.⁴ Cecil's memorandum declared the chief purpose of the Allied war effort to be the defence of international treaty agreements:

¹Lloyd George Papers, D/16/17/9: interview in memorandum form by Lord R. Cecil, 7 April 1916

²British Museum Addit. MSS. 49704 (Balfour Papers), f.4: memo by Hankey for Balfour, 25 May 1916.

³War Memoirs of David Lloyd George (Popular - two volume - edn., London 1938), ii. 1491. (Hereafter cited as "Lloyd George, War Memoirs")

⁴CAB 23/5, wc 314, item 2, 4 Jan. 1918

'Foremost of all, they ~~the~~ Germans must understand that their lawless invasion of Belgium is not forgotten. This outrage was not only a terrible injury to the people immediately concerned. Far more disastrous to Europe and the World even than the horrors inflicted on the Belgians was the blow thus struck at the very foundation on which peace rests; the sanctity of international obligations. Unless Treaties be upheld, unless every nation is prepared at whatever sacrifice to honour the national signature, it is obvious that no Treaty of Peace can be worth the paper on which it is written'¹

Lloyd George used many of Cecil's passages unchanged, but he modified this one, leaving out the words from 'Foremost' to 'obligations'. The main stress of his own speech was on national self-determination, not the defence of the treaty system.²

Because of his convictions on the subject, Cecil was always against the unilateral repudiation of treaties even when he thought them bad. Britain, Italy, France, Roumania, Japan and Russia had all made secret agreements assigning different areas of enemy territory to annexation or control by themselves after the war, if the Allies won it. These agreements were the price of, or an incentive to, support. When these terms became known, they shocked many, and spokesmen of the Central Powers made much of them as obstacles to peace. Supporters of a negotiated settlement in England urged the government to abandon them.³ Cecil personally disliked the terms of many of these treaties - he wrote, in January 1918, of 'the unreasonableness of Italian claims',⁴ and had

¹CAB 24/37, GT 3181: War aims - draft statement by Lord R. Cecil, 3 Jan. 1918

²Lloyd George, War Memoirs, ii.1513

³See Hansard, 5th series, 1918, vol.103, pp.219-225

⁴F.O.371/3133, p.140, f.2002.7760: minute by Cecil, undated, about telegram from Rumbold to F.O., 12 Jan. 1918

worked in July 1917 to get the Italians to reduce their claims in the Near East.¹ If the treaties conflicted with the Allies' principles, then, he suggested, they should be re-negotiated.² But, he told the Commons, replying to foreign policy radicals' attacks in February 1918:

'When they ask us to repudiate treaties, it seems to me that these pacifists do not understand the elements of their creed. How are we ever to make any progress in international affairs unless we regard international obligations as sacred? It is the very essence of any reasonable system of international relations. What of your League of Nations itself?'³

One of the secret agreements was the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement - an Anglo-French pact assigning spheres of influence in the Near Eastern Ottoman Empire after the defeat of the Turks. It gave France more power than the British later wished, and conflicted with other undertakings they made subsequently to Arab and Zionist leaders.⁴ It had been drawn up in association with an agreement with Russia about the Ottoman Empire. After Russia abandoned her Allies, many thought that the Sykes-Picot Agreement could be regarded as having lapsed. When policy about the agreement at the forthcoming Peace Conference was being discussed by the Eastern Affairs Committee in December 1918, Lord Curzon, the chairman, was in favour of disregarding the Sykes-Picot terms - the British had done nearly all the fighting in the Near East and dominated militarily there by the end of the war. Cecil told him

¹CAB 24/20, GT 1474: memo by Lord R. Cecil, 21 July 1917

²CAB 24/37, GT 3181: War aims, draft statement by Lord R. Cecil, 3 Jan. 1918

³Hansard, 5th series, 1918, vol.103 p.230

⁴CAB 27/24, p.186, 5 Dec., 1918

that they could not break faith with the French, though he himself had worked hard to get them to modify the terms.¹

'LORD CURZON: We are getting back to that wretched Agreement again. Cannot we take a line at the Peace Conference that these Agreements have necessarily lapsed?

'LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, not as between us and the French. They are not binding on the Conference, but I think they are binding on us.

'LORD CURZON: You always take a very strong and stiff view about that, and I am afraid I cannot agree with it'²

Thus Cecil felt that keeping international agreements was the key factor in ensuring peace. However he did recognise that the matter could not simply be left at that: therefore, in future, he wanted some procedure for achieving peaceful change to be internationally recognised; he hoped that nations would adopt the practice of making treaties which would bind the parties only for a limited time, and, after that, be re-negotiated. 'You must remember this', he told the Eastern Affairs Committee, 'If the new ideas come to anything, any arrangement come to may have to be reconsidered..... I hope the idea of eternal treaties has gone'.³ Much of Cecil's scheme for a League of Nations centred round this hope; he pressed the idea repeatedly during the war⁴ and at the Paris Peace Conference.

¹CAB 27/24, p.135: F.O. Conference, 18 Sept. 1918, and pp. 141-2 17 Oct. 1918; and see p.187 o.s. 5 Dec. 1918

²CAB 27/24, p.177, 2 Dec. 1918

³CAB 27/24, p.190 o.s. 5 Dec. 1918

⁴CAB 24/37, GT 3181: War aims - draft statement by Lord R. Cecil, 3 Jan 1918

Despite Cecil's strong stand on international agreements, he was personally instrumental in securing the abandonment of an international agreement safeguarding the maritime rights of neutrals - the Declaration of London - without thinking it necessary to secure the assent of all the neutral countries themselves. The Declaration had been signed in 1909 by Great Britain and other countries and been acknowledged as the generally accepted basis of conduct. It sought to protect neutral rights in war by defining what could legally be seized as contraband on the high seas.¹ These definitions did not take account of the total nature of modern war - of the fact that almost all commodities that might ultimately reach the enemy through neutral traders could make a contribution to the enemy's war effort. It thus limited Britain's capacity to fight her war by blockade - one of her most powerful weapons. Cecil was against any such voluntary limitation of British strength - as he had been in the case of naval armaments in 1909. During the war, he opposed any suggestion that the principle of 'the freedom of the seas' should be an object for negotiation and discussion, and it was this idea that he attacked most strongly in his criticism of Lord Lansdowne's 'Peace Letter' in November 1917.²

At the beginning of the war, the Americans insisted that the Declaration must be the rule for the belligerents, even though the

¹Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty Five Years 1892-1916 (1st edn., London 1925) ii. 101 et seq.

²Lloyd George Papers, F/6/5/10: Cecil to Lloyd George, 5 Dec. 1917

British parliament had never ratified it. Britain's power on the sea was such that she could ignore that insistence. Grey took account of American feelings, but gradually truncated the scope of the Declaration by Orders in Council which put more goods on the contraband list.

Grey's policy, shared by Cecil, was to try to apply effective blockade measures without antagonizing American opinion too greatly.¹ However Cecil was more impatient than Grey, and was one of those who pressed him, for example, to declare cotton contraband²; when he became blockade minister, he acted more boldly than Grey; he introduced a black-list of American firms suspected of trading with the enemy and he secured the abrogation of the Declaration by the British and French governments.³

He justified the action on account of the danger threatening Britain and the Allies:

'... we owe, as a matter of justice, the fullest consideration to the legitimate rights of Neutrals, always bearing in mind that we are fighting not only for our very existence, but also for the very existence of Civilisation, and that we are entitled in pursuance of our belligerent rights, to apply the principles of International Law in the way which modern conditions render necessary in order to make them effective'⁴

It must be pointed out in this context that as Britain had not ratified the Declaration, it did not for Cecil constitute a solemn

¹Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., pp. 131-2

²F.O. 800/95, pp. 202-4: Cecil minute for Grey, 19 July 1915.

³Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.140

⁴F.O. 371/2840, f.53172.53172: draft of interview with Lord R. Cecil, March 1916

undertaking that either a ratified treaty or a pledge of assistance would have done. Moreover he believed, that at this stage at least, it was not appropriate to try to incorporate international law in a code; this was because its rules were for the most part the expression of general understandings limiting belligerent rights, either to preserve neutral rights or to meet the claims of humanity. Inevitably, Cecil maintained, changes had to be made in the actual rules as the conditions of the war altered; but the root principles of international law should remain the same.¹

Cecil thus felt strongly that Britain must be allowed to decide how far she was to keep to an unratified agreement on belligerent rights, and also he believed that there were principles of international law concerning this matter which could not be thrown over completely. This attitude is shown clearly in another example: As part of the blockade machinery the British government concluded agreements with various neutral trading firms who thereby undertook not to trade with the enemy; the Admiralty in August 1916 advocated using naval power to hamper the operations of those neutral merchants who had not signed such agreements and were thus profiting from the absence of friendly neutral - or Allied - competitors. Cecil believed that it was not justifiable to thus wage a commercial war on non-belligerent trade rivals: 'Generally speaking my view is that belligerent rights should only be used for belligerent purposes'.²

¹F.O. 800/242, pp. 106-7: Cecil to Coudert, 4 Apr. 1916

²F.O. 382/541, f.198433: minute by Cecil, undated, about minute by Admiral de Chair for Cecil, Aug. 1916

His aim was diplomatic - to avoid damaging the Allies' cause; but it was based on a general standard of international conduct. In 1917, he warned that Britain should not trample ruthlessly on the rights of small neutrals, or she would bring herself down to the level of Germany, would antagonise world opinion, and would find herself isolated in the future.¹

Throughout the period of America's wartime neutrality, Cecil pursued his own line; though ready to be tougher than Grey with the United States, he often resisted powerful pressure from within the Foreign Office and Admiralty and from the press, to apply more extreme blockade measures.² It is therefore misleading to say, as May does, that 'Cecil was almost ostentatiously unregardful of American interests and feelings'.³ Cecil stuck to advice he had received from friendly opinion in the U.S.A. - on the one hand - from Coudert⁴ - to convince the U.S.A. that the blockade was effective, not simply an irritant, and, on the other - from Frederick Dixon of the Boston Christian Science Monitor⁵ - to stand firm on essentials and give way on everything else.

¹Addit. MSS. 51105, ff. 34-35: memo by Cecil about Blockade, Imperial Conference, 1917

²For a press opinion, see: Lloyd George Papers, F/22/4/1: Gwynne to Lloyd George, 8 Dec. 1916

³Ernest R. May, The World War and American Isolation 1914-1917 (Quadrangle Paperback edn., Chicago 1966), p. 318

⁴F.O. 382/12 f.61822.176581; Coudert to Cecil, 9 Nov. 1915

⁵F.O. 382/12, f.61822.172186: Dixon to Cecil, Nov. 1915, and minute by Cecil, 19 Nov. 1915

The Contraband files of the Foreign Office for 1916 show that Cecil followed this course¹; he was inevitably affected by pressure from colleagues like Sir Eyre Crowe to take a hard line, but, usually, when he approved strong blockade measures it was in accordance with the Dixon and Coudert policy.

Crowe and his assistants were restless under Cecil's management, and were later to take most of the credit for the effectiveness of the blockade²; whatever the truth of this, there is no doubt that Cecil was far more concerned than they were about opinion in America. The war led him to appreciate the importance of American power and political attitudes and he became interested in friendship with the United States not only to help the war effort, but as part of his peace plans for the future. He was on excellent terms with Walter Page, the U.S. Ambassador³, and with Colonel House, President Wilson's intimate aide. Cecil looked on close friendship with America as one important solution to the problems of Britain's security and world peace. Closer alliance with that powerful and peace-loving democracy: '... must be', he told the House of Commons on 19 December 1917, 'the policy of every rational being...' ⁴

¹ See for example: F.O. 382/498, f.212,42786: minute by Cecil, undated, about tel. from Spring-Rice, 4 March 1916, and: F.O. 382/512, f.8279. 132184: minute by Cecil, 13 July 1916 about tel. Spring-Rice to F.O., 8 July 1916

² Information given to the author by Sir Owen O'Malley

³ Burton J. Hendrick, The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page (1st edn., New York 1925) iii. pp.304-5

⁴ Hansard, 5th series, 1917, c., 2096

Both Page and House did much to foster Cecil's hopes of a joint Anglo-American peace policy after the war. Writing to Page on 14 September 1917, Cecil paid tribute to the Ambassador's efforts in bringing England and the U.S.A. together:

'You ... have laboured so earnestly & successfully to produce the only national combination which can hope to establish the better state of things to which we all look forward... '1

He made Anglo-American friendship an important point in his address to the Electors of his constituency of North Hertfordshire in November 1918:

'In all these proceedings we must take care to act in close harmony with our Allies, and specially with the United States. Friendship between the two great English-speaking Democracies is of priceless advantage to this country and, as I think, to the world at large, and must on no account be endangered or impaired'2

He was not thinking in terms of a formal political alliance, but of an understanding characterised by an absence of rivalry, and agreement over the League of Nations. He hoped, if it were practicable, to bring America into the system of trusteeship which was to be developed under that organisation. In December 1917 he told Walter Page that the Americans might have the protectorate of Palestine³ when it became a national home for the Jews, but afterwards in December 1918 decided that⁴

¹Houghton Library, Harvard, Walter H. Page Papers, 1090.I, Box 61, 283; Lord Robert Cecil: Cecil to Page, 14 Sept. 1917

²Addit. MSS. 51162, f.60: To the Electors of North Herts - election address by Lord R. Cecil, 20 Nov. 1918

³F.O. 371/3061, f.214354.243467: memo by Cecil of talk with U.S. Ambassador, 20 Dec. 1917

⁴CAB 27/24, p.213, 16 Dec. 1918

the British might do the job better; he was against the Americans having a mandate in the Caucasus¹, and mildly in favour of their having a mandate in Constantinople.² He did not think that too much should be expected of them at first in this line.

But for him the crucial thing was to have America's cooperation over the future of the various regions of the Ottoman Empire, since both the French and British had ambitions there, and, if the Americans were going to accept the overall peace settlement, they must be convinced that the Entente powers were not bent on annexation and extending their imperial power.³ Moreover, the English wanted backing against French ambitions which they regarded as undesirable in that region. After the constant wartime reassurances that there was to be no annexation, this would have to be proved in action. He and the British government therefore pressed for self-determination, and the mandate system in this region.

He had no fears that the American presence in Europe would be disruptive to the balance of power in Europe; he attacked an Admiralty suggestion to this effect at the Eastern Affairs Committee on 23 December 1918:

' ... I think that we have to make up our minds definitely what attitude we are going to take up with regard to the Americans. If we are going to regard any increase in American power as a danger to this country, then I confess I do not see any hope whatever of arriving at a durable settlement under the Treaty of Peace. I think

¹CAB 27/24, p.180, 2 Dec. 1918

²Ibid., p.245, 23 Dec. 1918

³Ibid., p.133, 3 Oct. 1918

that we must take up the position that, admitting nothing is certain in the future, the chance of our having to fight the Americans is so remote that it may be neglected, and that we must consider that a growth of American power is not a threat to us at all, but on the contrary is rather a bulwark to our safety... '1

Nor indeed was Cecil suspicious of American commercial aims in the areas of Europe and the Near East where America was proposing to set up relief agencies after the war. Sir John Beale, chairman of the Wheat Executive, told the Eastern Affairs Committee in December 1918 that he feared that the Americans were using these missions to obtain commercial concessions; Cecil scoffed at this idea:

'What is the argument? I do not see that it would matter very much if America relieved the whole of these places.

'... Take Poland, which is probably the most contentious of all these countries... Supposing America relieves Poland and thereby acquires great merit in Poland, and great influence.

'... how does that harm us or anybody else? She is not going to try and exercise any political influence in Poland; she would be insane to wish to do such a thing. If she is not, I do not see that it matters'²

Thus Cecil looked to a friendly association with America as a key ingredient in the new world order and in Britain's ability to protect herself in war.

Cecil's views on post-war economic policy must now be considered. Allied plans for the economic future were formulated at Paris in June 1916. The Allies were anxious to secure their trade and industry

¹ Ibid., p.245 o.s., 23 Dec 1918

² Ibid., p.174 o.s., 2 Dec 1918

against German rivalry after the war, fearing that she might emerge from the war with a vastly stronger position in Eastern Europe.

They therefore passed resolutions imposing restrictions on enemy trade in the post-war period; the enemy powers were to be excluded from a most-favoured-nation arrangement between the Allies, during a period of reconstruction; for the same period, the Allies were to conserve their natural resources for themselves before others. For a time, too, they were to protect industry and commerce against 'economic aggression' - 'dumping' etc. - by submitting enemy commerce to special controls and even prohibition. Even more extreme measures were envisaged - prevention of enemy subjects from holding professions which would assist Germany's economic independence or military capacity; further, through government control, subsidies and tariffs, the Allies were to try to secure total and permanent independence in the future from any of the enemy countries as far as raw materials and commercial and maritime organisations were concerned.¹ The moving spirits behind this policy were the French, led by Etienne Clémentel, the minister of commerce, and British and Empire protectionists.² The Asquith coalition adopted it as fears of German economic power after the war grew. It was vigorously opposed by the foreign policy radicals as it ruled out a peace of reconciliation. The Americans hated it, and President Wilson continued to attack it after America had entered the war on the Allied side.³

¹CAB 24/4, G.156; extract from the Resolutions of the Paris Conference, attached to memorandum by Sir Edward Carson, 20 Sept. 1917

²For an account of the Paris talks and their impact, see: Laurence W. Martin, Peace Without Victory. Woodrow Wilson and the British Liberals (New Haven 1958 - Yale Hist.Publs.No. 70) p.33, p.70, p.112, p.143

³See: CAB 23/3, WC 226, Appendix: reply to Benedictus XV, by President of U.S.A., Aug. 1917

Cecil was not a protectionist. Like other members of the government he accepted a resolution proposed at the Imperial War Cabinet in favour of Imperial preference in the future - but not until he had secured a change in the original wording so that he was accepting preference in principle, not as a rigid system.¹ He defended the Paris proposals in August 1917 as a counter-measure against German commercial imperialism after the war, when commenting on a criticism by Wilson.² But he admitted the following month that America's attitude necessarily modified the position. Sir Edward Carson, of the British War Cabinet, had complained of the delay in taking action on the resolutions.³ Cecil urged that the government should not yet cancel its old commercial treaties, nor commit itself to any new agreements. He explained that he had reservations about the proposals:

'Personally, I have never been a great admirer of the terms of these proposals. Moreover, they have been in effect rejected by Russia, Belgium, and, I think, Italy. They are notoriously unpopular in the United States, and they have been of great use from a propagandist standpoint to the military party in Germany'⁴

He did not, however, object to the idea embodied in the proposals that interallied economic cooperation should continue after the war:

'The principle underlying them, however, is sound enough, viz., that the Allies shall assist one another in the work of reconstruction, and do their utmost to stimulate and conserve the natural resources of Allied countries'⁵

¹CAB 23/40, IWC 12, item 16, 26 Apr. 1917

²F.O. 800/198; memo by Cecil, 31 Aug. 1917

³CAB 24/3, G.156; memo by Carson, 20 Sept. 1917

⁴CAB 24/4, G.159; memo by Cecil, 28 Sept. 1917

⁵Ibid.

Moreover, he appreciated Carson's argument that putting Germany at an economic disadvantage would make her more amenable at a future peace conference:

'It may well be that the offer of most-favoured-nation treatment to Germany - as suggested by M. Clémentel - will be our most potent bargaining counter when we come to discuss the terms of peace'¹

In November, 1918, similarly, he saw the Allied economic power as a possible means of dealing with the problem of Bolshevism - by cutting off supplies from its adherents and supplying its opponents.²

Thus Cecil was against any permanent measures against Germany; but he believed that the Allies should make use of the controls over world resources that they had organised, to improve their position after the war.

The British government did not take action - in the way of binding agreements - to implement the permanent measures proposed, but they did little to reassure Wilson that they had abandoned the Paris policy.³ Cecil himself, though he attacked 'economic war after the war', stressed in his public and official statements the Allies' right to hold on to any raw materials that they needed.⁴ He urged, too, that the government should buy up Spain's entire iron pyrites output for the

¹Ibid.

²CAB 23/8, WC 502, item 5, 14 Nov. 1918

³F.O. 371/4360, p.62, f.37.81 memo by Cecil submitted to Political Intelligence Dept. of F.O., 26 Apr. 1918

⁴See: Hansard, 5th series, 1917, c.2094.
and: CAB 24/37, GT 3181: War aims, draft statement by Lord R. Cecil, 3 Jan. 1918

following few years - well into the post-war period, before Germany could do the same.¹ This type of thinking, without a formal revocation of the Paris resolutions, gave the impression that a post-war boycott policy was still planned by the European Allies.

Apart from the dangers of German rivalry, and the needs of the Allies, the other crucial economic issue after the war was the general state of Europe. Four years of blockade and interallied control, combined with war damage and disorganisation meant that return to normal would be extremely difficult. Cecil knew that if his League ideas were to work, the economic chaos would have to be solved. He placed his faith in the very successful interallied supply control bodies, which had collected a mass of information on individual national needs and sources of supply. On 15 October 1918, he urged the Economic Defence and Development Committee of the Cabinet to recommend to the Cabinet that these bodies, with extended powers, should take on the problem of the transitional period.² The Allied Maritime Transport Council, the key supply body, because it was responsible for the apportionment of shipping space, should, Cecil recommended, be expanded in function to become a 'Supreme Inter-Allied Economic Authority'. If accepted by the Cabinet, he said, the plan should then be submitted formally to the Americans and other Allies, and a conference on the whole subject should be convened. Answering arguments by Sir Joseph Maclay, the

¹Addit. MSS.51090, ff.12-13: Cecil to Oliver, 19 Feb. 1918

²CAB 27/44: Economic Defence and Development Committee, 11th meeting, 15 Oct. 1918

British shipping controller, a few days later, he explained that co-operation rather than a system of rigid control agreements was envisaged. He said that the Allied Maritime Transport Council had been successful just because it had proceeded by diplomacy between its members.¹

Events were to prove Cecil's case for maintaining an efficient organisation for economic coordination; as a later chapter shows, the economic chaos after the war was even, in some cases, increased by the ineffectiveness of the new bodies that had ^{instead} to be formed. Indeed the situation became worse than he had envisaged in October 1918, when neither he nor MacLay foresaw that shipping too, would be in short supply.² However, Wilson's unallayed suspicions of the European Allies' commercial aims worked against Cecil's plans. The American government rejected the idea. Wilson's leading economic advisers, such as Herbert Hoover, were committed by their principles against the idea of controlled trade in peacetime.³ It seems that Cecil and those of his colleagues in the Foreign Office, who shared his views, did not consider the attitude of these men sufficiently, but preferred to go by the assurances they received from American representatives in the United Kingdom. Cecil believed it would only need an intelligent exposition of his plans to convince Wilson of the distinction between this and a policy

¹CAB 27/44: Economic Defence and Development Committee, 12th meeting, 22 Oct. 1918

²Ibid.

³See Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, pp.157-158

of economic boycott. Colonel House, Wilson's aide, stated in early November that the post-war economic situation could be met by the blockade machinery alone. This muddleheaded statement led Cecil to believe that the Americans were confused rather than fundamentally opposed.¹

As a subsequent chapter shows, Cecil persisted with his idea; economic stability was crucial to his peace plans and these interallied bodies with their practice in friendly cooperation and their fund of experience seemed to him the best way of achieving this. The effect of these and other wartime economic organisations on his League of Nations views will be discussed later.

The future security and power of the British Empire was one of the chief concerns of His Majesty's Government during the First World War. Lloyd George's formation of the Imperial War Cabinet in 1917 in order to unify and strengthen the efforts of the British Empire during the war brought the Dominions into British councils, so that they decisively influenced the policy of the government. General Smuts urged considerations of geographical necessity on the British government and William Hughes, the Premier of Australia, battled successfully for the extension of Australian control of the South Pacific after the war, and supported his Dominion colleagues in similar aims. Both neo-imperialists, like Milner, who looked to an improved and strengthened British Empire to be a force for peace in the new world order,

¹ F.O. 371/4367, f.354.516: minute by Percy, 8 Nov. 1918 and:
F.O. 371/4367, f.354.548: telegram, F.O. to Barclay, from Cecil
for Crawford, 9 Nov. 1918

and more traditional imperialists, like Curzon, were in favour of Britain moving into as many of the areas vacated by the enemy powers as possible. There was always a strategic, a commercial, an idealistic reason for Britain taking over an area; and not least the reason which was satisfactory to most, that Britain and her dominions were a mighty power who had as it were a physical necessity to exercise control, as an athletic physique needs exercise. Lloyd George himself was concerned to placate dominion feeling. All this ran clean against the anti-annexationist policy of President Wilson and, towards the end of the war, Lloyd George and the British cabinet accepted Smuts' plan for a mandate system under the League of Nations to give the policy of conquest a covering of decency.¹

Cecil respected the Empire as an institution, and had some concern for its security. For example, he argued, in 1917, against Grey's policy in the Far East. Grey had allowed the Japanese a free hand over the whole of China; Cecil thought that this involved serious dangers to the future of India, and Britain's position in the Far East generally.² Further, the Turkish Empire had offered India's Western flank some protection against Russian attack before the war. The Entente had decided the Turks were to be expelled from the Middle East. The British policy was to exercise some kind of control in that region

¹Wm. Roger Louis, Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies 1914-1919 (Oxford 1967), p.77.

²CAB 23/2, WC 142, item 12, 22 May 1917

after the War to protect the Indian flank and British routes to India. Cecil shared this concern. He thought it vital to have the goodwill of the Arabs for this reason;¹ and he was afraid that if Russia's power revived she might be a menace in that area.² In consequence he was in favour of having a French mandate in the Caucasus where he believed they would be an effective buffer between Russia and the Arab countries. In the Middle East itself he was afraid the French would be a divisive influence³ and would disgust the Americans with their imperialism;⁴ but he believed they would be preferable, as mandatory in the Caucasus, to the Americans, because the Americans would not stay there, and it would be left to the Russians. The French would stay, and would be too remote from their sources of supply to be a military danger there.⁵ His colleagues on the Eastern Affairs Committee disputed this.

However, he tended to find fault increasingly with the British presence in such areas, and to stress rather the importance of the League, mandates and Anglo-American friendship. A conspicuous example of his lack of real interest in India's security was his view on what should be done about Persia. Persia was actually contiguous with India; Britain had thrown away money in trying to prop up the government and keep it friendly. Cecil urged that Britain should wash its hands of

¹ GAB 27/24, p.166, 27 Nov. 1918

² Ibid., p.180, 2 Dec. 1918

³ Ibid., p.188 o.s., 5 Dec. 1918

⁴ Ibid., p.221, 18 Dec. 1918

⁵ Ibid., p.180, 2 Dec. 1918

Persia and let it sink by itself.¹ Curzon argued that Cecil's plan would have a deplorable effect on Britain's position in Mesopotamia and India;² he described it as 'immoral, feeble and disastrous'.³ Cecil agreed that Persia might be given another chance, but, if, after economic pressure, they were still uncooperative he was in favour of withdrawal of British aid.⁴

There were other indications that Cecil had largely lost interest in the security of the Empire; he pointed out the expense of maintaining British troops in the Caucasus. He dismissed Curzon's plea that the British should remain 'to set the people on their legs there'. Cecil replied: 'You ought not to be taken in by that phrase. We get there so often, and we always remain'.⁵

He grudgingly admitted that the British troops there might stay to protect the oil pipeline, the railway from the Black Sea to the Caspian⁶ and the route to Persia - from the Russian Bolsheviks;⁷ but he preferred the idea of an international force for these purposes;⁸ Britain's

¹ Ibid., p.237, 19 Dec. 1918

² Ibid., p.259, 30 Dec. 1918

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p.260, o.s. 30 Dec. 1918

⁵ Ibid., p.201, 9 Dec. 1918

⁶ Ibid., p.179, 2 Dec. 1918

⁷ Ibid., p.210, o.s. 16 Dec. 1918

⁸ Ibid., p.209 o.s. 16 Dec. 1918

presence in all these places would produce an imperialistic impression; and he was wholly against any idea of Britain keeping the peace in this chaotic region - it would require 60,000 troops, he understood.¹

Finally, he dismissed the strategic arguments for continued British control:

'I know that if Mr. Balfour or myself makes any proposition with regard to Africa, we shall be told that there is an aeroplane station, or a submarine base, or that it is the oldest colony, or it will bitterly offend some New Zealand politician if we do it, or something of that kind. It is always the same'²

Similarly, in the case of Palestine, he denied that there were vital strategic reasons for a British presence there - though in favour of a British mandate for other reasons:

'... I am not much impressed by the argument that in order to defend Egypt we had to go to Palestine, because in order to defend Palestine we should have to go to Aleppo or some such place. You always have to go forward; at least I gather so'³

There was a striking resemblance between this and a comment of his father on the strategic advice of the military. Lord Salisbury once said that if a minister paid attention to everything they said he would find himself ordering the fortification of the moon to ward off an attack from Mars.⁴

¹ Ibid., p.178 o.s., 2 Dec. 1918

² Ibid., p.202 o.s., 9 Dec. 1918

³ Ibid., p.192 o.s., 5 Dec. 1918

⁴ Lord G. Cecil Salisbury. III. 218

Like his father too, Cecil was uninfluenced by geographical arguments or a glowing vision of unending and beneficial imperial expansion; in order to secure agreement with the Germans, Salisbury had been willing to allow them some freedom of action in Africa; his policy was largely dictated by diplomatic considerations. Curzon always considered that Salisbury's policy was partly responsible for the colonial conflict that had been a cause of the war, because it had given an impression of British weakness.¹ Salisbury had dismissed the idea of a British held Cape to Cairo route as 'a curious idea',² neither commercially nor strategically valuable. Cecil had the same approach; he sat on the Territorial Desiderata Committee of the Imperial War Cabinet in April 1917 which discussed what areas might be taken over by the Empire if the Allies won the war. An earlier committee of the Foreign Office, the Mallet Committee, had recommended in August 1916 that the Allies might allow Germany to keep some of her African Empire if they could not get their way with the Germans at a future Peace Conference. Cecil was in favour of that plan;³ Smuts, however, explained that if Germany was left a harbour in East Africa she would be able to threaten sea routes, and Cecil's suggestion was rejected.

It should be noted that though Smuts supported the League idea and initiated a number of proposals in connection with it as part of the

¹William Roger Louis, Germany's Lost Colonies, p.20

²Ibid., p.22

³CAB 21/27, p.47: Imperial War Cabinet Committee Meeting on Territorial Desiderata, 17 April 1917

British official policy on an international organisation after the war, he laid more stress than Cecil on the role of the Empire in the future. The Empire was, he said, 'a beacon light to the peoples of the world in their gropings towards peaceful international government'¹. As far as the future of the German East African colonies was concerned, Smuts wished the British Empire to maintain some form of control over them after the war in order to give the British 'through communication along the whole length of the continent'².

During the war, the Allies became involved with the question of whether they should bring about the liberation of the various subject nationalities in the Austro-Hungarian and Turkish Empires. Many people in Britain, particularly liberals and radicals, thought that the achievement of national independence was intrinsically right and desirable. Cecil was not one of these; but he, with the rest of the British government, saw that sympathy for this ideal could be an aid to victory; it was a way of detaching subject peoples from their masters; the Arab revolt against the Turks, the desertions from the Austro-Hungarian army and the formation of pro-Ally regiments of Czech ex-prisoners-of-war were the successful results of the policy; it helped also to gain good will for the Allies in the U.S.A. from immigrant members of these new nationalities and from President Wilson - for whom national self determination was an essential principle.

¹CAB 24/37, GT 3180: War aims - draft statement by General Smuts.

²CAB 23/42, IWC 44, item 2, 20 Dec. 1918

Finally Cecil and all supporters of self determination, for whatever reason, believed that if the wishes of subject nationalities were taken into account, the map of Europe could be re-drawn in a way that might lead to more lasting peace.

The national destiny of Polish and other slavic peoples had no interest for him. Until December 1916 he was unaware that there were hopes of creating a new state called Czechoslovakia. As his prewar views on Irish nationalism showed, he did not believe that the rule of one country by another was per se wrong.

He was initially against the break up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire partly because it would close the door to separate peace talks with Austria, and he tended to play down any such possibility in public speeches in 1917; but he also felt doubtful about the subject peoples' competence to rule themselves. He wrote in February 1917:

'I am disposed to think that there is much to be said for the view that the settlement of South-Eastern Europe, based on a personal union of the four states under the Austrian Crown, would be better for the future peace of Europe than the creation of a new confederation of Slav states. Our experience in the Balkans of small independent kingdoms is not encouraging'²

The future weakness of these new states in central Europe worried him - even if they were independent of Austria they would have to be in a federation: 'Unless we can induce the small states we are setting up to federate with one another the last state of Europe may well be

¹Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.141

²CAB 24/6 GT 43; p.181: note by Cecil, 19 Feb. 1917 about memo by Drummond, 12 Feb. 1917

worse than the first'¹. However he was persuaded by Namier that an enforced federation might only stir up more trouble.² He was similarly concerned about the vulnerability of the Baltic states liberated from Russia.³ His views echoed those of his father. Salisbury, expressing his own opinion, though writing of Castlereagh, said that new small states invited war, because they were 'incapable of self-defence, and only a temptation to aggressive neighbours'⁴.

Cecil believed that the principle as such could actually be a danger to peace. This he stated in a letter to St. Loe Strachey written on 13 November 1917, summing up his general objections.

'As for the terms of Peace I must honestly admit to you that I am to some extent a heretic. I recognise, of course, that we must do all we can for the Poles and the Yugo-Slavs and the Czechs, but I must add that I cannot look forward with much enthusiasm to the success of our efforts. As far as I can see the Slavs have never shown the slightest capacity for self-government.

'Steed and his friends would no doubt regard this as ignorant folly, but they will treat this aspect of European politics from a crusading point of view. They believe in nationality as if it were a religion. I can only regard it as one of the great international forces which it would be folly to disregard. So far its achievements do not appear to me to have been very encouraging. It produced a United Germany, unfortunately for us, it has kept Eastern Europe in a turmoil, it is responsible for very wild and unreasonable aspirations in Italy, and it is a perfect curse to us in Ireland.

'All this does emphatically mean I do not myself believe that a European peace founded only on nationality, and without any other provisions is likely to be durable, or even in all respects beneficial'⁵

¹F.O. 371/3136, f.64427.177223, p.296: note by Cecil, undated, about memo by Amery, 20 Oct. 1918

²Ibid., p.300: note by Cecil, undated, about Namier minute, 7 Nov. 1918

³CAB 24/67 GT 6050: memo by Cecil, 20 Oct. 1918

⁴Essays by the Late Marquis of Salisbury K.G., Biographical, p.42

⁵F.O. 800/196, Strachey, St. Loe: Cecil to Strachey, 13 Nov. 1917

Despite this, Cecil actively promoted the principle of nationality to assist the Allied cause and eliminate sources of discord after the war. When President Wilson, in an effort to end the war, called on the belligerents to state their war aims in December 1916, Cecil helped to draft the Allied reply. He urged that the Allies should show themselves to be in favour of a just peace and that the German aims were incompatible with justice. Allied aims should include the restoration of Belgium and evacuation of occupied regions by the Germans; 'Beyond that', he advised, 'we should say that we looked for some territorial settlement that would have a chance of permanence; that it would and must be based on principles acceptable to human feeling, such as nationality and security'.¹ On these grounds he thought France was entitled to an adjustment of her eastern boundaries to give security against unprovoked attack, and the return of regions - i.e. Alsace and Lorraine - which were ethnologically French. Other aims should include 'autonomy' for Poland under Russian protection, liberation of the Slav peoples (it was not specified in what manner) and the expulsion of Turkey from Europe.² Thus Cecil accepted nationality as a necessary ingredient in a future peace, though in combination with other elements such as the League.³ He stated his support on these grounds more forcibly in his 3 January 1918 memorandum, which provided material for Lloyd George's Trades Unions

¹CAB 23/1 WC 16, Appendix I: memo by Cecil about action on U.S. Note, 22 Dec. 1916

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

speech; here he dealt at greater length with the problem of the Austro-Hungarian Empire - the immediate cause of the war itself:

' ... unless some measure of self-government is granted to those Austro-Hungarian nationalities who have long desired it, it is impossible to hope for the removal of those causes of unrest in that part of Europe which have so long threatened its general peace'¹

He believed that the League of Nations to prevent war would fail if based on an unsound territorial settlement.²

He feared serious postwar strife in the Near East. The British had encouraged the Arabs, led by the Sherif of Mecca, to revolt against Turkey; they promised to support the creation of independent Arab states in certain areas, including the greater part of Syria. But the Sykes-Picot agreement had assigned that region to French control. Feisal, the Sherif's son, to strengthen Arab claims, liberated the ancient Syrian capital, Damascus, and hoisted the Arab flag there, with British approval. The Syrian populations supported him. Realising the danger, the British held talks with the French. Cecil took an important part. These led to an Anglo-French pledge in November 1918 to help to establish native governments in Syria and Mesopotamia - an assertion of the nationality principle. Cecil hoped that it would lead to the cancellation of the Sykes-Picot agreement, with which it was incompatible.³ But the French would only yield Mosul, and their sector of Palestine - to British control. They insisted on their claim to control most of Syria.

¹CAB 24/37, GT 3181: War Aims - draft statement by Lord R.Cecil, 3 Jan 1918

²Hansard, 5th series, 1918, vol. 106, p.625

³CAB 27/24, pp.186-188: 5 Dec. 1918

He encouraged national self determination for other reasons; first, the Central European peoples might help the Allies against the Germans: '... these persons are the enemies of our enemies, and as such are entitled to our warmest sympathy'.¹ He came to believe that the Czecho-Slovak National Council, newly established in Allied countries, must be recognised as the lawful government of a Czechoslovak nation. The consideration which really affected him was the need to gain the support of a liberated Czechoslovak prisoners-of-war in Russia, so that they could be a nucleus for Allied military intervention there.²

As mentioned earlier, America's approval was important, too. If the British tutelary position was to be accepted in the Near East the Arabs must be allowed to rule themselves in Mesopotamia - he told the Eastern Affairs Committee: 'The Americans will only support us if they think we are going in for something in the nature of a native government'.³

Though he approached the nationality question pragmatically, and thought that there was nothing repugnant in the idea that one nationality should be subject to another, there was one aspect of the question where he thought natural justice was involved; he believed that persecution - in particular religious persecution - justified a people in wishing to be free. This led him to take a special interest in two peoples - the Armenians and the Jews.

¹Hansard, 5th series, 1918, vol. 106, p.2021

²F.O. 371/3135, p.101 o.s. f.64427.89425: minute by Lord R.Cecil, undated (May 1918)

³CAB 27/24, p.166: 27 Nov. 1918

In his speech justifying Allied War Aims on 16 May 1917 it was the Armenians in particular whom he cited as deserving liberation.¹ In 1915, 1,200,000 Armenians out of a population of 1,800,000 had been slaughtered or deported by their Turkish overlords. He urged in parliament² and at the Eastern Affairs Committee³ that they should be delivered from Turkish rule. He wished to see justice done to the perpetrators of the massacres.⁴ At the end of 1918, he favoured a large Armenian state comprising their populations in Russia and Turkey, under a League mandatory.⁵ He pleaded their cause again in August 1919, when their independent existence was threatened. He thought it more important to save them than to continue aid to the anti-Bolshevik Russians. It was a plea as much for the cause of Christianity as for a people:

'I hope we shall not have to deplore in a few months' time the final extinction of a race... which has held aloft the banner of Christianity in a land in which that banner has not often been raised'⁶

Some of Cecil's motives for assisting the Zionist Jews to obtain a homeland in Palestine after the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire

¹Hansard, 5th series, 1917, xciii.1669

²Hansard, 5th series, 1918, vol. 110, p.3269

³CAB 27/24, p.177, 2 Dec. 1918

⁴Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/38: Cecil to Lloyd George, 30 Apr. 1919

⁵CAB 27/24, p.176 o.s. 2 Dec. 1918

⁶Hansard, 5th series, 1919, vol.119, p.2036

were concerned simply with the prosecution of the war. Russian pogroms prejudiced American Jewish and liberal opinion against the Allies. The Foreign Office welcomed Zionism as a means of retrieving this support.¹ Cecil shared this view: 'It is very provoking', he noted on 12 February 1916, 'that the Russian Gov^t feel able to do so little for the Jews. Their financial importance is immense'.² He told the War Cabinet of the strength of the Zionist movements - particularly in the U.S.A. - and that it would be: '... of most substantial assistance to the Allies to have the earnestness and enthusiasm of these people enlisted on our side. To do nothing was to risk a direct breach with them, and it was necessary to face this situation'.³ Partly for this reason he was among those who favoured a declaration of sympathy with the movement by the government. The Balfour Declaration, in November 1917, was the outcome of these Cabinet discussions.

Cecil wished also to win over Jewish political leaders in Russia, after the first 1917 revolution there, by impressing them with British efforts on behalf of the Zionist cause. He hoped that as a result of visits from British Zionists, Russia might be encouraged to continue support for the Allies in the war.⁴ Following the Bolshevik Revolution Cecil in December 1917 hoped friendship with Zionists would help to

¹F.O. 800/96, p.85: F.O. to Lord Bertie and Sir G. Buchanan, 11 Mar. 1916

²F.O. 371/2846, f.2212.21987: note by Cecil, 12 Feb. 1916 on letter by Sir Robert Borden, 31 Dec. 1915

³CAB 23/4, WC 227, item 2, 3 Sept. 1917

⁴F.O. 800/198: Cecil to Ormsby-Gore, 15 May 1917

finance the resistance of non-Bolshevist provinces of Russia to the German advance after the Bolsheviks had decided to stop fighting.

'LORD ROBERT CECIL further pointed out the great difficulty of getting roubles to finance Southern Russia, and he suggested that use might be made of the Jews in Odessa and Kieff through friendly Jews in Western Europe such as the Zionists'¹

But Cecil's strongest reasons for supporting the movement had their roots in his religious beliefs; the idea of the Jews as the fore-runners of the Christian faith had a reality for him. He believed the Christian and Jewish outlook about international affairs and the new order to be the same: writing of his League of Nations views, he told Sir William Wiseman, attaché in Washington: 'What is wanted is an ideal, and that must be found in the old Hebrew - and let us add Christian - conception of the reign of peace'². The Cecil family had taken a special interest in the question of Jewish immigration at the beginning of the century. Robert Cecil's brother Hugh made an impassioned speech in 1905 in support of allowing refugees fleeing from pogroms in Eastern Europe to have full freedom of entry into the United Kingdom;³ and in 1906 their plight led Robert Cecil himself to favour Zionism; he wrote:

'The central idea underlying the Zionist movement seems to me worthy of all support. Apart from other considerations, it appears to me that the restoration of the Jewish nation offers a satisfactory solution, if it can be accomplished, of those problems raised by Jewish emigration, which are otherwise very difficult of adjustment'⁴

¹ F.O. 371/3439, f.19777.19777: minutes of I.C. 37, Conference at Quay d'Orsay, 23 Dec. 1917, transmitted by War Cabinet Secretariat to Cecil

² Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p. 142

³ Hansard, 4th series, 1905, vol. 149, pp. 172-4

⁴ Nahum Sokolow, History of Zionism 1600-1918 (London 1919) i.299

During the war and after Cecil followed the fate of the European Jews with concern. He corresponded with Lucien Wolf and Leopold de Rothschild on the plight of the Roumanian and Russian Jews in 1915.¹ He was strongly affected by Namier's condemnation of the anti-semitism of the Polish National Democratic party, in April 1918,² and after the Peace Conference he was concerned that those guilty in Poland of outrages on Jews should be brought to trial.³ In June 1919, he advocated withdrawal of Allied aid to Koltchak and Denikin, the Russian anti Bolshevik leaders, if rumours of pogrom plans by their officers proved to be true.⁴

Cecil met the Zionist leader, Chaim Weizmann, on 18 August 1915, and, like nearly all the members of the British government, was deeply impressed by him. Cecil recorded that he was particularly struck by Weizmann's argument that the persecution of the Jews was a danger to peace:

'He said..... that the oppression of the Jews was not only disastrous to the Jews themselves but was a danger to the peace of Europe so long as it lasted and that there was no reason to suppose that it would not go on so long as Jews were scattered throughout the nations in their present anomalous national position.
... 'He said that this could only be corrected by giving the Jews a local habitation and full national existence, and that apart from the material advantages to this country which he had touched upon, they were fitted to be a kind of

¹F.O. 371/2443 (Roumania), f.165840.165840 - 171025: Lucien Wolf to Cecil, 3 Nov. 1915, 4 Nov. 1915; and: YIVO Institute of Jewish Research; Wolf-Movshovitch Collection, no. 4329: Cecil to Leopold de Rothschild, 3 Sept. 1915

²F.O. 371/4359, p.41 o.s., f.22.22: minute by Namier, 12 Apr. 1918, and note by Cecil (p. 40). See also: F.O. 371/3139, p.22, f.190561. 193186: Cecil comment on tel. Rumbold to F.O., 21 Nov. 1918

³Hansard, 5th series, 1919, vol. 118, p.888

⁴Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/52: Lord R. Cecil to Lloyd George, 7 June 1919

buffer or intermediate state between East and West which was urgently necessary and which they alone could bring into existence'¹

Cecil became as interested in the question as Balfour, and he had a number of meetings with Weizman at the Foreign Office in the following years. On 25 April 1917 Weizman spoke with Cecil.

'Lord Robert Cecil was deeply interested in the Zionist ideal; I think that he alone saw it in its true perspective as an integral part of world stabilization. To him the re-establishment of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine and the organisation of the world in a great federation were complementary features of the next step in the management of human affairs'²

A demonstration in support of the Balfour Declaration was held at the London Opera House on 2 December 1917. Cecil spoke there of the government's aims:³

'... Our wish is that Arabian countries shall be for the Arabs, Armenia for the Armenians, and Judea for the Jews ... Yes, and let us add, if it can be so, let Turkey, real Turkey, be for the Turks'

He stated clearly his own view of the meaning of self-determination - the removal of discrimination before the law because of creed or race. He explained that in supporting Zionism he was acting quite in the

¹F.O. 800/95, pp.278-9: minute by Cecil for Russell: 18 Aug. 1915

²Chaim Weizman, Trial and Error, the Autobiography of Chaim Weizman (Illustrated edn., London 1950), p.241

³Nahum Sokolow, History of Zionism, ii. 101-3

tradition of his country; there were two great foundations on which the policy of Britain was always founded - liberty and justice:

'Perhaps, more accurately, they may be called supremacy of the Law and Liberty, for, be well assured, if we are ever to obtain that security which we have been recently told is so important for us, if we are ever to lift European civilisation and national relations in Europe out of the anarchy in which they at present are, it must be by the same means by which we have secured liberty and happiness in each country, namely, by the supremacy of Law'

Self-determination, he said, was a new word, but not a new idea in the British Empire, where they had striven to give people complete liberty and equality before the law and the fullest self government of which they were capable. 'One of the great steps - in my judgement, in some ways the greatest step - we have taken in carrying out this principle is the recognition of Zionism'. It was the first constructive effort in the new settlement after the war - the re-birth of a nation. He concluded:

'I don't like to prophesy what ultimate results that great event may have, but for myself I believe it will have a far-reaching influence on the history of the world and consequences which none can foresee on the future history of the human race'

Thus, to conclude, Cecil came to accept that the wishes of those wishing for separate nationality could not be ignored if a lasting peace was to be achieved. Further, he believed that suffering justified a wish for independence; but he did not believe that race or language

gave an intrinsic right to it; rather he held that the true definition of self-determination was a condition where neither race nor language was a disability in a court of justice.

Cecil hoped for another outcome of the war - the overthrow of the Hohenzollern rule in Germany and the replacement of the military regime by a government more pacific in spirit; this view was generally held by his colleagues. At the beginning of the war he told his brother that he thought a large indemnity must be imposed on Germany after the Entente powers had won the war - it would be: 'the only means likely to produce the downfall of the military system in Germany'.¹ He believed in Germany's responsibility for the war and shared the general belief in the atrocities imputed to her soldiers. In 1915, he spoke in parliament of making the Kaiser answerable for these after the war;² and he deeply resented President Wilson's suggestion that the Entente powers had war aims similar to those of the Germans, in his Peace Note in December 1916. Cecil told the American Ambassador that the Allies were fighting for civilisation:

'A failure to secure such a victory will leave the world at the mercy of the most arrogant and bloodiest tyranny that has ever been organised. It is far better to die in an effort to defeat that tyranny than to perish under its success'.³

A democratic regime would alter the Allied attitude, however,

¹CHE 52/52: Cecil to 4th Marquess of Salisbury, 1 Dec. 1914

²Hansard, 5th series, 1915, lxx. 1525

³Burton J. Hendrick, The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page, ii. 209

Cecil asserted in March 1917, when discussing with Balfour and Drummond the possibility of encouraging German socialists against their government:

'... The greatest obstacle to peace with Germany was undoubtedly the rule of that country by the German military clique with whom no settlement short of absolute surrender by them could be regarded as a real security against future war. If however there were established in that country a genuinely democratic constitution it would be much easier for us to treat & in that case it is very unlikely that we should insist on any considerable territorial re-arrangement in Europe as far as Germany was concerned'¹

After America joined the war, President Wilson declared that there could be no compromise with the Hohenzollern regime²; but as the war continued this was played down, and even Cecil came to think that too much should not be made of it as a war aim since it might enrage the Germans rather than encourage them to make terms. As he put it in the late summer of 1918:

'Nothing would please me more or be more wholesome than to secure the dethronement & if possible the execution of the Kaiser & Crown Prince. But to put that in the forefront mobilises against us all the forces of loyalty & tradition which are probably still powerful in Germany'³

He continued, however, to believe that 'the exorcism of German militarism'⁴ was one of the achievements essential to the success of a

¹F.O. 800/206, Sweden, p.135: minute by Cecil, March 1917

²CAB 23/3, WC 226, Appendix: Reply of President to U.S.A. to Benedictus XV, Aug. 1917

³F.O. 371/4367, p.46 o.s., f.339.339: minute by Cecil undated (August?) 1918

⁴F.O. 371/4365, p.374, f.253.427: address by Cecil, shown to F.O. (Political Intelligence Dept.) Oct. 5 1918, given 12 Nov. 1918

League of Nations. The revolution in Germany, and the unseating of the Kaiser at the end of the war, largely as the result of Allied pressure, took care of a part of that problem. During the general election campaign in November and December 1918, however, Cecil still insisted that punishment for the head of the German military regime as well as lesser war criminals was a necessary ingredient for a lasting peace - as a lesson to law breakers:

'He said that he stood for a clean, just, and lasting peace, and he believed that the foundations of that peace must be the punishment of the criminal who caused the war. The peace must provide for the punishment of those Germans guilty of torturing our prisoners of war...'1

He stuck to this position late into 1919; when the projected trial of the Kaiser was abandoned, he was among those who objected:

'... there is no doubt whatever that the Kaiser ought to be punished. I said so in 1915, I have repeated the observation more than once, and I hold it as strongly as ever I did... The Kaiser has been tried by the public opinion of the world and has been condemned'2

For many others, who advocated a far harsher peace than Cecil, the Kaiser's trial had been an election rallying cry in 1918 to serve the mood of the moment. Cecil did not wish for the punishment of the Kaiser from anti-German, revanchist motives; his desire that Germany should join the League as soon as possible and his approval of a moderate reparations settlement show that he was against a vindictive peace.³

¹Times Weekly, 20 Dec. 1918 p.1049: Cecil speech at election meeting, Hitchin

²Hansard, 5th series, 1919, Vol. 118, p.986

³See following chapters

His reasons were that he wished to see the triumph of law and to see the Germans put their military past behind them. Thus the only inconsistency lay in his lack of good sense on the matter - good sense which he showed over reparations and the effect a bad settlement would have on German feeling. He took no account of the 'forces of loyalty and tradition' there, which he had considered the previous summer, and which in 1919 showed their persistence and strength in the weak new German republic.

Finally Cecil's views on Russia's future after the war must be considered. Instability in that area affected the rest of Europe. In this context it will be necessary to quote views which he actually expressed later than the intended scope of this chapter, in order to explain his thinking on the subject.

When the Bolsheviks seized power in the Autumn of 1917, they held peace negotiations with Germany, threw over their treaties with Russia's former allies and repudiated their debts to them. Their aim was to get a peace, make concessions to the Germans, if necessary, to buy time, and then gain control over the whole of the Russian Empire. The Allies feared that the peace with Germany laid Russian sources of raw materials, and armaments dumps, open to German armies, and that the blockade would thereby be broken. Most of these raw material areas were in the hands of Russians who did not accept the Bolsheviks, or break-away nationalities, like Azerbaijanis and Ukrainians. The Allies were not very concerned with Russia's constitutional fate. They disliked the Bolsheviks' creed as far as they understood it, and thought their

defection to have been treacherous; but what moved them to act was Russia's vulnerability; they decided to stop the Germans themselves; they tried to get the cooperation of the Bolsheviks and failed; they helped the other Russians with supplies and troops; by the end of the war they were involved in fighting Bolsheviks as well. After the Armistice they were faced with a dilemma; they could withdraw, abandon their Russian friends, probably to defeat by the Bolsheviks, certainly to prolonged warfare. Or they could lead a major crusade against the Bolsheviks - who were for them synonymous with chaos - or at least form a cordon sanitaire of friendly stable states round them, isolating them. To help the Bolsheviks was unthinkable, though they were gaining ground. However, a major offensive would be another vast expense added to the Allied war bill, and it would be difficult to find enough soldiers willing to fight such a war. Finally, they decided to intervene in a small way, to try and stop things getting worse, even if they could not get better. Allied troops did in fact remain in the Russian Empire, partly because of difficulties of withdrawing them from the frozen north, partly because the British were convinced of their continued usefulness in the Caucasus. The French moved troops into South Russia late in 1918. Otherwise aid took the form of supplies and a blockade imposed on the Bolsheviks. The policy failed - the aid prolonged the struggle but was on too small a scale to save the anti-Bolshevist Russians.¹

¹ See: Richard H. Ullman: Intervention and the War: and: Britain and the Russian Civil War November 1918 - February 1920 (1st edn., Princeton 1968)

Cecil was an ardent supporter of intervention during the war; he supported the policy of small-scale intervention after the war. He shared the ignorance of the situation which made British policy in Russia so vague and hesitant at this time. He was not interested in the doctrines of Bolshevism but he intensely disliked its anti-religious bias and belief in class warfare.¹ He shared the view that the Bolsheviks had acted treacherously towards the Allies² in making peace with Germany. At the beginning, he believed their leaders, Lenin and Trotsky, to be simply paid agents of Germany and that the Allies could have no dealings with them.³ He saw them as motivated only by desire for vengeance: 'We could hope for nothing from Trotzki, who was a Jew of the international type and was out solely to smash Russia and revenge himself, not only on the governing classes, but upon the peasants of Russia'.⁴

By 22 December however, he came to agree that it was worth entering into relations with them as well as with their Russian opponents;⁵ and he continued to hope for some time that they might welcome Allied aid against German seizure of their raw materials. It was at that time that Cecil so ardently wished the Japanese to help form a front in Siberia against German penetration; President Wilson, who feared

¹CHE 71/11: Lord Robert Cecil - election address, Hitchin by-election, Nov. 1911. (Cecil's dislike of class warfare)

²CAB 23/4, WC 306, Appendix: Cecil-Milner memo. 22 Dec. 1917

³Richard H. Ullman, Intervention and the War, p.61

⁴CAB 23/4 WC 304 item 10: 21 Dec. 1917

⁵CAB 23/4, WC 306, Appendix: Cecil - Milner memo. 22 Dec. 1917

Japanese ambitions, said that the Allies must have the assent of the de facto government of Russia - for these purposes, the Bolsheviks, who held Russia proper. However, they refused their assent and this confirmed Cecil in his mistrust of them.

He condemned Bolshevik atrocities too, singling out in November 1918, the killing of Captain Cromie, a British naval attaché, by a Bolshevik mob; because of this, he told the Commons: '... the Bolshevik Government as such is entitled to no consideration whatever from the British Government¹. Moreover, Cecil's peace plans revolved round the establishment of the rule of law in international relations; the Bolsheviks looked on treaty agreements differently. They had broken their word and this, in Cecil's view, put them outside the international order.

Finally he did not think that Bolshevism could ever be a solid foundation for a lasting government. Without wishing for a return to the old regime, he thought that Russia could only be put in order by a period of autocracy; till that was achieved, it was fruitless to attempt to set up a constitutional government. This he told C.P. Scott, the editor of the Manchester Guardian in February 1919; but when Scott pointed out that the Bolsheviks might well be able to impose tolerable rule and come to terms with the old order, Cecil denied this; Bolshevism in his view was impossible as a basis of society and nothing could be built on it.² He stuck to this view. In July 1919, he told

¹ Hansard, 5th series, 1918, vol. 110, p.3264

² The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott 1911-1928, ed., Trevor Wilson (London 1970), p.370: 21-22 Feb. 1919

the Commons that he thought it was bound to fail, that it was 'A very bad idea, I think, and a dangerous creed'.¹ Only in Persia did he suggest that it might do any good; and there more as a punishment than anything else.²

For these reasons he was against total Allied withdrawal from Russia, if it meant that the Bolsheviks prevailed. Moreover he feared that this might leave Russia open to German domination in the future. He believed, in October 1918, that the Germans were exploiting the danger of Bolshevism spreading in the areas they occupied, if they had to leave them, in order to stay there and control western Russia and the Baltic economically and politically; he therefore recommended Allied assistance.³ Even after the Armistice, this danger remained a possibility; though forced to withdraw in the West, German forces stayed in the Baltic areas and tried to keep control.

Further, he was moved by considerations of honour. The elements fighting the Bolsheviks had been the Allies' friends in the war. Thus, at an Imperial War Cabinet meeting on 31 December 1918 he emphasised that they could not be suddenly left in the lurch.⁴ It was part and parcel of his view of right conduct in international relations and of his view that pledge-breakers like the Bolsheviks could be consigned to perdition, if it were practical to let that happen.

¹Hansard, 5th series, 1919, vol. 118, p.1983

²CAB 27/24, p.234 o.s. 19 Dec. 1918

³CAB 24/67, GT 6050: memo by Cecil, 20 Oct. 1918

⁴CAB 23/42, IWC 48, item 3, 31 Dec. 1918

He also hoped that Allied intervention would have a favourable effect on Russia's future constitution. The Allies would help to restore orderly government - autocracy would have to be set up for that purpose, he said, in September 1918, as it would be beyond the powers of 'half-baked constitutionalism' to do so. However, the intervention by democratic countries might have a mollifying effect and help constitutionalism to develop:

' ... Whether the military dictatorship, once in power, will be content to abdicate seems very doubtful - indeed one may say it certainly will not - unless under the influence of the Western democracies. We should therefore aim at securing military chiefs whom we can trust, supporting them financially as well as by armed force and making ourselves indispensable to them.... It should be remembered that a permanent military despotism in Russia would be a very serious menace to the peace of the world'¹

Finally, intervention would help to diminish the Russian danger in the future (under whatever government) because it would detach a number of new nationalities like the Caucasus republics, the Baltic states and the Ukraine and thus diminish the actual extent of Russian power.² He did not think this should be achieved by the Allies alone; the new weak states might possibly be protected, he thought, by a League mandate (in the Caucasus) or a Scandinavian bloc (in the Baltic region).³

However, he rejected the idea of a massive military intervention,

¹Richard H. Ullman, Intervention and the War, p.273. Ullman believes the date of the document, a memorandum by Lord R. Cecil in the Milner Papers (Box C-I) to be early September, 1918

²CAB 27/24 p.180, 2 Dec. 1918

³CAB 24/67, GT 6050: memo. by Lord R. Cecil, 20 Oct. 1918

to crush the Bolsheviks, because of the expense and the difficulty of obtaining support for it in England. 'I am entirely opposed to anything like a crusade against Bolsheviks whether by sending forces if we had them into Russia or even by erecting as is contemplated a ring fence round European Russia'. His own policy of limited intervention might have that effect, he admitted, 'but I do not advocate it on that ground.'¹ He was always against a 'crusade' for strictly practical reasons² he described the idea as 'fantastic'³ at a Cabinet meeting on 31 December 1918. For did he think that the British could maintain any armed forces in Russia after the end of the war; but he recommended other forms of support:

'We ought to support with money and arms as far as we can any Government in Siberia which has a chance of surviving and we ought in the same way to help to set on its legs a national Government in each of the Baltic States and if we can reach it, in Poland also'⁴

Allied control of the world's resources would be another way, he suggested in November 1918: 'to assist the forces of order against disorder'⁵

However, as the aim of all this was lasting peace, not constitution-making or power politics, Cecil came by the end of 1918 to favour a policy of stopping the fighting, without abandoning the Allies' Russian friends. On 30 December 1918, Sir Robert Borden,

¹ Ibid.

² The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott, p. 370

³ CAB 23/42, IWC 48, item 3, 31 December 1918

⁴ CAB 24/27, GT 6050; memo by Lord R. Cecil, 20 October 1918

⁵ CAB 23/8, WC 502, item 5, 14 November 1918

premier of Canada, proposed, at a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, that all the governments of Russia should be summoned to meet for peace talks at Paris; a stable government could then be worked out under the power and influence of the League of Nations. This plan to use the League appealed to Cecil; he elaborated on it: all the participants in the civil war should cease fire and hold their present positions until the conference was over and many of the difficult points settled.¹

This policy was later adopted by all the Allies. Cecil thought the Russians should be pressed to stop fighting by being told that they would not be admitted to the conference if they continued.² President Wilson used a threat close to this one when, in January 1919, he summoned the various Russian governments to meet on the island of Prinkipo near Constantinople.³ It was not effective in making the Bolsheviks stop fighting because they had not asked for the conference; the other Russian governments refused to attend a conference to which the Bolsheviks had also been summoned. Thus this plan, too, failed. Cecil continued to advocate a policy along those lines, using economic sanctions to stop the fighting,⁴ but his influence on the government's policy in Russia was unimportant after the beginning of 1919.

¹CAB 23/42, IWC 47, (p.8, this meeting) 30 Dec. 1918

²See: CHE 75/125: interview with C.I.G.S. by Lord R. Cecil, 19 Mar 1919

³Arno J. Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking, Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919 (1st edn., New York 1967) p.431

⁴CHE 75/125: interview with C.I.G.S. by Lord R. Cecil, 19 Mar 1919

This chapter has shown that Cecil concentrated on such matters as the sanctity of treaties and close friendship with the U.S.A. after the war; on the other hand he lacked a strong concern about Imperial frontiers and special economic advantages for the Empire and the war-time Allies. What does this add up to in terms of an overall foreign policy?

His wartime approach to the peace settlement was largely an attempt to continue what he saw as the policy of both Salisbury and up to a point, Grey: namely, that after certain territorial grievances had been allayed, and wrongs righted, that Britain must take the role of disinterested supporter of just causes abroad; her influence should be towards the preservation of peace everywhere and fair government in her own Empire and spheres of influence; for the most part, however, she should keep aloof. He thought that Britain should take a moral lead and that her very real belief in justice and liberty 'due to centuries of natural training' qualified her well for this.¹

It had of course been Grey's fate to have had charge of Britain's foreign affairs at a time when she was becoming increasingly vulnerable; Grey could therefore not pursue a policy of detachment; instead he had taken on the policy of Ententes with Russia and France

¹Addit. MSS. 51161, f.161-165: Lord R. Cecil to Grigg, 11 Aug. 1914

which were an unsatisfactory compromise between power bloc entanglement and isolation. Cecil was well aware of Grey's dilemma. As early as August 1914 he admitted that the danger could not be disposed of simply by the Salisbury-Grey policy and an improved territorial situation; he was to feel this more and more as the war continued, and created more problems than it solved; in August 1914, he wrote: 'Ultimately the only satisfactory solution must be something in the nature of a European federation'¹. Here he echoed his father's words in a speech of 20 March 1897: 'the federated action of Europe..... is our sole hope of escaping from the constant terror and the calamity of war'².

Cecil's views must be contrasted with those of his Conservative colleagues who thought the solution to the problem of security against war lay in a strengthened Empire and an economic bloc with Britain's wartime Allies. He was as unsympathetic with nationalistic self-assertion among members of his own party as with its foreign varieties; and he felt that such policies, in the long term, were inadequate. After 1916, when his League views got under way, his disagreement with them became far more noticeable. Despite the endurance of his conviction that Britain must maintain her power at sea, he came to regard the protection of Empire communications as having a lower priority

¹Ibid.

²Alfred Zimmern: The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, p.79

than security through a strong international organisation for peace.

His reflections on tariff reform policy and the new conservatism show the foundations of this disagreement:

'The dominance of the landowner was at an end, and his place was taken by the business man... The old conception coming down from feudal days that a man had no unqualified right to his property but held it only as a trust, the condition of which was his readiness to discharge his public duties, was demoded. Instead, the new doctrine was that a man had a right to what he could get, so long as it was honestly come by and, with a similar qualification, could do what he pleased with it. Unpaid service was neither asked for nor much approved. The same principles were applied to Imperial matters. Our great Dominions belonged to the British Commonwealth, and we had a right to deal with them as they and we liked. If, in doing so, we injured foreign citizens, that could not be helped. Indeed some New Imperialists rejoiced that it should be so, for they tended to regard all foreigners as potential - if not actual - enemies who should be kept as weak as possible. The conception that we were under a duty to use our possessions for the benefit of ourselves, no doubt, but also of the world at large, was regarded as being at the best a piece of washy sentimentality'¹

The wartime development of his views on the League thus occurred in the face of considerable lack of sympathy, in the Coalition government. That development will now be described.

¹Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.88

Chapter Four

League of Nations Ideas

May 1915 - March 1918

Not until after he achieved office did Cecil come to believe that a League of Nations must be set up immediately after the war. Two things determined this - fuller realisation of the horrors of the war, and the influence of Sir Edward Grey. Grey convinced him that if there had been machinery to convene a conference automatically in the time of crisis, war might have been averted in 1914.¹ Grey was bent on continuing the Concert of Powers system in international relations - in some form. He did not wish to change over to a power bloc or fortified Empire policy to meet international dangers in the future. Events had shown that the machinery for moving armies now went into action swiftly and automatically when war was threatened; the machinery for averting war was not similarly developed; but he believed it could be. He wanted the U.S.A. to give its support to the establishment of an improved Concert of Powers system, with compulsory conferences in time of crisis. He believed America was peace-loving and disinterested and that as an Anglo-Saxon power, her ideals, internationally, were similar to those of Britain.

¹Viscount Cecil, A Great Experiment, p.47

He talked early in 1915 to Colonel House about this idea.¹

House and President Wilson had already, in 1914, drawn up a blueprint for a pan-American peace plan; this involved a joint undertaking by each of the Monroe doctrine states of the Americas to guarantee one another's territorial integrity against external aggression. It was intended as a model for a future world order - and was indeed the foundation stone of Wilson's League of Nations.² Though House responded enthusiastically to Grey's ideas, he could not at that time promise him that the United States government could pledge themselves to such an arrangement;³ Wilson did not commit himself for a long time after this.

Grey continued to press his ideas, during his term of office; he spoke in informal terms, and confined himself to the expression of hopes and intentions after the war.⁴ His views were to some extent affected by those of the U.S. League to Enforce Peace, a group which included the Republican ex-President Taft - a Supreme Court judge - and President Lowell of Harvard; Grey met and corresponded with a leading member, Theodore Marburg.⁵ The group wished for a League of Nations obliging

¹The Intimate Papers of Colonel House. Arranged as a narrative by Charles Seymour, i, Behind the Political Curtain, (1st edn., London 1926), p.370, pp.428-9

²Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, p.218

³The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, ed. Seymour, i, p.370

⁴F.O. 371/2803, f.2930.22184: F.O. to de Fleurian, 9 Nov. 1916; and F.O. 800/242; Grey to Marburg, 16 Sept. 1916

⁵See F.O. 800/105, p.400: Lord Bryce to Drummond, 13 March 1916

members not to resort to war in an emergency without submitting a dispute, if justiciable, to an arbitration court, or if not justiciable, to a council of conciliation. If a member pursued its aggressions regardless of its obligations, the other members would be bound to use economic and military sanctions to make it desist. There were also to be meetings to codify international law; the Great Powers were to be members, and a selection of the lesser ones.¹ This came close to Grey's own ideas.

His views on a League were never precisely outlined; but it seems that he accepted that there should be some surrender of national sovereignty by each country, and that Germany and America must be part of such an arrangement if the idea was to work at all.² These views were adopted by Cecil. Asquith had entertained ideas similar to Grey's. League enthusiasts feared that the Government would take no further interest, when the two men left office in December 1916.³ Cecil's adherence to the idea was not yet widely known.

In August 1916, Asquith asked his war council to prepare papers, individually or departmentally, to help clarify war aims.⁴ Cecil, at the Foreign Office, wrote a memorandum on 'Proposals for Diminishing the Occasion of Future Wars'.⁵ In this appeared his first suggestions

¹ Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, pp. 161-5

² Viscount Grey of Fallodon, The League of Nations (London 1918)

³ C. M. Trevelyan, Grey of Fallodon (1st edn. London 1937), p. 313

⁴ CAB 29/1, p-2: extracts from proceedings of meeting of the War Committee, 30 August 1916

⁵ CAB 29/1, p-18: 'Memorandum on Proposals for Diminishing the Occasion of Future Wars', by Lord R. Cecil, undated (Autumn) 1916

for a League of Nations type of organisation; it was not the only paper at this time to deal with the subject of a League¹; but it was the first in a line of documents from government departments which led, eventually, to an official British League plan.

First he pointed out the expense, suffering and villainy of war, with its aftermath of injustice and turmoil; an unsatisfactory territorial settlement might lead to total anarchy. It was only sensible therefore to look for an alternative means of settling disputes. Public opinion against war would be strong after the war, and this feeling - if harnessed - might provide the solution.

In the rest of the paper, he examined means of diminishing the frequency of war, and suggested his own plan. He did not use the words 'League of Nations'. He was thinking, simply, at that stage, of an improved and enlarged Concert of Powers system - like Grey.

He considered the use of arbitration. But he pointed out that it was insufficient to deal with questions where vital national interests were concerned - the situations most likely to lead to war - because such questions went beyond points of fact or law. He therefore left out any suggestion for extending arbitration in his subsequent conclusions.

Among these conclusions was a proposal that territorial arrangements should remain unaltered for the five years following the peace treaty. At the end of this period, a conference should be called if any powers wished for it, to consider revision of boundaries. The recommendations of this conference were to be carried out. As has been shown, Cecil

¹CAB 29/1, P-5: memorandum on territorial settlement by Paget and Tyrrell, 29 Sept. 1916

frequently canvassed the idea of modifiable treaties during the war; in this way he hoped to achieve peaceful change without breach of treaties, and to maintain respect for international law by ensuring that it did not impose obsolete and impossible obligations. This provision took an important place in his 1916 memorandum; it was not destined to do so in the 'Covenant' of the League of Nations, though he tried repeatedly to emphasise its importance. It was his most original contribution to League of Nations ideas, as well as one of his earliest.

The appearance of this proposal is the first indication of Cecil's developing wish that the conference of powers should have an international legislative function, over and above making treaties. He was over-optimistic about the power of a conference to bring about a change in the territorial arrangements in the treaty. Boundaries, though a part of international law, involve vital interests which make peaceful change almost impossible. Here Cecil was over-legalistic, as well; he was thinking too much of the revision of law in terms of English domestic legal practice. Obsolescence would certainly not be accepted by a country as a reason for ceding territory. However the idea of revising other parts of the treaty, not touched on in this paper of September 1916, was one of value. His pragmatic, insular approach to frontiers in this respect may partly be connected with his lack of interest in the nationality movement and geographical considerations, which distinguished him from so many other idealistic persons working on the post-war settlement.

He suggested also a system of compulsory conferences. He pointed out that there was currently no provision to force unwilling powers to a conference or to await its decision, and he suggested that such a provision should be incorporated in the future peace treaty. He proposed, therefore, the following clause:

'If any difference or controversy shall arise between any of the High Contracting Powers with respect to the meaning of any of the articles of this treaty, or with respect to the rights of any of the parties thereto, or with respect to any other matter, a conference of the Powers shall forthwith be summoned, and the controversy shall be submitted to it and no action shall be taken by any of the parties to the controversy until the conference has met and considered the matter, and has either come to a decision thereon or has failed for a period of three months after its meeting to come to such a decision. Any decision agreed upon at such a conference shall be maintained and enforced by all the High Contracting Powers as if it were one of the articles of this treaty'

Nothing was said about unanimity in voting, but this must be assumed from the nature of the conference. Membership of this conference system was to be confined, apparently, to the signatories of the treaty of peace in which these peace keeping clauses were incorporated, together, presumably, with interested parties. The important thing, however, was that the 'signatories' meant both the Allies and the Central powers. There was no question of a 'Holy Alliance' plan.

Cecil was confident that this conference system would give a dispute full publicity, and that this public airing would ensure that the right cause won. It is common among politicians to believe that their own

views are, deeply, those of the people; even more do idealistic politicians believe that given the chance, public opinion can be relied on to favour a course of action that will lead to peace and the triumph of natural justice. Cecil's own expectations of the prescience and wisdom of informed public opinion were high. For the most part his approach was practical and that of a trained lawyer - sometimes to a fault - but there was this element of pure faith which helped to sustain his enthusiasm for a League of Nations scheme.

In his 1916 memorandum he was concerned with the problem of compulsion; he pointed out that a provision that all the powers would punish by force a breach of the treaty would, by itself, be ineffective, since few powers would be anxious to take on a large and aggressive nation, or bloc, which had chosen to ignore all treaties. The answer, he thought, was to have some means of pressure which involved less risk to the guardians of the treaty. His own war experience had provided him with the answer - full scale economic and financial blockade. This weapon, he asserted, if applied instantly, would very likely have forced the Central Powers to the conference table before the war; had the United States been participants in this operation, its effectiveness would have been greatly increased.

Accordingly he proposed, in his 1916 memorandum, a possible sanctions clause for a future peace treaty. It was directly ancestral to the sanctions clause in the final League Covenant. Each of the High Contracting Powers was to guarantee the provisions of the treaty;

if any power refused or failed to submit a dispute to the conference or otherwise infringed the provisions of the treaty (including the requirement to abide by the decisions of the conference), the High Contracting Powers were all bound to cut the wrongdoer off from all commercial and financial intercourse with other countries, whether parties to the treaty or not. Blockade-style machinery would be used for this purpose.

It is notable that Cecil here proposed that sanctions should be used against a nation which infringed the peace treaty; elsewhere in the document - where he proposed his conference plan - he laid down that a decision of the conference should be enforced 'as if it were one of the articles of this treaty'. In other words, Cecil wanted the conference's decisions to be enforceable by sanctions; this went further than any other subsequent British draft prepared in a government department. Cecil's original plan was thus stronger than later ones; but his plan involved too great a surrender of sovereignty - despite the fact that voting at the conferences had to be unanimous. Cecil later sought by other means to make the League of Nations more effective.

Finally, Cecil included a disarmament proposal in his September 1916 memorandum. It was to be a subsidiary measure, dependent on the fulfilment of the other requirements - automatic conference machinery and sanctions. He proposed that when the conference of the powers was assembled it should be invited to discuss the question of general dis-

armament. As part of the treaty, moreover, private manufacture of arms and principal 'materiel de la guerre' was to be prohibited.

Nearly all of these ideas were general currency among League of Nations enthusiasts at the time. For example, the idea of a compulsory conference, called in emergencies, together with the idea of a period of delay to allow passions to cool and for nations to prepare their defences, was similar to the ideas of Grey and of the American League to Enforce Peace; the idea of a delay period also features in the schemes set out by members of the Fabian Society in 1915 and 1916.¹ Like the U.D.C. policy programme of 1915, he favoured the nationalisation of armament industries. Cecil's library is unfortunately dispersed, and it is not possible to say whether he read any of the works of 'Peace Movement' leaders like Leonard Woolf, Norman Angell or G. Lowes Dickinson before he composed his paper. It is unlikely, certainly in the case of the last two, for Cecil, outside his official duties, read little but light literature and very seldom anything dealing with contemporary ideas; the only book he mentions in his autobiography as having had a formative effect on his attitude to war was a collection of technological thriller stories called 'The Green Curve and other Stories'.² It is far more likely that most of his ideas were picked up in conversation with Grey and others at the Foreign Office.

At this stage, he was not thinking in terms of a League organisation with a permanent secretariat or a permanent court of justice. Zimmern has described Cecil's 1916 plan as being on the same general lines as the League plan drawn up the following year by a group headed by Lord³

¹Henry R. Winkler, The League of Nations Movement in Great Britain, 1914-1919 (1st edn., New Jersey, 1952; Rutgers University Studies in History No. 7), p.13

²Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.125

³Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, p.180

Bryce. But the two plans were different in many respects; the Bryce scheme was more elaborate, with a council of conciliation and an international judicial bench; the decisions of the council were not to be enforceable.¹ There was nothing about treaty revision. Cecil's attention to the maintenance of the sanctity of treaties was a particular feature of his plan.

The Cecil paper was examined by Sir Eyre Crowe, permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office.² Crowe thought it over-optimistic. He disliked the idea of basing British foreign policy on such a plan, but he treated the memorandum fairly and admitted his agreement with some of the points.

First he outlined the difficulties over disarmament. Limitations soon became out-of-date. Ambitious countries could always hoodwink the international body put in control of disarmament. It was hard to impose a fair limitation, since some nations had larger frontiers and more vulnerable areas to defend; but it might stifle the natural development of states and their tendency to become weaker or stronger. He pointed out that the British fleet would be the first thing to be limited under the new conditions. Finally he showed that nothing but a world-wide disarmament agreement would be reliable. He suggested that Cecil should postpone this question. Cecil agreed, but added:

'On the whole I agree that nothing can be done at present. But it is possible that in future ages

¹Ibid., pp.165-9

²CAB 29/1, P-19: notes by Sir Eyre Crowe on Cecil's paper on the diminishing of future wars, 12 Oct. 1916, printed comments by Cecil

a public opinion will develop so strong against the settlement of disputes by war that armament will be reduced by common consent. The history of feudalism in England illustrates my meaning. The catastrophe of the Wars of the Roses led to the supremacy of the law'

Thus he did not abandon the idea; but in the years covered by this study, he approached it with great caution, after reading Crowe's remarks.

As to the revision proposal, Crowe was inclined to believe that the real force which could alone bind the powers guarding the treaty was a moral one residing in the conviction that the status quo was desirable and just; when that conviction was eroded, even if peaceful means of change were contemplated, the ties would be loosened.

He thought that small powers joining in the economic boycott of a large and important trader would be the ones who suffered, and rather than preventing universal war would bring it on themselves; also he pointed out that economic blockade meant, in the long run, military force; moreover it took a long time to take effect, during which the beleaguered power might try to escape its fate by war. This meant that the guardians of the treaty would have to have a collective military organisation - which in itself presented problems.

Crowe agreed with Cecil on the limitations of arbitration; but he did not share his confidence in conferences. When they were concerned with vital interests, they were no solution; power alone always

decided such issues. Cecil disputed this, invoking again the influence of public opinion.

'This leaves out the force of world opinion. This war has shown it to be enormous, though not all-powerful. It is safe to say that if Germany's diplomacy and war methods had attracted instead of repelling sympathy she would long ere now have obtained satisfactory terms of peace. And had she originally had a just quarrel she would have swept the board'

Discussing the same point, Crowe raised the case of Bismarck's wars. He said that Bismarck had deliberately planned for war, and prevented the possibility of an effective combination against him by careful diplomacy; but if he had not achieved that, said Crowe, he would not have attempted a war; in either case a conference would have contributed nothing to preventing war.

Cecil's note on this paragraph reads: 'I differ. The wars of 1864 and 1866 could never have taken place if a preliminary conference had taken place, and without them the war of 1870 would have been impossible'.

Here Cecil emphasised the value of a conference on a smaller issue to forestall the development of a larger, more intractable one.

However, Crowe did admit that international co-operation through conferences was the most helpful step in the direction of peace and believed that if encouraged, it would become more and more morally binding to call one before committing an act of war and that the penalty

for failing to do so might be to face a combination of the other signatories. Cecil commented 'I do not claim substantially more than this'.

Cecil's 1916 conference proposal was not very detailed. It said little, as Crowe pointed out, about the composition of the conference, which it would appear, seems only to consist of the signatories of the treaty of peace - the actual belligerents. Crowe believed that such a system should have the adherence of a larger group if the universal peace was to be guaranteed - the co-operation of Spain, Switzerland and Holland for instance would be needed for coercion. 'No nation can in the long run be excluded'. He also thought there should be a fixed seat for the conference so that it could be ready at any moment.

Crowe thus increased Cecil's caution about disarmament proposals; he also encouraged him to think in terms of a wider, and a more permanent, organisation. Throughout the war, Crowe made a constructive contribution to British official thought on a League, despite his sceptical attitude towards the idea.

Three months after he wrote his paper, Cecil showed great interest in President Wilson's reference to a League of Nations in the American peace note of December 1916. Writing his memorandum on a possible Allied reply,¹ Cecil urged that the Allies should express the utmost sympathy for the idea, and that they should also ask how far the U.S. government was ready to go: did they have the will and power

¹CAB 23/1, WC 16, Appendix I: memo by Cecil, 22 Dec. 1916

to give armed support to the decisions of such a league? Would they depart from the Monroe doctrine and allow the League to extend to the American continent? The Allies should profess their readiness to enter more fully into the subject when they had been satisfied on these points. Like Grey, Cecil believed that the adherence of the United States was essential; but he was apprehensive about her isolationist traditions.

When the Allies sent their reply to Wilson, they followed Cecil's advice in showing sympathy with the League idea. But they stressed that the adoption of such a plan would be dependent on a peace settlement satisfactory to them in other ways; they asked none of the searching and realistic questions about America's intentions that Cecil had suggested.¹

America joined the war on the Allied side in April 1917, following the resumption of indiscriminate attacks by German submarines on merchant shipping. The wish to promote close relations with this new ally led the Lloyd George government to give some attention to the possibility of a League scheme; a sub-committee of the Imperial War Cabinet was set up to discuss the economic and non-territorial problems of the peace, and this, tentatively, examined the League of Nations idea. Among the documents submitted to this committee was Cecil's 'Memorandum on Proposals for Diminishing the Occasion of Future Wars', and Sir Eyre

¹L.W. Martin, Peace Without Victory, p.40 et seq.

Crowe's comments on it. The committee's conclusions were unenthusiastic. It saw some hope in the notion of consultation and conference but feared that anything too ambitious would do harm; it considered that nothing should be done without consulting the Allies and, especially, the U.S.A. government.¹

The Imperial War Cabinet discussed this report on 25 April.² Cecil attended the meeting. Lloyd George regretted that the report had not mentioned disarmament; he felt that there would be general disappointment after the war if there were no plans for limiting arms. The Prime Minister's past career as a nonconformist radical made him naturally sympathetic towards such ideals; equally he was always concerned to meet popular opinion on these subjects. His ambivalent feelings about the League, which were so much to exasperate Cecil, came about through a combination of these ideals and policies with a view of the way affairs were run, and of the realities of power, which conflicted with them. On this occasion Cecil explained that Crowe's criticisms had led him to remove the disarmament passage from his paper before submitting it to the committee. The Imperial War Cabinet proceeded to discuss disarmament, and raised the same objections as Crowe, especially about the British navy.

Cecil gave some of his views on a League; he pointed out in particular the value of reviewing treaties - but he now spoke of doing so periodically, and not simply of reviewing after five years the peace

¹CAB 29/1, P-15; Report of the Milner Committee on the terms of peace, 24 Apr. 1917

²CAB 23/40, IWC 12, item 19, 26 Apr. 1917

treaty following the present war. Thus already there was growing in his mind the idea of a conference system which met periodically, and not simply in emergencies.

Some present thought that his revision idea might encourage discontent. But a number of people showed sympathy for the League scheme - particularly Henderson, who represented British labour, and Sir Robert Borden, the Canadian premier.¹ It was agreed that any joint plan for a League of Peace or disarmament must be discussed with the U.S.A. Discussion of the League occupied little of the Imperial War Cabinet's time at these spring meetings - a part of two meetings; but it was the longest discussion for over a year, and a more careful examination of the question than any made by either War Cabinet until December 1918. With American support assured, and President Wilson absorbed in running the war, the British government, as will be seen, took little further interest in the League, except as a slogan, for a long time to come.

It is worth mentioning that at one of these meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet on 2 May 1917 Cecil applauded suggestions that the Imperial Conference should meet every year, with, perhaps, representatives of the parliamentary oppositions in each Dominion attending, to discuss important Imperial questions. This accorded with Cecil's growing view of regular international conference as a way to international peace; the presence of all shades of popular opinion would aid the task

¹CAB 23/40, IWC 13, items 3 & 4, 1 May 1917

of communicating the facts of a situation to the world.¹

During the summer, there were efforts by League supporters to induce the British government to take over the League question and study the schemes proposed to date. Theodore Marburg, of the U.S. League to Enforce Peace, proposed this to Balfour,² and pointed out that if the various governments had made a thorough examination of the question by the time of the future peace conference it would save much trouble. Balfour agreed, and the Foreign Office made no objection, provided it was clear that this was for the post-war period; moreover there would be no need to publish such findings unless Britain's allies wished it. Following a meeting organised by an English League group, the League of Nations Society, a number of public men - including Cecil's brother Salisbury - signed a memorandum urging that the government should appoint a committee to study League schemes. Lord Bryce sent this to Lloyd George. The Prime Minister did not reply;³ nor did he raise the matter in the cabinet until October. Then, it was decided to adjourn the question until it could be discussed with Colonel House who was shortly expected in the country.⁴

In September 1917, Cecil, who was corresponding with House,

¹CAB 23/40, IWC 14, item 2, 2 May 1917

²F.O. 371/3072, f.118460.118460; Marburg to Drummond, 18 May 1917

³F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.53848: Dickinson to Cecil, 16 Nov. 1917

⁴CAB 23/4, WC 253, item 17, 19 Oct. 1917

raised the subject of Anglo-American cooperation on a League.¹ He referred to the suggestions of Marburg and the others and told House that he supported the idea of an investigatory commission. He also gave him a copy of his 1916 proposals for diminishing war in the future. He said that there should be a real effort to establish peace machinery after the war, and that he was confident that the effort would be made; however he was against attempting too elaborate a system - such as the one submitted by Marburg. The Holy Alliance of 1815 had, he said, started as a League to enforce peace - and had become one to uphold tyranny, to its discredit.

'One danger seems to be that too much will be aimed at. In the present state of public opinion in Europe, I am very much afraid that, if anything like a complete system for judicial or quasi-judicial settlements of international disputes be aimed at, it will infallibly break down and throw the movement back for many years. Nothing did more harm to the cause of peace than the breakdown of efforts after Waterloo in this direction'

President Wilson continued, during 1917, to speak publicly in favour of the idea of the League. However, when Colonel House arrived in England on November 7th, 1917, he revealed that the President did not want a cut and dried League scheme but was in favour of a flexible understanding in the future, so that the great powers and others concerned could get together to meet any emergency; House also revealed that the President did not want the League to be generally discussed at this stage in the U.S.A. and had therefore put a number of prominent

¹ Sterling Memorial Library of Yale University, Edward M. House Collection, House Papers, Cecil to House, 3 Sept. 1917

advocates of the League into work immediately connected with the prosecution of the war.¹ He asked Bryce to submit his views about action on the League in writing and promised to discuss them with the President.² This was not encouraging.

After a talk with W.H. Dickinson of the League of Nations Society, however, Cecil wrote a minute for Balfour urging that despite the attitude of House and Wilson, it would be desirable to have the question of establishing a League examined very carefully from an historical and juridical point of view.

'I suggest, therefore, that a very small, strictly private Committee might be appointed, consisting of, say, Sir Walter Phillimore, Lord Bryce, a historian, with perhaps Crowe & Hurst of this office added to consider all the schemes that have been put forward and advise generally as to the practicability of the policy. Otherwise I am afraid we may be faced at the peace conference, whenever that takes place, with a lot of windy talk, ill thought out, and leading to nothing'³

Balfour answered lukewarmly, balancing approval against doubt; it was over-optimistic to hope that this would diminish windy talk, or that any of the previous schemes would be illuminating; but it was as well to see them. He approved Cecil's suggestion. Cecil was supported by Sir Maurice Hankey,⁴ the Secretary of the War Cabinet. Hankey had recently completed his own plan for a League, based on the new Supreme War Council of the Allies at Versailles.⁵

¹F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.53848: Lord Bryce to Balfour, 15 Nov. 1917.

²The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, ed. Seymour, iii, Into the World War, (1st edn., London 1928), p.236

³F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.53848: minute by Cecil for Balfour, 20 Nov. 1917

⁴Ibid., Hankey minute 22 Nov. 1917, and Lord R. Cecil comment undated

⁵Stephen Roskill, Hankey: Man of Secrets, i (1877-1918) (London, 1970)

As a result of Balfour's decision, a committee was set up in the Foreign Office consisting of two law experts - Sir Walter Phillimore who was chairman, and C.J.B. Hurst - three historians - A.F. Pollard, J. Holland Rose and Sir Julian Corbett - and two members of the Foreign Office - Sir William Tyrrell and Sir Eyre Crowe.¹ The Phillimore Committee began work at the end of 1917.

Cecil had spoken earlier in the year in the House of Commons about his own enthusiastic support for a League of Nations after the war.² He spoke again at some length on 19 December 1917.³ A previous speaker had said that there was a need for a permanent alliance sufficiently strong to secure world peace - this was, Cecil said, a dangerous topic to embark on; however he could say some things with safety:

First, the League must be a world-wide organisation. It was vital to its success that Hohenzollern militarism must be overthrown; after that, Germany must be admitted to the League. Further, a closer Anglo-American alliance was not only rational but 'the necessary foundation for the policy of the League of Nations'. He added that he would not remain a member of any government for an hour which did not make the establishment of a League of Nations after the war one of its main objects.

¹ D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 3, note 1.

² Hansard, 5th series, 1917, xciii, 1675

³ Hansard, 5th series, 1917, c., 2096-2097

He described the League as being 'the only thing worth struggling for in connection with international affairs'. To members of the House and to the Government, the future of the Empire and the reshaping of European boundaries and national groupings were burning issues; this speech illustrates clearly where Cecil's priorities lay.

Cecil's memorandum of 3 January 1918 on war aims, which provided material for Lloyd George's Trades Unions speech has been described in the previous chapter. The League of Nations section in Lloyd George's speech was entirely written by Cecil; part of the passage was an assurance that the government was in earnest about the question:

'... we are confident that a great attempt must be made to establish by some international organisation an alternative to war as a means of settling international disputes. After all, war is a relic of barbarism, and, just as law has succeeded violence as the means of settling disputes between individuals, so we believe that it is destined ultimately to take the place of war in the settlement of controversies between nations'¹

On 8 January 1918, President Wilson, at a joint session of Congress, began his campaign for a liberal peace. Bolshevik attacks on Allied war aims had to be met. He did this by laying down, in fourteen points, the peace programme for which America was fighting. It was to be a peace unsullied by annexations, armaments were to be reduced, economic barriers removed, there was to be freedom of the seas, open diplomacy, autonomy for subject races in the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, a free and independent Poland, evacuation of territory

¹CAB 24/37/2, GT 3181: memo by Cecil, 3 Jan. 1918

occupied by the Germans, the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France, the readjustment of Italy's boundaries on lines of nationality, and, finally, 'A general association of nations...affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike'.¹ It was Wilson's own programme; the European Allies used its lofty aspirations as moral armament during the war, but did not bind themselves to abide by them until the end of the war. Wilson subsequently added other points to this programme.

Following this, in February, Cecil told American journalists that Britain was giving serious and constructive attention to the idea of a League; Draper, of the New York Tribune, reported that Cecil and the British government evidently did not share Wilson's faith in the early establishment of a League and were merely trying to forestall criticism. Cecil denied this vigorously:

'This is a pure invention. I do believe in the early establishment of such a League and I made no reference to ADRAMYTI [Wilson] in that connection, still less did I indicate any divergence from his opinion. On the contrary, I share it to the full.'²

Cecil's pronouncements to the press and in parliament made him now for the first time widely known as a League enthusiast; henceforward he was to be the recipient of private League schemes, of

¹A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945, (Oxford 1965), p. 119

²Sterling Memorial Library of Yale University, Edward M. House Collection, William Wiseman Papers, Drummond (from Cecil) for Wiseman, tel. 16 Feb. 1918

varying degrees of eccentricity and merit, many of which he passed on to the Phillimore Committee.¹

On 16 February, he wrote to House, telling him of the committee's work. He had heard that House had a team of experts working out the implications of Wilson's Fourteen Points; if they were investigating the League question, he suggested that it might be helpful for them to co-operate with the British committee. The English, he said, had no intention of publishing their report yet.² House replied that the American side had not got far enough to compare notes. Wilson, despite his dramatic pronouncements, was in no hurry to complete any draft scheme; however, House asked him to take more part in the planning.³

The Phillimore Committee issued their interim report on 20 March 1918.⁴ They had studied many schemes, including those of Cecil, Bryce, the Fabians, the League to Enforce Peace and Hankey.

Cecil was enthusiastic about the report; it bore features similar to his own September 1916 plan. The words specifying the use of blockade techniques in imposing sanctions were almost identical in both papers. There were differences, however, between his thought and that of the Phillimore Committee; by now he was coming to think

¹ See F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.13761-50278

² House Papers: Cecil to House, 16 Feb. 1918

³ The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, ed. Seymour, iv, The Ending of the War (1st edn., London 1928) p.10

⁴ CAB 29/1, P-26: interim report of committee on League of Nations, 20 Mar. 1918

in terms of regular conferences - as opposed to ad hoc ones. He also thought the contracting parties should be represented by their prime ministers or foreign secretaries - a conference of 'principals' as opposed to subordinate diplomats would have more impact on world opinion. Thirdly, in the Phillimore report, it was laid down that at first the parties to the convention should be, specifically, 'each of the allied states'; in Cecil's memorandum of 1916, they were to be all the signatories of a future peace treaty - namely, the present enemy powers as well. Fourthly, the report made no reference to treaty revision. Fifthly, it laid down that the conference's recommendations should not have the force of a decision; Cecil had thought that they should have that force and be enforced by sanctions. Cecil laid down nothing about voting; it seems likely that at this stage he intended that all - including the parties to the dispute - should vote since his conference decisions were binding.

The report proposed occasional meetings to prevent war in times of crisis, when conferences of the Allied powers would take place ad hoc. These powers would be represented by their ambassadors to the country where the meeting was held. They would bind themselves by a convention not to go to war until the dispute had been submitted to arbitration or to the conference; or until there had been an award or recommendation; and not to go to war with an allied state which had accepted the award or recommendation. The treaty-breaking power would be ipso facto at war with the other signatories,

who would be bound to take economic and military action, including the total severing of commercial and financial relations. The Phillimore plan included a definition of disputes suitable for arbitration - those concerning the interpretation of a treaty or any question of international law; it did not seek to use arbitration in all cases; those disputes not sent to arbitration were to be dealt with by the conference, whose recommendations would not have the force of a decision; but the parties to the dispute would not have a vote - the recommendation would be made to them.

Decisions by only a majority of those voting at the conference could also be submitted, though any power conforming to such non-unanimous recommendations would not have the protection of the convention. The signatories of the convention would be protected against attacks by non-members through certain provisions. Other provisions dealt with the abrogation of treaties inconsistent with this agreement.

The Phillimore plan was on the whole much weaker than Cecil's 1916 one. It carefully avoided infringing on national sovereignty, though Crowe personally feared that the committee's decision to allow the issuance of majority recommendations might endanger that; the plan was for a more exclusive joint undertaking than Cecil's and with less prestigious representation. The report had loopholes - the procedure of the conference would break down if one of the parties to the dispute, without actually going to war, refused to accept the unenforceable recommendation of the conference. Also - and here it did not differ from

Cecil's plan - if the conference failed to reach a decision nothing could prevent war. These loopholes persisted in subsequent League plans, including the final Covenant itself; Cecil was later to try to secure a stronger League.

Chapter Five

The Promotion of the League Plan

March - December 1918

Cecil and the Phillimore Committee now wished to press ahead with achieving preliminary understanding between the U.S.A. and the other Allies on a League in order to save trouble at a future peace conference.¹ At their suggestion the War Cabinet discussed the Phillimore report on 15 May. As yet, no public reference had been made to it. The War Cabinet came out against any discussion of it in the House of Commons until it had been examined at the forthcoming session of the Imperial War Cabinet; meanwhile, Wilson and the Dominion premiers were to be sent copies, and to be told that the report did not necessarily express the views of the British government.² Cecil sent copies to Wiseman, to pass on to Reading, Britain's special ambassador in Washington, and to House, so that, subject to House's approval, it might be fully considered and laid before the President. He took this chance to praise the talent of the Phillimore Committee: '... the highest technical opinion obtainable on the subject in this country'. He stressed how vital it was to find out

¹F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.53848: minute by Crowe, 28 Mar. 1918, and by Cecil, undated

²CAB 23/6, WC 412, item 7, 15 May 1918

whether such an experiment was worth trying:

'For myself, I think I should be pretty near despair if I thought there was nothing to be done in this way, but I believe there is something to be done, provided we are content not to try and do too much'¹

As the existence of the report became more widely known (Balfour spoke about it in the Commons on 19 June)² there was pressure from M.Ps. interested in a League to have it discussed in the House. Cecil at first was against publishing the report - until the Imperial War Cabinet and then the Allies had studied it. But he was persuaded by Drummond that it should be published at once to evoke public enthusiasm and show that the government was interested.³ He therefore urged Lloyd George to bring the report before the Imperial War Cabinet as soon as possible:

'I think it would be regarded in this country as almost a scandal if that body were to separate without having considered a subject in which large numbers of people are deeply and even passionately interested'

The Dominion representatives, should not, he said, be asked to commit themselves to its details or principles...

'But the I.W.C. might express a general approval of the lines on which it proceeds, as furnishing a

¹F.O. 371/3439, f.13761/62323, Cecil to Wiseman, 17 May 1918

²F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.111176: parliamentary debate extract, 19 June 1918

³F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.126113: parliamentary question to be tabled by Maj. D. Davies, 19 June 1918 - minutes by Cecil and Drummond

hopeful basis for discussion and negotiation with our Allies. The report might then with that modified blessing be published and discussed here and elsewhere.

'It seems to me that this question is so difficult and complicated that unless the Government gives some kind of lead in the matter we may easily find ourselves at the Peace Conference with only vague aspirations for something to be done, no definite scheme in our minds, and above all no public opinion behind any proposals we might make'.¹

The Phillimore Committee's final report, of 3 July, fortified, without altering, the earlier document.² Under Crowe's supervision, the group continued to study League schemes, aided by other experts.³ Of these, the semi-official French plan was found to be strongly affected by fears of future German aggression.⁴ It made far greater inroads into national sovereignty than any British or American plans. It provided for an international army. A permanent committee would prepare agenda for the yearly meetings of state heads. Disputes, where appropriate, would be settled at these, or at an international court. Joint sanctions, economic, diplomatic and military would enforce decisions, and would be used against outside powers who attacked a member. Hohenzollern Germany was excluded. Only countries with 'representative and responsible institutions' could join. It was the

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/5/34: Cecil to Lloyd George, 26 June 1918

²F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.118270: Phillimore to Balfour, 3 July 1918

³F.O. 371/4365, f.253.253: note by Lord Hardinge, 24 July 1918

⁴F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.117740: French Ambassador to Balfour, 1 July 1918, enclosing report of French Commission on the League

political counterpart of M. Clementel's proposed economic bloc, and closer economic co-operation among the Allies was actually proposed. Cecil disliked this exclusiveness. He felt however, that ideas had advanced far enough for an interallied conference on the League.¹ He and Crowe approved a decision to send copies of the Phillimore scheme to the French, Italian and Japanese governments.²

Meanwhile President Wilson, owing to pressure of work,³ had passed the question on to Colonel House; evidently, however, he considered the Phillimore plan too detailed;⁴ the League should grow organically on the great principles which he would teach the world, and not be trammelled by a ready-made constitution. His only definite proposal was for a League founded on solemn mutual guarantees of independence and territorial integrity - his 'extended Monroe doctrine' plan. The League, he believed, must have no kind of executive authority nor infringe state sovereignty - in which, as a southern democrat, he deeply believed - or the U.S. Senate would reject it. Ironically it was his own mutual guarantee plan which was to upset them most.

¹F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.122551: minute by Cecil for Balfour, July.

²F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.121790, Percy minute 30 July 1918

³F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.128240, Hohler (for Lord Reading) tel. to Balfour, 9 Jul. 1918

⁴The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, ed. Seymour, iv. 15-16

House shared his master's views, and these he transmitted in a muddleheaded letter to Cecil on 25 June.¹ His arguments were based partly on a memorandum on the Phillimore report by Sir William Wiseman, who did not understand the British scheme.² House did not mention the report, though he did read it. At Wilson's request, he also drew up a League scheme for comment, which modified the Phillimore plan in accordance with the views in his letter. This contained Wilson's mutual guarantee plan;³ and in order to meet with the President's wish for boundaries to be revised on lines of nationality, the guarantees, in the new draft, were to be subject to changes made according to that principle. This was different from Cecil's treaty revision plan, which was an effort to prevent the treaty system breaking down by making it more flexible, and in which treaties on all matters were to be revisable by conference. The House plan concerned only boundaries and it was vague about the machinery to be used.

In House's plan the League was to meet in emergencies and from time to time; continuity was to be maintained by a secretariat; thus House helped to encourage the idea of the League as a permanently

¹House Papers, House to Cecil, 25 June 1918

² Wiseman Papers, memo by Wiseman, 22 June 1918, and Percy to Wiseman, 3 Sept. 1918

³D. H. Miller, Drafting, Vol. ii, 7-11

functioning body. Disputes which could not be solved by diplomacy were to go to arbitration; they could be referred from the arbitration court to the conference, but sanctions could only be used to enforce the awards of a court dealing with a dispute. Sanctions would be applied against a state which went to war either without submitting a dispute for arbitration, or when the court's award had gone against it, and if a state failed to carry out the court's award. As in the Phillimore draft, inconsistent treaties were to be abrogated. Ambassadors to the place of the dispute were to be the delegates. House emphasised open diplomacy: the signatories should bind themselves to maintain the same standards of honour among themselves as existed among honourable private individuals. He cherished the belief that in this way world opinion could be encouraged to look with contempt at 'the dishonourable acts' of a power - which would induce that country's subjects to force a change in their leaders' policies. There was also a disarmament clause; in brief, House's draft attempted to outlaw war by the sanction of public opinion and arbitration for all disputes in the last resort.

Cecil replied to House's 25 June letter on 22 July.¹ The letter was tactful but criticised nearly all of House's ideas. Cecil said that he believed that in disputes involving vital interests a conference was more suitable than a court.

¹House Papers, Cecil to House, 22 Jul. 1918

He explained that the Phillimore scheme relied on making the disputing nations bring their quarrel for open discussion before an international conference. This was, he said, in agreement with House's view that international public opinion should be the chief guarantee of peace. To ensure that the parties came before a conference, coercion might have to be used. Cecil said that House's suggestion of a profession of faith to abide by a code of honour, though it should be incorporated, could not be relied on as a sanction -

'The example of Germany shows that under pressure of false teaching and national danger there is no crime which a civilized nation will not commit... '

So long as the codes of law were only or mainly codes of honour or good conduct, they were always disobeyed by anyone who was sufficiently powerful to do so; one example of this, he said, had been the anarchy in England culminating in the Wars of the Roses. The success of the Star Chamber in dealing with this illustrated that the great instrument of law and order had been the doctrine of the supremacy of the law. (The constitutional triumphs of Henry VII were a constant theme in Cecil's statements regarding the League. Here family history was partly an influence on his thought. The fortunes of his 16th century ancestors were always closely connected with those of the Tudor monarchs. He admired Henry VII's hard-headed practical approach to government).

Cecil said that he did not have an international Star Chamber in mind, but that the French League committee had suggested combining the League with an economic organisation controlling supplies; and this, Cecil felt, might make the sanctions all the more effective.

He criticised the French plan for its suggestion that membership be confined to democratically governed nations. He recalled the misguided plan of the Holy Alliance in 1815, and the obsession that Jacobinism was the great danger to peace at that time - which had led

to so many mistakes. Prussian militarism, the current menace, was indeed a portentous evil, but if, from fear of it, an attempt was made to impose democracy on nations not really suited to it, that would plant the seeds of very serious international trouble.

He disputed House's suggestions that the nations should guarantee one another's territorial integrity - the basis of all Wilson's League ideas -

'I am sure we ought to guarantee, as far as it can be done, the observance of all treaties, and as a corollary we ought to provide means for their periodical reviewal, but I do not know that territorial integrity should be specially singled out from other treaty obligations and as it were crystallised for all time'

In this letter Cecil conceded nothing from the Phillimore conclusions. He postscripted his letter with the hope that the U.S.

government would adopt the Phillimore report as a basis for discussion with the Allies.

House sent Cecil's letter on to Wilson on 9 August, with the comment: 'I do not agree with his conclusions. He would make the League an innocuous affair and leave the world where it is now'.¹

On 23 July, Reading reported that Wilson was against the British pledging themselves to a League plan before they had exchanged views fully with him. House had not covered the whole question; Wilson was still writing his own paper on it. Reading therefore urged the British government to take no further action until he himself had returned to London.²

Pressure for public discussion of the League continued in Parliament; Cecil himself explained in the Commons on 1 August the lines on which he and the Phillimore committee had been thinking. He explained the whole scheme was an attempt to harness public opinion which was favourable now to a real effort to diminish war; the conference plan should be devised to make sure that world opinion was thoroughly informed. He reminded the House of the shortness of the memory of nations; now was the time to make the effort; ... 'it is only by the united efforts of all men of good will that this scheme, essential as it is to the future of mankind, can possibly be brought

¹Library of Congress, Woodrow Wilson Papers, 2, box 181: House to Wilson, 9 Aug. 1918

²F.O. 371/3439, f.13761.129429: Lord Reading tel. to F.O., 23 Jul. 1918

into execution.¹ This urgent message was as close as Cecil could get to publicly attacking the government's passive attitude towards the League and the reluctance of Wilson to allow a general discussion of the question by the Allies.

On 13 August the War Cabinet discussed the League² - three months after the last discussion. Cecil urged publication of the Phillimore report; otherwise there was a danger that the whole question might be drowned by faddist schemes; it would set a good standard; there was no need for it to be published as an expression of the government's views. Reading explained that Wilson had discouraged discussion at home because he thought it inopportune while the war had to be won, not because he merely wished to be the first to publish on the subject. Lloyd George said that they must wait until the Imperial War Cabinet had given it a second reading. He feared the report might distract men's minds from the victory. Germany was nowhere near accepting tolerable terms; if the German government said it would accept the British League scheme, subject to certain conditions, it would have a disastrous effect on public opinion during the winter months.

For Cecil the meeting was disillusioning. After all this delay,

¹ Hansard, 5th series, 1918, vol. 109, pp. 735-738

² CAB 23/7, WC 457, item 8, 13 Aug. 1918

the League was only discussed in terms of whether it was politic to publish anything about it at this stage. There had been some expression of pious sentiments by Borden, and Balfour had ^{earlier} spoken of its usefulness in dealing with postwar international problems like communications;¹ but the Cabinet's main preoccupation had been with the future security and power of the Empire.

Cecil told his wife: ' ... I found the atmosphere very chilly - L.G. has never really cared about it and is almost against it now under the influence of Amery, Hankey and C Curzon. Not one of them except Barnes and possibly Smuts and AJB really approves... Of the colonials Hughes & Co. are definitely against - only Borden is with us wholeheartedly. I have always known that the Continental bureaucracy is opposed to us and blood lust is obscuring the American vision - what ought I to do? Without the hope that this war was to establish a better international system I should be a pacifist'.

He also told her that he hoped to get his sister Maud to mobilise women suffragists in agitating for more action on a League.²

On 15 August, Wilson told Wiseman that he was not prepared to make a public statement on the Phillimore report.³ Henry Cabot Lodge, his leading Republican enemy in the Senate, would say he was committing

¹CAB 23/7, WC 457, item 7, 13 Aug. 1918

²CHE 6/4, Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 14 Aug. 1918

³F.O. 880/222, L of N/12, Wiseman tel. to Lord Reading, 16 Aug. 1918

America to a Utopian scheme; others, that he was not going far enough. Also his own plan was not ready; he was determined that it should be more virile and real than the Phillimore plan which he thought was indefinite - it had no 'teeth'. He did not wish to appoint a committee like Phillimore's. He believed Lloyd George shared his views on the League; he said he would be willing to talk with a British government representative about it. He added that the League should not be constituted before the Peace Conference; Germany would have to be a member and it would endanger Allied solidarity to discuss that now.

He again pressed Reading to use his influence to stop the publication of the Phillimore report. Otherwise controversy would follow and he would be forced to admit his own unfavourable view of the report; this would seem like an important divergence of views between the two governments; this impression might have a bad effect, including some revival of anti-British feeling in the U.S.A., which still existed.

Reading informed Lloyd George of this on 19 August:¹

'I am expecting that Cecil will be annoyed by this view of the President, but it is imperative that we should know how seriously our relations with the U.S. might be embarrassed by premature public discussion based upon the report of a committee appointed by the government'

Reading said that he had already cabled to say that the publication of the report had not been permitted for the present. He

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/43/1/14: Lord Reading to Lloyd George, 19 Aug. 1918

understood that Lloyd George shared the President's view that the League should only be constituted at the Peace Conference.

Lloyd George told Bonar Law in a minute on 20 August:¹

'It is clear... that President Wilson does not take Robert Cecil's view about the League of Nations. We must take care Cecil does not rush us into a premature pronouncement that would get us into trouble not merely with the French but with the Americans as well'

Cecil wrote to Wiseman on 19 August in an attempt to make the President change his mind.² He stressed that after victory was gained there would be a powerful reaction against war; this would have to be harnessed - in time - to create an international public opinion supporting cooperation rather than competition. The economic needs of the postwar world might help this by bringing nations together in joint supply organisations. But this would fail if another ingredient was not added - a great ideal - the old Hebrew and Christian conception of the Reign of Peace.

'I believe that a great formless sentiment of this kind exists. If it does not, we can do nothing. If it does, we must give it an organ for its expression'

Such an ideal would operate in a League through discussion of disputes and through international responsibility for problems left by the war - like that of backward nations. Here again Cecil was

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/30/2/41: minute by Lloyd George for Bonar Law, 20 Aug. 1918

²Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., pp.142-4

advocating a recurrently meeting League with permanent responsibilities, as opposed to one to deal with emergencies only.

He told Wiseman that the government would comply with Wilson's wishes about the Phillimore draft - but he wondered if the President realised the immense difficulties in the way of the League: there was the attitude of the European and English bureaucracies: 'They are very able and honourable, but past masters in the arts of obstruction and resistance'. Militarism was another difficulty, and those who said that a League would further Germany's ends. Something vigorous must therefore be published to create and focus public opinion, and it was urgent to do so before the war was over. The President was later shown this letter¹; it did not alter his decision to stop the publication of the Phillimore Report.

The British Cabinet's lack of interest in the League was marked; in view of this it was reasonable of them not to care to risk a row with their Allies over it; Wilson's arguments were convincing. Nonetheless his failure to encourage interest and enthusiasm is open to suspicion; it is only too clear that he disliked the idea of other minds working independently on a new world order of which he wished to be the chief architect. There is no reason to suppose that some quiet general discussion among the Allies about a League would have provoked a serious quarrel. Moreover, he could have done more to encourage League enthusiasts in Allied governments; such people were

¹Wiseman Papers, Wiseman tel. to Drummond, 2 Oct. 1918

rare enough among prominent politicians; their enthusiasm needed support if the League was to stand a real chance. Further, his hopes that American opinion would be more favourable to a League after the war were not realised; discussion during the war would have given more time for exchange of ideas; he may have avoided wrangles at that stage; but in postponing discussion he still produced a League unacceptable to his people.

To be fair, his attitude also stemmed from his view that the League should begin as a set of principles and grow; he was therefore in no hurry to work out a constitution; Cecil on the other hand felt that time would work against a League if the ground was not prepared for creating a public opinion in support of an international peace organisation as soon as possible. As it was, Cecil's agitation over the question did have some effect; Wilson and House were alerted into taking more positive action; otherwise there might have been no official American draft by the time of the Peace Conference.

Wilson's own League draft was written in the late summer of 1918 at Magnolia, Massachusetts.¹ It resembled and was largely based on House's draft scheme. It was more explicit about military sanctions, and left out House's clauses about maintaining standards of honour in international relations, in spite of House describing them as 'the keystone of the arch'.

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i.15

For some time House had felt that the President should take the initiative over the League, and commit the United States definitely to the formation of the League as an essential part of the peace settlement - he therefore helped to outline a speech which Wilson made on the 27 September in New York in support of the Liberty Loan; this laid down a number of principles: the first was that the League should be formed at the Peace Conference - and definitely not before; secondly, that the League ought to contain the present Allies and the neutrals; the enemy powers were not mentioned - but a statement that Germany would be treated fairly hinted that its future membership was not ruled out; thirdly, that economic pressure would generally be used in preference to military force by the League - and that only the League would be allowed to use economic blockade, in future.¹

Cecil was very pleased by this evidence that the President was at last publicising the League ideal; he told House:

'It is, if I may say so, the finest description of our war aims yet uttered, and will give us all renewed courage to face the horrors of war'²

However he continued to hope that the Phillimore report could be published. He admitted that unless Wilson's views could be changed, he personally was hesitant to disregard them; moreover he also admitted

¹ Wiseman Papers, memo 'League of Nations', by Wiseman, 4 Oct. 1918

² House Papers, Cecil to House, 28 Sept. 1918

that it could affect people's willingness to go on fighting: he had faith in British but not in American opinion:

'The reality of this danger is a question of psychology and personally I believe that the conviction that the British Government were in earnest in their advocacy of a League of Nations would be encouraging and not depressing to our people. I am not afraid of a peace atmosphere for the English but I am seriously alarmed at the growing likelihood of a reaction against the American Spread Eagleism which is now rampant'¹

On 2 October, 1918, Barnes, who represented British labour in the Cabinet, raised the subject of the League at the War Cabinet.² He thought, like Cecil, that the individual Allies must clarify their ideas on the subject and then discuss the question together. Otherwise the feeling in support of it might be lost by the time of the peace; further, the Germans were considering the idea and should not be allowed to be the first to publish a scheme. If an Allied scheme laid down that Germany must have a democratic regime before it could join, this might help to end the war.

Balfour said that Wilson's attitude was still the problem; his own view was that Reading might be empowered to hold unofficial talks with Wilson who would be told that Britain wished to work with America and work out an arrangement before referring the question to the other belligerents.

Cecil said the U.S. chargé d'affaires had asked him to say what the British government thought of Wilson's speech; his own view was

¹F.O. 371/4365, f.253.435, p.397 o.s.: minute by Cecil, undated (Sept?) 1918

²CAB 23/8, WC 481, item 9, 2 Oct. 1918

that they should express agreement with the policy that the League must come into existence at the Peace Conference, and that the Allies should have a special conference - perhaps at Washington - to discuss the League so that they would have a definite scheme to put forward. It would then fall to the President to issue the invitations to this. Reading said he would approach Wilson about the League in the way Balfour had suggested; he repeated Wilson's objections to the publication of the Phillimore draft. Hankey reminded the Cabinet that they must wait until the Imperial War Cabinet had discussed the League before further action; this meant some delay - which he regretted - because not all the Dominion premiers were in England. Once again the British Cabinet were unenthusiastic about the League, and on the whole content with Wilson's wish not to give publicity to a particular scheme; Cecil had to answer a parliamentary question with the reply that publication of the British and French drafts was deemed inopportune and premature;¹ he grumbled to Foreign Office colleagues about the government's lack of policy on the League.²

The victory of America and the European Allies was now certain. The German government asked President Wilson for an armistice, accepting as the basis for the peace negotiations, his 14 Points peace plan and subsequent addresses on the settlement; the European Allies agreed to these terms though they had hopes of getting their own way on reparations and freedom of the seas; the armistice was granted; the war

¹Hansard, 5th series, 1918, vol. 110, pp.890-891

²F.O. 371/4365, f.253.446: minute by Cecil, undated (Oct.?) 1918

ended on 11 November, 1918.

Before continuing with the narrative, it is desirable here to mention one influence which greatly affected Cecil's attitude towards the League during the war - the interallied supply bodies referred to several times previously. Their success gave him great confidence in the possibility of international cooperation after the war. At a government dinner on 15 August, 1918, to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement, the earliest of these organisations, he pointed out that these bodies had paved the way for the international order of the future:

'We have to rebuild the international system... We have got to substitute among the nations co-operation, and that is why I believe the vast majority are confirmed and even passionate believers in the cause of a League of Nations. I believe this commission was the leading example which was set before us, and I believe it is upon an organisation such as this that a League of Nations can ultimately be built. I have said we are a partnership, and it is by conforming to and extending that partnership that we perhaps should show the way for a further organisation of nations'¹

Further, he stressed in a paper prepared by Percy and himself in September that apart from securing the most economic use of shipping and supplies, they had been set up to establish 'the principle of equality of sacrifice as between the Allies'. The supply system should continue after the war, not only for economic reasons, but in the interests of permanent peace:

¹The Times, 16 Aug. 1918, p.8, col.6

"It is also a consideration of great importance that the existence of such an economic inter-allied partnership is a very powerful solvent of the war will of our enemies and it may be invaluable after the war in furnishing a real inducement to the establishment of whatever international organisation is possible, designed to secure the peace of the world, as well as the only practical means of international co-operation by which a common sentiment may be built up in support of such an organisation'¹

Cecil had been specially keen to include such a statement in order to show the value such an organisation would have as a handmaid to a League of Nations.² He did not however wish such an organisation to be an extensive international economic government; he rejected the idea that the League should be an economic one based upon the interallied control of supplies - such as M. Clémentel advocated; he agreed with Christopher Addison, the Minister of Reconstruction, that a League for the purpose of securing peace should not incur at the outset 'the risk of the unpopularity attendant upon the commercial and industrial hostility which may arise out of any control which an economic association might have to exercise in some directions in the early transitional period'³

Cecil began campaigning for popular League support in earnest on 5 November with a speech to U.S. press editors.⁴ He expounded his views further on the 12th, at his inauguration as Birmingham University Chancellor.⁵ He began this speech by saying that he doubted whether

¹F.O. 371/4367, f.354.364: memo by Percy & Cecil, Sept. 1918

²Ibid., minute by Cecil, undated (Sept.) 1918

³F.O. 371/4365, f.253.421: minute by Addison, 3 Oct. 1918, & minute by Cecil, undated.

⁴The Times, 6 Nov. 1918, p.3, col.1

⁵Ibid. 13 Nov. 1918, p.6, col.3

European civilisation could stand another repetition of the last four years. He said that if the League was a daydream it was difficult to avoid despair. No one however could ignore the powerful arguments given against the likelihood of its success. It was objected that it was a mere Holy Alliance for democracy and that there was little ground for saying that democracies were always peaceful. Napoleon was the product of revolutionary democracy. A new society must not be a group, however large and important; rival groups would later spring up and it would be a return to the balance of power.

The League would be incomplete, and proportionately ineffective, unless every civilised nation joined it. He believed that conditions were more favourable to a world-wide League than ever before. Though the sentiment of nationality was strong, new movements showed that in some cases common humanity had the paramount claim - the movements towards religious unity and international behaviour and even Bolshevism with its doctrine of the brotherhood of all nations - its most generally attractive dogma. Also the war had revealed the economic interdependence of the nations and had shown that international co-operation for supply could be successful. Cecil saw international conference as the best way of establishing the rule of law - through harnessing world opinion. And he stressed the effectiveness of the economic boycott which had been operated under restrictions during the war. Unrestricted, it would mean certain ruin for the belligerent country.

'It may be hoped that such a menace would cool the ardour even of a German professor'

He said that there could be no complete security against future war without disarmament, but there did seem at the moment to be no safe and practicable plan for it. The only hope was to work for international goodwill so that the necessity for national armament would disappear - just as men in civilised countries no longer carried swords and pistols.

It was vital, he said, to any scheme of international peace that treaties should be rigidly observed. However, as treaties, like everything else, could grow out of date, the signatories must therefore undertake periodical consultations for the purpose of reviewing obsolescent treaty obligations.

He said that some might wish to see a League more fully equipped with legal machinery - he was alluding here to ideas like those in the Marburg, Bryce and League of Nations Society plans. He reminded such people that national sovereignty could not be invaded too far and he thought that a League which precluded sudden attack and forced contending nations to submit their quarrels to the opinion and conscience of mankind was a very great step forward - one in fact that some would find too visionary.

He reminded his audience that the League was an experiment and that all hope for the future must not depend on it. There must be a good peace, a territorial settlement based on natural justice, the sanctity of treaties must be re-established, and Germany militarism exorcised. The League could not be founded on any other basis. It must be brought into being by the treaty ending the war, otherwise the

great force on which the League relied, that of the hatred of the cruelty and waste of war, would be lost, and oblivion would set in.

'It is only while the recollection of all we have been through is burningly fresh, that we can hope to overcome the inevitable opposition and establish at least the beginning of a new and better organisation of the nations of the world'

It was on 21 November 1918 that Cecil resigned from the government over the issue of Welsh Church disestablishment; one reason for his resignation that he did not give officially, was that he felt he would be freer to work on the League outside the government¹. The lack of real enthusiasm on the government's part had been largely responsible for this view; even at this stage their commitment to the League seemed half-hearted. When Lloyd George, at a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet on 26 November raised the question of deciding on an official League scheme, it was again evident that some of the Cabinet ministers and Dominion premiers had reservations. Borden favoured giving the idea a try, but Hughes was hostile - he said that Wilson's League would mean that states would have to surrender their sovereign rights, and that Australia's immigration rules would certainly come under attack. No opportunity was taken at this meeting to discuss the Phillimore report².

¹Bodleian Library, Gilbert Murray Papers, Cecil-Murray correspondence: Cecil to Murray, 29 Nov. 1918

²CAB 23/42, IWC 38, item 10, 26 Nov. 1918

Cecil's election work occupied his next few weeks. His manifesto included an impassioned plea for a League.¹ Smuts invited him, on 3 December - with the approval of Lloyd George and Balfour - to head the League section of the British delegation at the Peace Conference.² Cecil accepted. He told his constituents of this when he spoke to them at Letchworth:

'There was ... no work that he would more readily do for his country than to get up and take the British case in this great Conference, the greatest International Conference that perhaps had ever existed, in favour of the greatest political and social reform that could be carried out for the interests of mankind'³

It cannot be said that the League was an important election issue. Demobilisation and the punishment of Germany filled people's minds. Lloyd George was unconstructive about the League in his press manifesto of 5 December.⁴ However, Balfour expressed approval on behalf of the government,⁵ and Churchill and others spoke favourably.⁶ No candidates attacked the League. Asquith and also many foreign policy radicals lost their seats because their wartime conduct was criticised, not because they wanted a League of Nations. Cecil,

¹Addit. MSS. 51162, f.56: Cecil election address, 26 Nov. 1918

²Addit. MSS. 51076, f.73: Smuts to Cecil, 3 Dec. 1918

³The Times, 6 Dec. 1918, p.12, col.3

⁴Ibid., p.9, col.1

⁵The Times, 9 Dec. 1918, p.12, col.5

⁶The Times, 27 Nov. 1918, p.10, col.4

Barnes and J.H. Thomas, the trades union leader, who were all League enthusiasts, though their public pronouncements on the peace differed in character, were elected again. Cecil took heart from this; he was convinced that the British public wanted the League.¹ Whether this was the case in any important sense or not, the British public's demand for harsh peace terms to be imposed on Germany was to be disastrous to the chances of securing a lasting peace settlement. Cecil's earlier scheme to have the Phillimore report published could conceivably have had the effect of creating a public reaction more favourable to a just peace.

Early in December, Smuts gave Cecil an account of some of his thoughts on world settlement and the role of the League. He told him that he favoured closer ties with the United States, because France had been a bad neighbour and would be in the future: its ambition would be to dominate the continent and keep Germany humiliated, creating an atmosphere hopeless for future peace - unless the United States could extricate Europe and the Near East from the muddle created by the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Treaty of London promises to Italy. The charter of future Anglo-American co-operation should be given at the Peace Conference and symbolised by supporting Wilson's League scheme and ideas less nebulous than his own. (In return Wilson might drop such contentious points as the 'freedom of the seas'). The League should take over the territories taken from the defeated enemies as

¹F.O. 371/4370, f.2.58: press cutting from Le Matin, 15 Jan. 1919: interview with Cecil

²Addit. MSS. 51076 f.73: Smuts to Cecil, 3 Dec. 1918;
f.74: notes by Smuts on policy at the Peace Conference, 3 Dec. 1918

mandates - anything else would be fatal to world peace. It would act through individual mandatories. 'The open door' in commercial matters would be part of the scheme. The virtues of such responsibility would be to make the League real from the start, to prevent the scramble for spoils and at the same time give the great powers a chance to control and administer some territory.

Smuts wrote out these ideas at greater length in a memorandum of 16 December, which was presented to the War Cabinet.¹ In it, he outlined eloquently his view of the League as the great organ to promote the peaceful life of civilisation - not simply for the prevention of war. The peace activities of Smuts' league were to be the foundation of peace and the guarantee against war. His memorandum contained a plan for the abolition of conscription and of the private manufacture of armaments, and expressed a hope for future disarmament.

The mandate system outlined by Smuts embodied precisely what Cecil and his father admired in the Empire, the notion of trust and responsibility - the granting of 'self-determination' - in the sense of equality before the law - that Cecil had spoken of in his speech on Zionism in November 1917. Moreover the basis of such an arrangement would be international, and thus the administration of mandatory powers would he hoped be even more altruistic than that of the British in their Empire; he warmly backed Smuts' plan at the Eastern Affairs Committee on 9 December 1918:

¹ D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii, 23-60

' ... If the objects of General Smuts materialise, and I hope they will, the League of Nations will not only be the dominant factor in all these situations, but it will probably lay down as a principle that no occupation of any of these countries must be of any advantage to the occupying country. When I say "occupation" I mean to include all the minor degrees of "spheres of influence", and so on. The "open door" will have to be an essential principle of all countries under the control of the League of Nations'¹

In the case of the Middle East, he believed that the introduction of this system would discourage the French from trying to carve out an empire for themselves there. In the Far East, too, he wanted to see some similar type of international arrangement; unscrupulous commercial policy and the grabbing of concessions by the great powers made that region a serious potential trouble spot for England, the U.S.A. and Japan, in particular. Such policies in China were a cause also of civil war, injustice and disorder there. Cecil had already pressed for the revival of the international financial consortium which had maintained the Chinese economy until the war.²

He had applauded too,³ an American idea of an Anglo-Saxon League of Peace to control militarism in the Far East for the benefit of all. The plan would involve the disclosure of all secret commercial concessions and the end of any further secret special arrangements by the great powers and their nationals. The plan was particularly

¹CAB 27/24, p.195 o.s., 9 Dec. 1918

²F.O. 371/3190, f.150165.176057: note by Cecil, undated (Nov.?) 1918

³F.O. 371/3191, f.175334.186939, p.80: tel. from Jordan, 10 Nov. 1918

directed towards controlling Japan, on whose policies American looked with disfavour. Japan's claim to take over the German sphere of influence was supported by the Entente powers - it was the price of her support. Cecil was ready to accept a change of policy towards her:

'To me the American policy appeals very strongly & I should like to see it extended to all countries occupied by backward races. It would mean little or no change in British policy. We have usually administered our possessions & exercised our influence in such countries for the benefit of the countries themselves rather than of the United Kingdom & it is the contrary policy pursued by Japan & by other European countries which has caused most of the bitterness & disputes & misgovernment'¹

Attacking the spheres of influence plan early in December,² he suggested that supervision of the Far Eastern areas - and the other 'backward races' regions - might come under the worldwide League of Nations which he was promoting. On 20 December, he read a despatch by Sir John Jordan from Peking; this recommended that the great powers should work together to develop China to the stage of self-government, pooling their interests; under a self-denying ordinance imposed by the League, they would undertake not to pursue selfish and separate interests. Cecil wrote:

'This paper harmonises well with the views of General Smuts on the League of Nations, with which I am heartily in accord'³

¹Ibid., p.77 o.s., minute by Cecil, undated (Nov.?) 1918

²Ibid., p.81 o.s., minute by Cecil on minute by Macleay, 2 Dec. 1918

³F.O. 371/3191, f.175334.205337, p.110 o.s., minute by Cecil 20 Dec. 1918 on Peking despatch by Jordan, 23 Oct. 1918

He took over direction of a special section on League matters, for the forthcoming conference. This largely consisted of men who had been at work on the question at the Political Intelligence Department, during the past months, and included Alfred Zimmern, Sir S. Waterlow, Phillimore, Hurst and Lord Eustace Percy.

The files kept by members of this section illustrate the lines on which the British League experts were working at this time. One member of the section, Philip Noel-Baker, a young League enthusiast and the son of J. Allen Baker M.P. - himself a devotee to the cause of international peace - was apparently thinking on the lines of sealing every loophole leading to war. In a series of memoranda he put forward the idea of compulsory arbitration, and also advocated elaborate conciliation procedures and steps towards the codification of international law. However, Cecil was firmly against this line, and the British team did not adopt it. Like Hurst, Cecil thought the conciliation procedure too complicated - he himself intended that the powers in conference would be the conciliation body. He doubted whether the phrase 'compulsory arbitration' had any meaning; he repeated his view that arbitration could not be extended to deal with vital national interests. He feared, too, that the unfortunate experience of the Declaration of London had shown the difficulties involved in the codification of international law.¹ He thought that the League should work out much of its procedure as its work proceeded.² Baker became a devoted friend

¹F.O. 800/249, p.44: minutes by Percy, 19 Dec. and Cecil, undated, 1918

²F.O. 800/249, p.107: note by Cecil, undated (Dec.) 1918

of Cecil and his indispensable assistant at the Peace Conference; the difference in his point of view, however, is here evident.

Zimmern had prepared a memorandum on a League in November.¹ This laid out a plan for a League which would be an organisation with a permanent secretariat and regular meetings and duties. It would take emergency action to restrain violence, and, in the long run, try to stop war altogether. Superstate-type control was not envisaged: there was to be a small 'executive' and administrative council of the great powers, but this was to deal with disputes as laid down in the Phillimore plan. Zimmern's plan differed, he claimed, from that plan, because his plan ruled out war if there was no decision by the conference or council. Instead the dispute would simply be kept in suspense.

Cecil was pleased with this plan; under his auspices, its organisation was amalgamated with the Phillimore draft's provisions for dealing with a crisis, in a paper called 'A Draft Sketch of a League of Nations'. It was a summary of the conclusions of which Cecil approved; it did not include Zimmern's idea of ruling out recourse to war. The paper was circulated to the War Cabinet on 17 December.²

In the 'Draft Sketch',³ the League meetings were to consist of the regular annual meetings of prime ministers and foreign secretaries

¹CAB 29/2, P-68: memo (Nov.) by Zimmern with covering letter by Cecil to War Cabinet, 20 Dec. 1918

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i., 38, note 1

³D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii., 61-64

of the great powers ('the Executive Committee'). There were also to be quadrennial meetings of the representatives of all the League states. On the council of the great powers, the recommendations would have to be unanimous - as in the wartime interallied conferences. There were also to be special conferences, either at the demand of any of the great powers, or of any other member, if threatened with war. Definitely untrustworthy or hostile states would be excluded from membership - Russia, for example, if the Bolsheviks continued in power. Otherwise, the paper stressed, the conferences should not be too rigid in scrutinising qualifications:

' ... since the smaller powers will in any case not exercise any considerable influence'

There was to be a permanent secretariat, and the Chancellor (general secretary) was to be appointed by the great powers. The secretariat would be the responsible channel of communication between the conferences and the international bodies which would function under treaties guaranteed by the League - judicial bodies, international administrative bodies, and international commissions of inquiry. There might also be a periodic conference of delegates of the parliaments of member states - similar to the conferences of the Interparliamentary Union; such conferences would discuss the reports of the inter-state conferences and of the international bodies under the League. A permanent meeting place - Geneva was suggested - where the officials would enjoy the rights of ex-territoriality, was deemed essential to this organisation.

As in the Phillimore report, the members were bound not to go to war until a dispute had been submitted to an international conference or arbitration court and until a report or award had been issued; no time limit was laid down for arriving at these. Members were not to go to war with any member who accepted the report or award. The report had to be unanimous (excluding the parties to the dispute). Members of the League would be ipso facto at war with any one of them acting contrary to these covenants; they were bound to join in collective action, both military and economic, against a recalcitrant state; they were bound also to similar action against a state who was not a member, in a dispute with a member. If only a majority of a conference voted for a report, the report might still be issued, even though no covenant would be involved; the paper believed that it would be likely to carry great weight with the public opinion of countries belonging to the League.

On 24 December, the Imperial War Cabinet met to consider the League and to discuss the various proposals for the first time, at any length.¹ They had before them numerous documents, including the Phillimore, Smuts, Zimmern and Cecil (17 December 1918) plans. Cecil began the discussion. He spoke first of Smuts' memorandum. He said that the League was needed not only to keep the peace, but also to cope with the new problems of international relations - the safeguarding of the liberated nationalities and problematical areas of the world like the Caucasus. Without League help, such states and

¹CAB 23/42, IWC 46, item 1, 24 Dec. 1918

areas had a precarious future. Other problems which it might take on were: the ownership of Constantinople, the Chinese question and the control of international waterways, railways etc. The League needed to become such an organisation or it too would have a poor chance of survival. The Supreme War Council and the Inter-Allied Maritime Transport Council had shown that international bodies had great possibilities, provided there was a genuine desire to co-operate and a permanent secretariat to keep the organisation going in the intervals between formal meetings.

In his own paper, he said, he had planned such an organisation, based in a neutral capital, and presided over by a head of the secretariat who would be chosen for his statesmanship - someone of the calibre of Venizelos, the Greek premier. The annual conference of prime ministers and foreign secretaries would act as the executive committee representing the whole body of the League of Nations. The most important work would be done by the secretariat and by the annual meetings. The annual conferences would consider the chief current points of international interest and would revise any unworkable or obsolescent treaties.

'It was a matter of common experience that treaties were made as if for eternity, but in the course of time became anachronistic'

The object, he said, was not to stop war by coercion, but to procure delay, and force the parties to come into the open and submit their dispute to the highest authority the world could supply. If war ensued, Cecil believed that this machinery would ensure that it was limited, rather than world-wide. This was in accordance with the views of the Phillimore committee and the latest statements of President Wilson. Concluding, Cecil warned that in his election campaign he had noticed an increase of class bitterness. The feeling was growing that the richer classes regarded war as favourable to their class interests, and though he thought this false, it was undeniable that the press organs of the wealthier classes had been least enthusiastic about schemes to put down war. To reverse this impression, the Cabinet should show itself to be really in earnest about a League.

The Smuts memorandum caused the most misgivings at this meeting. Some members of the Cabinet were under the impression that the League would determine the military contribution of each state, when sanctions were being carried out against a covenant breaker; Cecil tried to reassure them that although breach of an obligation meant a state of war, automatically, between the breaker and the other members, the League could not dictate what forces were to be used. Hughes thought Smuts' scheme threatened national sovereignty on this and other points; he was against a commitment to anything stronger than Wilson's recent and unexplicit pronouncements, for the moment. The Australian premier was simply concerned that the League

should be as ineffective and harmless to his country's interests as possible. His arguments were seldom informed, intelligent or consistent - though he recognised correctly that an effective League on the lines proposed would involve more of a superstate authority than Cecil, for example, was ready to admit. Hughes' views were important because influential; he was the voice of 'the common man' in the Imperial War Cabinet; and Lloyd George, though he seldom agreed with him, was affected by his fierce vehemence and by Australian claims on British gratitude for her wartime sacrifices.

The Smuts plan contained arms limitation proposals which also caused objections - that it was asking too much, in the present state of Europe, and that such excessive demands would be the downfall of the League. Borden, however, said that the common people were blaming the war largely on the arms manufacturers and would regard the League as a sham if there were no disarmament provision. Cecil agreed; he said that he wanted a provision against conscription and the private manufacture of arms; but he felt that the danger of a comprehensive disarmament scheme was that questions like the freedom of the seas and the size of the British navy would be raised.

He had not changed his views on those matters; and as reported a month before, by an American observer, he expected little result at that time even from the disarmament ideas he did propose at this meeting:

'He spoke of the abolishment --- even of the scaling down of --- armaments, according to any radical plan, as being quite beyond the domain of practical politics, and thought the necessary corollary to such a step would be the establishment of an army of spies in every country. It seemed to me that the mere agreement that military service, apart from a certain necessary minimum, should be neither enforced nor paid, would accomplish this most desirable of ends. But he remained sceptical... ¹

Lloyd George thought the solution was to impose disarmament on the Central Powers; then the French would follow suit, because the German threat would have been removed; he made the mistake of believing that the French thought like the English about military establishments.

Smuts' memorandum was praised by Barnes and Borden. But Borden was concerned about how the League's activities were going to tie in with the principle of self-determination - when would it intervene over secession? If the League interfered within the boundaries of states, its responsibilities would never end; and might not the League have prevented independence movements in the past? Cecil explained that the League would not intervene if Egypt rebelled against English rule; but if Germany, for instance, supported Egypt militarily, this would be grounds for League intervention.

Lloyd George said he felt that the Cabinet was now agreed at least that there should be a League and that its main framework should be broadly as Cecil suggested; the public would not tolerate

¹Library of Congress, Woodrow Wilson Papers, 5A, box 3; extract from letter by Sedgwick, 6 Nov. 1918

a government which failed to allay their fears of another war, by a League and disarmament measures. He believed League machinery, as described, would have prevented war in 1914. He drew attention to Smuts' observation that the Inter-Allied Council at Versailles and the Imperial War Cabinet provided a model for the League. Lloyd George felt these bodies to be an admirable precedent; they provided effective cooperation without any member being compelled to act against its wishes; nothing was to be settled by majority. However, he had never known a case where agreement had not been reached. If based on these bodies it would be possible to have a League without independent executive authority, whose authority rested in its member governments. This was the Hankey plan - and similar to that of Lloyd George's secretary, Philip Kerr. Lloyd George did not want a real departure from the previous conduct of international affairs; his remarks at this meeting make it clear that he regarded the League as a showpiece and as a useful adjunct to other diplomatic methods - not as central to foreign policy in the future.

Cecil himself sensed this; he thought little of the 'extended Versailles Council' League idea; he thought the Versailles Council had only been moderately successful in securing a united war policy. Secondly he knew that conditions would be different after the war - there would be no mutual danger to induce agreement between members; hence a far solider organisation was needed. Thirdly, the Versailles Council secretariat was neither large enough nor sufficiently organised

to cope with the very wide administrative tasks he envisaged for the League.¹ He did not raise these points at the meeting because he was more concerned at this stage that the Cabinet should accept the general idea of a League with conferences and administrative responsibilities.

On 26 December 1918, President Wilson arrived in London, for a visit of a few days as part of his triumphal tour of Allied countries before the Peace Conference. Cecil tried to see him; Wilson was already aware of Cecil's League efforts, through Colonel House; reports of Cecil's activities had also reached him; among Wilson's papers which accompanied him to Europe was an American intelligence report giving the following account of Cecil:

'Lord Robert Cecil ... has a very considerable sympathy with most of the President's program. He will not ... accept the freedom of the seas in the American sense until the League of Nations is an effective reality. But he is essentially a moderate, and if I read him right is without the familiar Salisbury cynicism. It would be impossible, I think, not to respect him, and difficult not to like him. His feeling for the League of Nations is very real...'²

Also in Wilson's papers was a copy of Cecil's 'Draft Sketch' of 17 December, which he was apparently handed on this visit.³

¹Addit. MSS. 51131, Lord Cecil's Diary of the British Delegation, Paris, 6 Jan. - 10 June 1919 - entry for 5 Feb. 1919. (Hereafter shortened to: 'Cecil Diary')

²Library of Congress, Woodrow Wilson Papers, 5A, box 3: extract from letter by Sedgwick, 6 Nov. 1918

³Library of Congress, Woodrow Wilson Papers, 5B, box 2: draft sketch of League of Nations, 17 Dec. 1918

Thus Wilson must have been aware of Cecil's importance as far as the League was concerned; but Cecil found the President reluctant to exchange ideas on this visit.

'.. .. I tried to see him on the subject while he was here. But he was only here a short time and was very busy so that the best I could manage was a brief conversation during a state reception at Buckingham Palace. At such a time he naturally could not be prevailed on to express an opinion; and I had to go to Paris early in January 1919 without knowing what was in the mind of the individual who Monsieur Clemenceau habitually referred to as Jupiter'¹

Cecil himself had already been irked by Wilson's refusal to allow interallied debate on the League; he resented the widespread impression that Wilson was the only head of the Allied and Associated powers who was in favour of a League. Writing to Lloyd George on 19 December about a forthcoming meeting on the League organised by J.H. Thomas, Cecil said:

'I hope he will not turn it into a glorification of Pres: Wilson & a little regret that we have let that eloquent pedagogue "patent" this question as he has done'²

Lloyd George, however, talked at length with Wilson; he

¹Visc. Cecil, A Great Experiment, p.63

²Lloyd George Papers, F/6/5/53: Cecil to Lloyd George, 19 Dec. 1918

reported his conversation to the Imperial War Cabinet on 30 December.¹ He said Wilson still had no definite formal scheme, but was thinking along the lines of the Cecil and Smuts memoranda. Wilson wanted the League to be the first thing discussed at the Peace Conference. Balfour and Lloyd George had both been inclined to agree, since if Wilson was satisfied on this, he might let the question of the colonies and the freedom of the seas go; at the moment the President was strongly opposed to the annexation of the German Southern Pacific islands by Australia and New Guinea - just as he was against Japan annexing the German North Pacific islands or even having a mandate there. The President had not raised the question of Germany's membership of the League, but evidently did not intend that this should take place at once. He wanted a decision on disarmament before the Conference left and the League was actually constituted, though he admitted that the question was too intricate to be solved by this conference; he was content that its business should be confined to disarming Germany for a start. Cecil here queried whether the new Central European countries should have conscription; he was against them having large armies. Lloyd George agreed. He reported, further, that the President was against the U.S. taking on mandates - his country did not wish to lose their disinterested position through such responsibilities.

There was indignation at these revelations - Hughes objected to the President's hard line on annexation and poured scorn on his League

¹CAB 23/42, IWC 47, item 1, 30 Dec. 1918

schemes; vital matters such as the rewarding of Australia for her sacrifices must be decided before the League or they would be choosing the shadow in preference to the substance. Curzon felt that it would be better to work with the French if Wilson persisted in his demands; Lloyd George, he said, was going to Paris with authority superior even to that of Wilson.

Cecil said it was true that the British Empire went to the Conference with enormous power, but her responsibility was also vast. A settled peace was vital, for which the best guarantee was a good understanding with the U.S.A. This could not be secured until the Empire was prepared to join the League. He agreed that the League could not be settled in detail at the beginning of the conference, but certain principles could be laid down as soon as possible. He proposed that the Peace Conference should pass three resolutions - on the desirability of a League, on its general functions, and on the powers who could be trusted at present to take part in it. A technical commission could elaborate these resolutions. The conference should settle the main terms of the peace; but they could leave the League to administer matters arising from the settlement.

The discussion continued the next day.¹ Lloyd George thought the President had not been extreme about the League or irreconcilable about annexation. The indemnity was the only tough point. The League, he clearly indicated, was a bargaining counter; they must cooperate with America as far as possible; he assured the Cabinet that Britain

¹CAB 23/42, IWC 48, item 4, 31 Dec. 1918

would not leave Paris without getting what it wanted. He agreed with Cecil's plan of laying down a few principles.

This was the last Cabinet discussion on the League before Cecil went to Paris. No British scheme had been accepted as the official British draft. Though Cecil and others at the Foreign Office had devoted a great deal of time to it, it had formed a very small part of the agenda of the Cabinet. In terms of a government plan, Britain, despite Lloyd George's later claims, had no more to offer when the Conference began than Wilson. The British Delegation League section were able quickly to draw up a scheme, when they reached Paris, which was the result of several years thought; but for this thinking, Cecil and Smuts alone of the Lloyd George Cabinet could take much credit.

Cecil, too, had been the chief British publicist of the League. Although he had not gained his way about publication and discussion of the Phillimore report, he had taken repeated opportunities to speak on behalf of the new scheme. As well as making speeches he had assisted the efforts of those working for the League. In November he became a vice-president of the League of Nations Union¹ - a recent amalgamation of leading League groups under Viscount Grey's presidency. Cecil had also corresponded with J.H. Thomas about promoting the League; and, to draw attention to this, their letters were published in The Times of 27 December.² Cecil concluded his letter with a characteristically

¹United Nations Association, London - archives: minutes of the L.N.U. provisional executive committee, 21 Nov. 1919

²The Times, 27 Dec. 1919, p.7, col.5: Cecil to Thomas, 23 Dec. 1919

optimistic and lofty passage on the tasks that lay ahead in the next months:

'You say that there is a feeling that "strenuous efforts are being made to minimise and hamper the League of Nations project". I do not doubt it, though I have not seen much evidence of it in this country. One thing is certain: If the British people show that they are in earnest in pressing forward this reform they will carry it through, as they have carried through many another scheme for the freedom and improvement of mankind.

'We have a splendid opportunity and a noble cause - the cause of Christianity itself. Let us not be weary in well-doing'

PART THREE

LORD ROBERT CECIL'S LEAGUE WORK AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE OF PARIS

Chapter Six
Preliminary Discussions
January-February, 1919

Cecil arrived in Paris on 6 January, with a personal staff which included Philip Noel-Baker, Major J.R.M. Butler, and Captain Frank Walters, a family friend. He was later joined by his nephew, Lord Cranborne. With these and other assistants, he set to work to draft a British League scheme based on the efforts of the past months.

This League section met in the mornings in Robert Cecil's room in the Hotel Astoria. It varied in personnel according to topic, but Cecil, Baker and Hurst, the Foreign Office legal adviser, were constantly there. Others appeared when the question required their special advice - colonial and oriental experts discussed, for example, the mandate question.¹

Meanwhile, Cecil and Smuts kept in touch with the other delegations - notably that of the United States. Cecil only succeeded in having a few words with Wilson on 7 January, but talked with House and Lansing, Wilson's Secretary of State, on the following day.² He presented them with the three resolutions on the League, which he had suggested to

¹Cecil Diary, 13 Jan. 1919; 14 Jan. 1919; and F.O. 608/240.f.1614/1/1.403: meeting of League section, 31 Jan. 1919

²Cecil Diary, 7 Jan., 8 Jan. 1919

the Imperial War Cabinet, on the desirability of the League, its general functions, and the nations which could be trusted to take part in it. The resolutions were to be passed by the Plenary Conference; they were to launch the League as part of the agenda of the Conference.

Cecil and the two Americans then discussed the form the League should take. House had seen Cecil's 17 December 1918 memorandum. He felt that the document was not nearly strong enough.¹ He wanted to lay down that there should be no resort to war in any circumstances and that all disputes should be referred to arbitration in the last resort. Cecil was surprised at House taking such an extreme stand.² Lansing and House also warned Cecil that the American people were not universally behind the League and that the President might not get his way with them over this question.

After lunch, House spoke alone with Cecil about the whole story of his own and the President's work on the League. He recorded blithely afterwards that this talk had done much to eliminate differences.³ Cecil did not think so and when he returned to the Majestic, he asked Crowe to prepare a paper on objections to universal compulsory arbitration to go to the Americans the next day.

¹House Papers, House Diary, xv. 8 Jan. 1919

²CHE 6/7: Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 8 Jan. 1919

³House Diary, xv. 8 Jan. 1918

Crowe demonstrated that arbitration was unacceptable in certain circumstances.¹ He explained that the U.S. Senate could not accept a universal compulsory arbitration scheme for disputes because that would take away the Senate's right to make reservations in certain cases - one of their constitutional rights in treaty making which they had always jealously guarded. Their opposition would greatly increase the already huge difficulties the League faced.

Cecil saw Lansing and House again on 9 January.² He reminded them of the history of negotiations between Britain and the U.S.A. as illustrated in Crowe's paper; though both were shaken, House was still not convinced. Very likely he did not fully understand Crowe's paper. His enthusiasm for the League excused him, however, in Cecil's eyes. Cecil thought poorly of the intelligence of Lansing who was against the League.³ Cecil overestimated House as a statesman and as a man; he wrote of him later: 'If men may be divided into those whose ambition is to do something, and those who want to be something, he emphatically belonged to the first class'.⁴ House's devotion to the League cannot be questioned; but Cecil was wrong in supposing him to be without vanity; House achieved his influential position in the only way that he could -

¹F.O. 608/240, f.1607/1/1: notes on compulsory arbitration by Crowe, 9 Jan. 1919

²Cecil Diary, 9 Jan. 1919

³Ibid., 13 Jan. 1919; and: Robert Lansing, The Peace Negotiations (1st edn. Boston 1921), p.48 et seq.

⁴Visc. Cecil, A Great Experiment, p.63

as an intimate friend and aide of the President. His urbanity and charm won over Cecil and many other foreigners at the Conference; he lent a sympathetic ear when the President was inaccessible, and for this Cecil was grateful. He was a skilled compromiser, but his judgement fell short of that skill, and he sometimes compromised in matters too important for concession. Moreover, his diaries reveal his inflated opinion of himself, and are full of spiteful grumbling. When he lost favour with Wilson he consoled himself that the President was incompetent without him;¹ Wilson used him badly but House's querulous comments were not those of a large-minded man.

He had some imagination, but the drafting of the League 'Covenant' - as Wilson had dubbed the planned League Convention - was beyond him; what he had to say - as about compulsory arbitration - was pushed aside by Cecil himself. At the commission on the League he kept his mouth shut. His suggestions were those of a showman - dramatic challenges to the world leaders, magnificent buildings for the League organisations.² His mind could not go more deeply into the questions involved. He did spare Cecil some trouble in dealing with the touchy and inaccessible President; his contribution to the League went little further than that. He claimed later, however, that all the ideas on the League, other than the mandate scheme, had been embodied in his own and Wilson's wartime drafts; Cecil's contribution, he said, had been to request that the drafts

¹See: House Diary, xvi. 6 May 1919; 30 May 1919

²House Diary, xv. 30 Apr. 1919; 11 Apr. 1919

be put into legalistic form - to which he had given his assent.¹

House and Lansing accepted, on 9 January, the three resolutions which Cecil had proposed and which would establish the League as part of the Conference's agenda. To explain the circumstances under which Cecil worked in setting up the League, it will now be necessary to follow through the story of these resolutions and of the subsequent appointment of the commission on the League, and to describe the nature of the support he received from his own government.

The British League section, and afterwards, Wilson, revised Cecil's resolutions. The general functions of the League were stated in this to be: 'to promote international cooperation ... to provide safeguards against war'. The League was to meet in international conferences and have a permanent organisation to carry on business in the intervals between meetings. The League Convention was to be incorporated in the Peace Treaty and it was to be open to 'every civilized nation which can be relied on to promote its objects'.²

On 25 January, the resolutions were passed by the whole Conference of Allied and Associated States.³

The President wished to have the Covenant drawn up by a commission in two weeks⁴ - he was returning to the U.S. early in February, and

¹House Diary, 17 Oct. 1925

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 76, 81-82

³Ibid., i. 79

⁴Cecil Diary, 19 Jan. 1919

wanted to take the draft back with him to demonstrate the inauguration of a just peace to the American people.

To avoid delays through large numbers and cumbersome procedure, he proposed that the League 'Covenant' should be framed by an informal committee of the five great powers only; it should then be presented for final inspection to a larger conference of neutrals and Allies.¹

Cecil, too, wanted the main work to be done by the five great powers. With his League section, he drew up a plan whereby, after that stage, the smaller Allies would be consulted, and if their objections were serious, there would be a discussion by the whole conference. After that body had adopted the scheme, the neutrals and later the enemy powers would be invited to join. The neutrals, if they wished, might be allowed to offer suggestions earlier.² Cecil was always concerned that the neutrals, many of whom had drawn up League schemes should have a say in the framing of the Covenant.

Lloyd George and Premier Clemenceau of France, however, thought that it would be more tactful to allow the smaller Allies a place on the first committee.³ Wilson agreed; as a result the committee as set up by the Council of Ten, consisted of fifteen members - two representatives

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 84

²F.O. 608/243, f.1641/2/1.177, p.339: Cecil minute for Balfour and Lloyd George, 16 Jan. 1919

³D.H. Miller, Drafting, i.85

of each of the great powers, and one each for Belgium, Brazil, China, Portugal and Serbia. Subsequently as a result of small power pressure, representatives of Greece, Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Poland were added.¹

Clemenceau and Lloyd George did not act in this instance out of a wish to prevent the League Covenant being finished in time to go into the Peace Treaty. But neither man wanted his hands to be tied by its terms. As Cecil's diary shows, Lloyd George was against a detailed plan. He told Cecil on 31 January that he wished the League to be confined to a brief statement of principles and organisation.² He had not himself read the British drafts, and he used a commentary on them by his aide, Philip Kerr. Kerr thought there should be a minimum of paper obligations or the League would be unacceptable to the national legislatures of members. It should be an expanded version of the present conference, which could be regarded as the first session. 'If the existing conference negotiates a settlement which is just and satisfactory it will have the authority necessary to float its own continuance as the League of Nations', wrote Kerr. 'If it does not succeed in doing this, no other League of Nations is likely to do

¹Ibid., i.143-144

²Cecil Diary, 31 Jan. 1919

better'.¹

Cecil was utterly opposed to this scheme, and believed that Lloyd George was seeking, with the French, to postpone a League plan until after the Conference. Cecil knew that Clemenceau wanted the League kept in its place, though regarding it, at worst, as harmlessly unreal; Cecil was able to respect, though he regretted, the patriotism which led Clemenceau to take this line.² He was harsher about Lloyd George's view of the League. As he put it to Churchill in 1929:

'Ll.G. approved of it but never attempted to understand it, and indeed thought it of little importance except as a bargaining counter with the Americans'.³ Again, to Bonar Law, Cecil wrote late in 1919:

'... the P.M. in spite of his denials has never really taken the League seriously - indeed, I doubt if he can'.⁴ Cecil was constantly struck by Lloyd George's lack of enthusiasm for the League when he visited him during the Conference;⁵ and he was aware too of his growing dislike of Wilson and resentment of American power.⁶ In spite of this,

¹ Scottish Records Office, Lothian Papers, GD 40.17.54 pp.31-33: memo by Kerr for Lloyd George on British 20 Jan. draft League scheme

² Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p.53

³ Addit. MSS. 51073, f.114: Cecil to Churchill, 8 Jan. 1929

⁴ Beaverbrook Library, Bonar Law Papers, 98/5/19: Cecil to Bonar Law, 24 Dec. 1919

⁵ See: Cecil Diary, 4 Feb. 1919

⁶ CHE 28/16a: note (undated) by Lord R. Cecil on Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference, p.118; see Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918 - 1923, p. 118

Lloyd George gave Cecil the fullest freedom to speak for Britain about the question, and only twice made difficulties - apart from the criticisms of the League he made on 31 January. Cecil tried to appeal to Lloyd George's sympathies as far as he could; he avoided high-flown language and tended to stress the practical nature of the League - 'a real and commonsense scheme' was the way he described the League plan being prepared in February.¹

Meanwhile, the British League section continued work on their scheme; they sent the Americans a modified version of Cecil's plan of 17 December 1918, on 11 January.² The changes were partly made to appeal to the Americans. They tended to correct any appearance of exclusiveness.

The 17 December draft had said: 'Definitely untrustworthy and hostile states should be excluded e.g. Russia, should the Bolshevik Government remain in power'. The later draft omitted the reference to Russia, and continued instead: 'Otherwise, it is desirable not to be too rigid in scrutinising qualifications'. This accorded with Cecil's view that the League should not be simply a league of democracies. On the other hand, Cecil went against his personal convictions, and allowed those of Smuts and Wilson to prevail when he cut out the clause that had appeared in the earlier document: 'since the smaller powers

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/8: Cecil to Lloyd George, 7 Feb. 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 61-64. Miller gives the date: 14 Jan. 1919, but in F.O. 608/242, f.1639/1/1.6, the date of the document is 11 Jan. 1919

will in any case not exercise any considerable influence'. His own view was that the position of the small powers in the League should be commensurate with their power in the world.

The earlier document of 17 December had not stated that there should be a fixed period within which the conference or court, when settling a dispute, must arrive at a decision and before the termination of which there should be no recourse to war. The 'Draft Sketch' of 11 January stated the need for such a fixed period, although it did not specify its length. Such an idea had appeared in Cecil's original 1916 scheme. Cecil believed that the League's effectiveness depended on it being able to arrive at decisions relatively quickly and through a definite procedure.

The British League committee, Cecil, Hurst and Percy, meanwhile prepared a more detailed League plan for presentation to the Americans. This was completed on 16 January; it was based in its wording on the 11 January draft and on one by Noel-Baker. Percy had objected that it would make the League over-organised. His colleagues were not convinced.¹ However the plan was indeed excessively detailed, and its clumsiness diminished its impact.²

The functions of the League were outlined in Chapter one, Article one. 'Impressed by the horrors of the late war', the document began,

¹ Cecil Diary, 16 Jan. 1919; 17 Jan. 1919

² D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 106-116: 20 Jan. 1919. British draft, with notes on earlier, 16 Jan., draft

'and convinced that another war of the same kind would be productive of still greater disasters to humanity and civilisation, the High Contracting Parties unite in constituting a League of Nations'. By linking the current revulsion against war with the new international organisation in these opening words, Cecil was trying to give the League convention greater popular appeal. Strangely enough, Wilson never seems to have attempted this; his own preambles, inaugurating his cherished dream, used strictly legalistic and unrhetoical language.¹

The 16 January British draft scheme pronounced the aim of the League was to secure specific settlements for as many disputes as possible and to encourage international co-operation. Members were required to put the arms trade under League supervision; and they were to submit international problems like labour and economic conditions to commissions for study, and to authorise the League to make recommendations on the basis of their findings. Freedom of transit and just trade arrangements between members were also required. Most important, they were to undertake covenants for the prevention of war similar to those in the 17 December and 11 January drafts; they were also to protect each other from foreign aggression and to prevent the alteration, by force, of their boundaries - either those set up by the Peace Treaty or those existing at the time of it.

This was a less explicit obligation to go to war - if necessary - than was Wilson's 'territorial guarantee' article. But the undertaking

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 65, 98

to 'protect' members from aggression did go very far - further than Cecil was willing to go later; the explanation for this lay in his inclusion of a strong treaty revision article. When this was weakened later, he tried also to weaken the force of the 'territorial guarantee', because otherwise it would mean that the League would be committed permanently to an unjust status quo and the rule of law in international relations might be thereby discredited. The treaty revision article in the 16th January draft ran:

'If at any time it should appear that the boundaries of any State guaranteed by Article I (i), (ii), do not conform to the requirements of the situation, the League shall take the matter under consideration and may recommend to the parties affected, any modification which it may think necessary. If such recommendation is rejected by the parties affected, the States members of the League, shall, so far as the territory in question is concerned, cease to be under the obligation to protect the territory in question from the forcible aggression by other States, imposed upon them by the above provision'

In this draft, as in recent League drafts, it was recognised that most of the important business of the League would be conducted by the great powers meeting in conference, as opposed to the assembly of all the members. Because the smaller body could conduct business more quickly, this body had been referred to, somewhat loosely, as the 'Executive Council'. It must be emphasised that there was no intention either by Wilson or the British that this body should be an international executive distinct in function from the large conference of all the members; nor was there any suggestion that the large conference was to

be the legislature. Executive action - i.e. authorising sanctions - or legislative action - i.e. alteration of treaties - could be performed by either body equally. Smuts used the word 'executive' to describe the smaller conference¹ and Wilson adopted the word.² Cecil used it neither in the 11 January or 16 January drafts - in the latter he referred simply to the 'Council'.

He had always thought that this smaller conference should consist of the great powers only, or, he feared, it might be too large to be effective. Smuts, however, was insistent that some small powers should be admitted; he argued that the major Allied powers should not expose themselves to the charge that the League was a device for putting control of the world in their hands.³ They reached a compromise: the great powers should compose the council; additional members would be co-opted, when their interests were concerned.

The section on the settlement of disputes was derived directly from the 11 January draft; there was to be no compulsory arbitration; non-justiciable disputes were at first to be discussed, upon submission to the 'Chancellor' (head of secretariat) by the council. Great emphasis was placed on publicity in this draft, in accordance with Cecil's convictions: the Chancellor was to publish the relevant statements of the parties to the dispute. After settlement, the terms and explanations

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 45

²Ibid., ii. 67, 98

³Ibid., ii. 41; and: Cecil Diary, 13 Jan. 1919

would receive similar publicity. If the report of the council was reached unanimously - other than by the parties to the dispute, who would not vote - League members were bound not to go to war with a member who complied with its decisions. But no member who was party to a dispute would be bound to refrain from war unless it had been invited to attend the meeting. If the council failed to reach a unanimous report, the majority should publish a report indicating what they believed to be the facts and giving their recommendations. The intention of this majority report was to point a way towards a peaceful solution which might retrieve the situation, yet did not force a judgement on a member who did not accept it. These provisions did not deal with the case of a unanimous decision which neither party to the dispute could accept.

The 16 January draft contained a plan for a permanent international court of justice to which questions could be referred by the council or by the large conference of all the members. It might be asked for advisory opinions on cases pending before either body. The court's decision would have to be confirmed by the council's decision.

The other obligations not to resort to war were to be: no member was to make war on another without submitting a dispute to council, court or conference, and until they had reasonable time to give their decision (the plan said this must be limited, but did not give a time), or for three months after their decisions, awards or reports had been delivered. Whoever broke these obligations would be ipso facto at war

with all the other members of the League, who were bound to impose sanctions to restrict the covenant breaker - the severing of international communications with that state, including commercial and financial relations. To prevent the League's blockade and economic sanctions being hampered by legal restrictions like the Declaration of London, there was a clause exempting these operations from such limits. The clause was soon dropped after the 16 January draft was circulated, because it appeared to permit 'war crimes' in the name of the League.¹

Other articles dealt with the ad hoc admission of non-members who were parties to a dispute, and duties involved in League sanctions - i.e. right of passage by League troops through a member's territory. The League Convention was to override previous treaties inconsistent with it. No treaties which conflicted with it were to be made in the future. Nations applying to join were not required to have democratic governments. The League would decide in each case if a country could be relied on to keep its obligations, and if further conditions should be imposed.

Some of these clauses were added when the draft was revised on 19 January (20 January Draft); at this time, also, it listed the powers to be invited to join:- the present Allies, the European neutrals, the Latin-American countries - except those judged by the U.S. to be

¹F.O. 608/243.1641/1/2.886. p.9: Adml. Wemyss for Cecil, 28 Jan 1919 and comments; and: Lothian Papers GD 40.17.54, p.30: enclosure in letter from Cecil to Lloyd George, 29 Jan. 1919 (p.10)

unready for membership. The enemy states should be invited, when they had given proof of their acceptance of the League Convention and the general treaties of peace, and proof of their determination to abide by these. Russia, the document stated, could probably not be invited to adhere.

Significantly, there was no scheme for disarmament.

The British draft, after revision, was circulated for comment to members of the British Empire delegation. The draft had specified that the Dominions and India should have separate representation when a matter arose with which they were directly concerned. Both Doherty,¹ the Canadian legal representative, and Hughes,² in their comments wanted separate representation all the time for the Dominions. Cecil was against this; he was trying - though he failed - to avoid offending the United States delegates on this issue - they were very sensitive about any hint of the British Empire gaining control of the League. The Dominions anyway, he argued, should act in concert as much as possible, internationally, and not seek to be independent the whole time.

Hughes was afraid that the League would deprive nations of freedom of action - again he feared about interference with the 'White Australia policy' and the question of freedom of the seas. He disliked the hints at supra-national legislative and executive power, which, he said, was all the more significant for being undefined. He thought the

¹F.O. 608/243-f1641/1/2.1095, p.10: Doherty to Cecil 30 Jan. 1919

²F.O. 608/243-f1641/1/2.1289, p.43: Hughes to Cecil 2 Feb. 1919, enclosing memo 1 Feb. 1919 (p.44)

League should only exist for the expression of moral judgements and to facilitate international agreements. Cecil commented: '... if the whole of his views were carried out, the League would be reduced to the position of an International Debating Society and would soon die of anaemia - which is perhaps what he desires'.¹

Wilson, meanwhile, had been working on drafts of his own in Paris. He based his first draft, of 10 January, on his 'Magnolia' draft the previous summer;² it was centred round his idea that League members should mutually 'guarantee' each other's territorial integrity. He had been impressed by Smuts' draft - he thought it far closer to his ideas than what Cecil had drafted.³ He took on Smuts' plan for arms reduction: conscription and private manufacture of armaments were to be renounced by members; the Executive Council was to be charged with investigating how general arms reductions could be brought about - and also how large a military establishment it was reasonable for a power to have; these limits, when adopted, were not to be exceeded without the permission of the 'Body of Delegates' - as Wilson termed the larger conference of the League. This condition was to give rise to much worry about sovereign rights - not least from the British naval authorities. Moreover Wilson did not stress - as Smuts had done - that a general disarmament scheme was not practicable at the moment, though it could be planned.

¹ Ibid., p.42: comment on above by Cecil, undated

² D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 65-93

³ Wiseman Papers, Wiseman Diary, 19 Jan. 1919

He took on, too, the mandates plan. Like Smuts, he spoke of removing a mandate from a power and transferring it to another in the event of a breach of the terms laid down by the League.¹

There was to be compulsory arbitration in certain cases and the decision of the court was to be binding. Cases could also be submitted to the 'Executive Council' - but here the decision was not to be binding. Like Smuts, he laid down that the Council should consist of the great powers and two lesser ones - the latter by rota.

There was to be equality of treatment for racial and religious minorities.

This was revised in accordance with criticisms by David Hunter Miller, the American delegation's legal expert.² Miller's chief concern was that the Covenant should not violate the U.S. constitution. He was against the obligations inherent in the territorial guarantee article; these appeared to commit America in advance to making war, which was unconstitutional. It is remarkable that Wilson never faced this fact. On 19 August 1919, he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that it was moral obligation binding in conscience - not in law.³ At the Peace Conference, he did not even try to explain it in this unconvincing way. His aim was simply the establishment of a principle of mutual

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 32, 89

²Ibid., ii. 65-93, 96-105

³Speech quoted in Ferdinand Czernin, Versailles 1919, The Forces, Events and Personalities that Shaped the Treaty (Capricorn Book edn. 1965) p. 403

goodwill and responsibility; until his meetings with Miller and Cecil he allowed his ideas for machinery to be vague.

Miller disliked also the proviso that the guarantee of the territorial arrangements existing at the time of the treaty should be subject to modifications in accordance with the principles of nationality; he thought it would encourage irredentist disorder and his criticism stemmed also from an American constitutionalist's dislike of secessionism. However Wilson did not modify the guarantee article in the sense that Miller wished. But he did alter the ipso facto war article to meet Miller's objections that this, too, transgressed the rule that Congress must assent to every declaration of war. The covenant breaker in the new version would 'ipso facto be deemed to have committed an act of war against all the members of the League'.¹

Miller wanted an article safeguarding the Monroe doctrine, because he thought that otherwise the doctrine would have been abandoned under the provisions of the guarantee article.² Wilson did not meet Miller on this, but he met his wishes for more articles supporting the Fourteen Points: he added articles against religious and economic discrimination, and secret treaties, and on the freedom of the seas. As in his other drafts, Wilson laid down that the decisions of the large Conference and the Council were not to be binding - only the arbitral awards were to be backed by sanctions.

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 101

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 45-7; and ii. 70-71

Wilson was sent a copy of the British League draft, and a meeting between him and Cecil was arranged for 19 January. Cecil was apprehensive; he had gained the impression, from his failure until then to get Wilson's attention, that Wilson did not wish to see him - indeed, disliked him.¹ Other delegates had had no difficulty in gaining access to the President. But he had pressed particularly for a meeting as soon as possible because he was afraid that without Wilson's support the aims of the League would be lost sight of in the struggle over detail, and the project delayed by its opponents. In fact he was not much pleased with Wilson's draft when he saw it; it seemed to him a hybrid of the Smuts and Phillimore plan with few new ideas added. Nor was he personally attracted by the President at the 19 January meeting, when he visited his rooms in company with Smuts.² But he was impressed by his quick, business-like mind; his outlook appeared to be a broad one. On the whole, he found the President ready to accept minor amendments in discussing the drafts:

'I began by treating him with the utmost deference and got very little out of him. Then I began to press rather more strongly and found that answered much better. He is, if one may say so, a trifle of a bully, and must be dealt with firmly, though with the utmost courtesy and respect - not a very easy combination to hit off. He is also evidently a vain man, and still with an eye all the time on the American elections'

¹Wiseman Diary, 18 Jan. 1919

²Cecil Diary, 19 Jan. 1919

Wilson seemed to Cecil chiefly anxious that the League should be his own scheme nominally and did not in fact, mind if it were largely the product of others. Wilson, during the meeting - which lasted nearly three hours - constantly expressed the need for America and Britain to co-operate closely; he found the French and Italians difficult to deal with.

The following morning Cecil saw Lloyd George.¹ The Prime Minister thought that the commission to be set up to draft the League must work one out themselves and not simply return one based only on the President's. He drew attention to the President's proposal that the governing body of the League should consist of ambassadors. To this he objected, because it meant that the Dominions could not be represented separately. It also clashed with Lloyd George's view of a League, based on the wartime and postwar conferences of the Allies. Cecil agreed with Lloyd George on both points; but his own wish for the members to be represented by 'principals' came in his case from a desire to give the League status and effectiveness. He found it hard however to get Lloyd George to talk for long on the subject; once again he was struck by his lack of real interest.

Over the next few days, Cecil and his colleagues studied the Wilson second Paris draft to see whether it could be combined in one scheme with the British draft. He thought the Wilson plan badly

¹Ibid., 20 Jan. 1919

expressed and arranged¹; Wilson had a superstitious fancy for the number thirteen: he wanted thirteen articles, which meant that the rest of the articles had to be tacked onto the end as 'supplementary articles'.²

Cecil also had a number of discussions with Miller³, who was authorised, from 25 January, to go as far as possible to meet the British on the basis of the American draft. Together they compiled a provisional draft. Miller criticised Cecil's treaty revision article for the same reasons that he had given to Wilson, and added that the amendment of a treaty meant a new treaty, under the U.S. constitution; this meant fresh ratification, and the article did not allow for this. But Cecil insisted that treaties could not be made immutable, and an article providing for revision of boundaries was included.

Miller also wanted the British ipso facto war clause altered, as it had been in Wilson's draft; Cecil accepted this; thus, military sanctions would now require the subsequent decision of individual member states, though non-military sanctions would follow a breach of the Covenant automatically.

Cecil told Miller that he disliked Wilson's idea of having smaller powers on the council; he said the great powers should run the League, and that should be recognised frankly. They agreed, finally, that the Executive Council should consist of the great powers and any

¹Cecil Diary, 21 Jan. 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 40

³See Cecil Diary, 21 Jan. 1919; and: D.H. Miller, Drafting, i.52-64; and ibid. ii. 131-141

states they chose subsequently to elect. Cecil also explained that he would have to object to the representation of members at the League seat by ambassadors, because his government were concerned about the representation of the Dominions. They therefore agreed to use the phrase 'special representatives' instead. At Cecil's request, more importance was given to the office of Chancellor than in the Wilson drafts.

They agreed to include Wilson's 'territorial guarantee' - but modified so that instead of members undertaking to 'guarantee' territorial integrity, they were to 'respect and preserve' it. This was closer to the language of the British draft. But it can be seen that it did not lessen the obligation in Wilson's draft very much.

Clauses and articles were dropped where Wilson had repeated himself. Wilson's mandate article was reserved while the British Empire delegation were debating it. Also reserved were his articles on the protection of minorities - dealt with subsequently by the commission on New States - and those on economic equality, freedom of the seas, and on appeals from arbitration. Wilson thought that if an appeal against an arbitration award had been successful, the case should go to another arbitration court. Cecil wanted a permanent international court to take such cases; however, the permanent court, he explained to Miller, would not simply be an appeal court.¹ As he planned it, it would foster the rule of law in international relations. He quoted Pollard: 'It was the suppression of private war that fostered recourse to law'. The

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 61-64

conference's fixed moratorium and cooling off periods would have this effect; the provision compelling publicity as to the nature and grounds of all disputes would do this even more so. States would not withdraw from arbitration issues which ought to go through when they had the certainty of publicity before them.

He concluded: 'But the supremacy of law in England was only rapidly established after the Wars of the Roses, because there were already Courts of law in existence. At present there is no international Court. Only if a true Permanent Court is established will recourse to international law under the League become the normal procedure of disputes. A Permanent Court is the necessary basis of all legal development in international relations'. He cited the highest legal authority for saying that a permanent court was perfectly feasible and would administer justice with complete impartiality: '... it would remove the chief ground of objection to arbitration in the past'.

Cecil's ideas about the court were not incorporated in the Cecil-Miller draft; and all the changes made in that draft were tentative. There was no guarantee that they would be acceptable to Wilson. Moreover the new draft was roughly cast, and needed re-shaping to give it impact.

Cecil and Miller explained their points of difference to House,¹ on 27 January. Cecil was reassuring on the subject of freedom of the seas. His own plan was similar in form to Wilson's. However, he was concerned that England should be able to protect her supply routes and he envisaged

¹Cecil Diary, 27 Jan. 1919

different conditions in the convention on belligerent rights from those in the Wilson draft.¹ In fact, the subject of the article was not to be raised again in connection with the League. The question was left to naval experts and lawyers and was lost in the welter of Peace Conference business. House, on 27 January, again expressed the wish that there should be a general declaration against war in the League Covenant. Cecil sketched one for him but it was not bold enough for House.²

Cecil then explained that the most serious difference between the delegations was over mandates.

The British Dominions were opposed to the application of the mandate system to the former German colonies now in their hands. Smuts' plan of 16 December 1918, had proposed that the League, acting through mandatories, should supervise and assist former territories of the Austrian, Russian and Ottoman Empires which were deemed unable to stand on their own feet, unaided.³ Smuts had not mentioned the former German colonies, but Wilson, following his peace policy of no annexations in his Paris League drafts, added these to the list.⁴ Wilson's mandates plan, which he wished the Conference to accept, was that the League should

¹Lothian Papers GD.40.17.54, pp.29, 30: Wilson and Cecil's proposals on freedom of the seas

²Cecil Diary, 27 Jan. 1919

³D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 26

⁴Ibid., ii. 103-104

have strict control over the mandatory powers, who would have to account for their actions. The territories were to be protected from the liquor and arms trade; no troops were to be recruited there for overseas purposes; the principle of the 'open door' in commerce was to operate in those areas.

Australia had conquered, and wished to annex, German New Guinea; New Zealand, Samoa; South Africa, German South-West Africa. Australia and South Africa argued that the lands they had captured were so close geographically that it made sense to rule them directly - particularly since the populations were so primitive and sparse. Moreover, they felt these territories were their deserved reward for wartime sacrifices. Hughes said that New Guinea must be annexed for security reasons. He was alarmed by the clause in Wilson's paper which laid down that a mandatory would be replaced if the League judged it unsatisfactory. He felt the 'White Australia' policy might lead to League criticism of Australia's rule. Even worse, Japan might be given the mandate instead.

A British draft mandate convention, written by the Colonial section and more moderate than Wilson's, appeared on 24 January.¹ It distinguished between 'vested territories' - still in need of guidance - and 'assisted territories' which were almost ready for independence. It did not speak of the future independence of 'vested territories' nor of the replacement of an unsatisfactory mandatory. Wilson's draft had suggested that the planned League commission on mandates should examine

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 106

reports on the mandates and make recommendations, if it saw fit, to the League council; the British draft did not say this. It did stipulate that forts and native forces were not to be maintained except for policing. This draft still went too far for the Australians, while it was too weak for Wilson.¹

Cecil believed the mandate plan was ^avital necessity - first, because he believed that the rapid occupation of so many parts of the world by the victor powers meant that some form of regulation of the terms of occupation were essential. Second, he thought that the new system would raise the standard of foreign colonial administration to nearer the British level - he was thinking here of the French in particular. His view was that it was a development of the ideas embodied in the Berlin Act of 1885 - securing free trade and native welfare in the Congo basin - for which his father had been partly responsible.² Far from being a reward for wartime sacrifices, he regarded it as a heavy responsibility. Thirdly, he believed that it would bring credit to the League and strengthen its position. Fourthly, he hoped that it would help to draw the Americans into the Old World, if they could be persuaded to take on mandatory duties - in Liberia, preferably.³ Fifthly he did not want a breach with America over annexations by the Dominions.

He was extremely displeased therefore when Lloyd George supported the Dominions' stand for annexation at the Council of Ten, on 24 January.⁴

¹Cecil Diary, 27 Jan. 1919

²CHE 6/19: Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 6 Feb. 1919

³Cecil Diary, 29 Jan. 1919

⁴Ibid., 25 Jan. 1919

Lloyd George argued that the natives would get a better deal by being in the British Empire - more resources would be available to them; and annexation saved the inconvenience of customs barriers.¹ The Dominions continued to resist the idea at the Council of Ten meeting on 27 January. On 28 January, Cecil, agitated by feeling that the negotiations were going on 'practically again in the atmosphere of the Congress of Vienna' sent notes to Balfour and Lloyd George urging them not to back annexation. He argued that if the Dominions had their way, France and Japan could not be denied the right to annex territory.² The Americans were very alarmed about the Japanese control of North Pacific islands which they had seized from Germany. He asked Lloyd George for an audience before making his final decision. He found he was unwilling to put pressure on the Dominions though professing that he favoured the mandate system. He was favourably impressed by the British convention on mandates which Cecil showed him; he had not looked at it before, though it had been available at the time of the second discussion of mandates at the Council of Ten.³ Balfour was irritated by Cecil's note, which told him of the serious responsibility resting on his shoulders; but on a drive with Cecil he became more amenable.⁴

Cecil attended a meeting of the British Empire delegation that afternoon. Hughes, with Massey, the Premier of New Zealand, opposed

¹Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. Paris Peace Conference 1919, iii. (Dept. of State Publication 1958), 719-20. (Cited hereafter as 'F.R.P.C. 1919, iii' etc.)

²Cecil Diary, 28 Jan. 1919

³Ibid., 28 Jan. 1919

⁴Ibid.

the creation of any mandate system whatsoever. Cecil explained his views, backed by Balfour. Montagu, the Secretary for India, afterwards wrote: 'Anyone who heard Lord Robert Cecil this afternoon and anyone who heard Mr. Hughes's answer could only realise that Australia has no case except this, that she is there, and intends to remain there'.¹

Cecil summed up his views on Hughes's objections in a memorandum:² First, annexation would not increase security because defence arrangements were permitted under the mandate plan. Secondly, he gathered that Hughes disliked the open door plan because he wished to reserve the coasting trade between German New Guinea and Australia to Australia exclusively. Cecil pointed out that Britain was likely to be the only serious rival in those parts, and Australia could secure an agreement about that; Japan he believed would only operate in areas too hot and humid for white traders.

Cecil also pointed out that even if it were assumed that Hughes was right about security, the same was true about security for Japan in the mandates which she was to administer, and this should reassure the Australians. He said Hughes's arguments did not depend on particular arguments: 'He is against the mandatory system altogether, at any rate as applied to any territory in which Australia has any interest'.

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/40/2/34: Montagu to Lloyd George, 28 Jan. 1919

²CHE 75/45-7: memo by Cecil, 29 Jan. 1919 (not circulated)

Finally he countered the argument that the mandate system was unsafe because unknown:

'This is the whole point. If we are going on with exactly the same international system as before the last war, then his position is unassailable. But if it has become essential as I think to try & make a change in our international organisation, it would be surely deplorable if owing to the fear of novelty, a British statesman should succeed in wrecking an essential part of the new proposals'

After the meeting on 28 January, Smuts invited Cecil to his rooms to work out a compromise acceptable to America and the Dominions.¹ The Smuts formula played down the discretionary role of the League in replacing a mandatory, though it retained the principle of League supervision.² It included a third category of mandate - those regions which would be best administered as an integral portion of the mandatory, because sparsely populated and geographically close. This plan was approved by Lloyd George and proved acceptable to the British Empire Delegation. Hughes let it pass, claiming afterwards that he did not really know what had been decided.³ There was no opposition to the new plan at the Council of Ten.

Cecil had been displeased with the conduct of President Wilson, also, over this affair. He felt that Wilson had mismanaged his case, had put forward untenable proposals and did not appear to know the

¹Cecil Diary, 28 Jan. 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 109-110

³Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference, p.17

details of the mandate plan.¹ Wilson would not say whether he would agree even that Australia should have the mandate of German New Guinea, and he maintained that he would treat the mandate plan agreed on as a provisional one.² Cecil had been ready to discuss the matter with him earlier, but Wilson had not been willing to do so; this, Cecil believed, made the wrangles at the Council of ten inevitable.³ Wilson also did not commit himself about America taking a mandate anywhere, though he hinted that it might be possible.⁴ This idea was not popular with many members of the U.S. delegation - or in the U.S.A. itself, and it subsequently came to nothing.

The time had come for a definite settlement on the whole League scheme with Wilson. A meeting between him and Cecil was arranged for 31 January. Cecil consulted Lloyd George beforehand, but found him unhelpful.⁵ After dinner, Cecil went to House's rooms at the Crillon, determined to confront Wilson with the points at issue, and on which he wished to have his way. He found to his disappointment that Wilson had not read the Cecil-Miller redraft, and had only an incomplete knowledge of the recent discussions on the League.⁶

Wilson and Cecil came to an agreement about the composition of the Council: any minor power whose interests were affected would

¹Cecil Diary, 29 Jan. 1919

²F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 786-789

³Cecil Diary, 29 Jan. 1919

⁴F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 807

⁵Cecil Diary, 31 Jan. 1919

⁶Ibid., 31 Jan. 1919

have ad hoc membership; otherwise it would consist of the great powers only; this was Cecil's 16 January plan. The President also consented to Cecil's plan whereby, in some cases, business should be transferred from the 'Executive Council' to the conference of the whole League. But the President insisted that the members of the League be represented by ambassadors.¹ Cecil got his way over the arbitration article; the provisions on appeal were dropped and one on a permanent court was to go in.² They decided that Miller and Hurst should draw up a draft based on this talk, to try and reconcile the American and British views.

Hurst and Miller had a draft in print by 2 February.³ A general statement of principles based on the compromise mandate convention was included. The most important change was in the 'territorial guarantee' article. Hurst, who had been given discretion to act by Cecil, proposed to cut the paragraph on revision of treaties from the text. Miller readily agreed. It is not recorded why Cecil permitted Hurst to give way. Wilson himself had been in favour of the idea. Miller records that Wilson made no comment on the change when he read the new draft, and this Miller took as consent; but it seems more a plausible explanation that as Wilson later rejected the Hurst-Miller draft in toto, he did not trouble to criticise in detail. It does indicate Wilson's insufficient grasp of the implications of these draft schemes he helped to prepare. Thus Cecil's treaty revision idea was dropped from what was to be

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 65

²Ibid., i. 67

³Ibid., i. 68-71; and ii. 231-7

the working plan of the League commission at Paris.

Wilson had used the phrase 'Executive Council' to describe the small conference. This had been adopted in the various amalgamations of the British and American drafts, without Cecil apparently objecting - indeed on one occasion he pointed out that the word 'Executive' had been left out. The Hurst-Miller draft also used the phrase. Wilson's phrase 'Body of Delegates' was used for the whole conference of the League. The document referred to the parties to the Covenant in the Treaty as the 'High Contracting Parties'. Finally, to meet Wilson's wishes, Cecil had earlier agreed to a disarmament article but in the Hurst-Miller draft, it was reduced to a pious wish; duties of enquiry into the possible reduction of armaments were laid upon the Council.

On the evening of 2 February, Wilson suddenly announced that he wished to scrap the Hurst-Miller draft - it had no 'warmth and colour'. House agreed with him.¹ The President drew up a new document² to be the working draft for the Commission on the League, which was to meet the next day. It was based on his second Paris draft. In it he ignored his agreement with Cecil to drop the arbitration procedure provisions, and to have lesser powers on the council as ad hoc members only. He rewrote the mandate article, keeping to Smuts' compromise formula, but stressing the League's duties towards the mandated territories, and its right to intervene. This new draft was printed on the morning of 3 February.

¹House Diary, xv. 3 Feb. 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i.72-73, ii.145-154

Thus the meeting between Wilson and Cecil, which House described as having brought difficulties about the League almost to vanishing point¹ was completed discounted by the President.

Cecil was furious; Wiseman, who had spoken with him, warned House that it would be unwise to have him in that state of mind at the League Commission meeting that afternoon, and asked House to arrange a meeting between Cecil and Wilson beforehand.² House telephoned Wilson to tell him that it was vital not to estrange Cecil - the one man in touch with the British government who really had the interests of the League at heart.³ The President agreed to see Cecil. For the first few minutes the tension was powerful: Wilson was nervous, and Cecil did not conceal his disappointment. He said it would mean delaying the work with long and detailed amendments.⁴ Finally the President 'who was a little apologetic in manner', agreed to accept the Hurst-Miller draft, though he reserved the right to clothe it in flesh and blood, as he put it. Cecil's opinion of Wilson was not improved by this episode; this was an example of the President's tenacity of mind and incapacity for co-operation, he observed in his diary - it was the result of a long period of autocratic power. Wilson apparently did not seem to think it irregular to tear up a draft to which he had jointly agreed. Moreover, he seemed surprised at Cecil's resentment, and not at all interested to

¹House Diary, xv. 31 Jan. 1919

²Ibid., 3 Feb. 1919

³Ibid.

⁴Cecil Diary, 3 Feb. 1919

hear that Miller had gone without sleep for two nights to draft and re-draft the paper.

Cecil made some attempts to consult with the French delegation during the period before the League commission met. The French approach was quite different from that of Britain or the U.S.A.¹ They wished the League to be a means of securing the results of the war; hence there would be no question of Germany belonging to it until she had carried out the terms of the Peace Treaty and paid reparations, as M. Pichon, the French foreign minister, assured the Chamber of Deputies in December.² Clemenceau was sceptical but had agreed that the League should be attempted. However the only kind of League plan which interested him was one which would guarantee Anglo-American aid for France in a future defensive war against Germany. The French League draft, with its international army and supra-national powers was designed to achieve such a purpose.

Cecil's official and social contacts with the French at this time showed that their feeling about the League was at best usually only a very reserved enthusiasm; more often, they did not believe in it, and they hated Wilson's ideals. This depressed and angered Cecil.³

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 238-246

²The Times, 24 Dec. 1918, p.6, col.2

³Cecil Diary, 8 Jan., 22 Jan., 27 Jan. 1919

On 9 January, he went to see Léon Bourgeois, the chairman of the committee who had drawn up the League draft.¹ He was an elderly international lawyer who had been prime minister of France and a Hague Court judge. He did not have his colleagues' full support for his scheme, and even at that date did not know if he was to be France's League delegate. Cecil who found him voluble about his project, though physically feeble, hoped that he would be useful, but was disappointed, and in fact saw little of him until the meetings of the League Commission. He met him on 18 January and argued with him about compulsory arbitration which Bourgeois defended passionately.² Cecil thought him 'French, systematic and unpractical'. Bored by Bourgeois's interminable speech at the Plenary Conference on 25 January, he scribbled a note to Balfour: 'If this old humguffin is as lengthy as this on the Commission for the League of Nations, he will, as one of the American correspondents said, "destroy the whole show".' Balfour passed Cecil's note to Lloyd George, who said: 'That is no doubt why Clemenceau put him on'.³

Towards the end of January, Cecil communicated some of the drafted plans to Bourgeois through Col. House but did not have personal contact until 1 February, when Bourgeois again pressed for a general statement on obligatory arbitration, and also for having representatives

¹Ibid., 9 Jan. 1919

²Butler Library of Columbia University, James T. Shotwell Collection, George Louis Beer Diary, 18 Jan. 1919

³Cecil Diary, 25 Jan. 1919

of the smaller powers on the executive council.¹ Otherwise Cecil was satisfied with the meeting.

The Americans were equally discouraged by Bourgeois. House and Cecil discussed how they could avoid having him as chairman of the League commission while Wilson was away in the U.S.A. House recorded that Cecil's objection to Bourgeois: 'is the objection we all have to him and that is his verbosity and utter inability to conduct meetings expeditiously'.² Thus the Americans and British lost faith in the French, and as a result the French plan was pushed aside and the League commission working plan was an Anglo-American document. This meant that Wilson and Cecil were in a controlling position at the meetings; they gave the explanations; the French enquired, suggested and complained. Though they had lost the initiative, they clung tenaciously to their ideas and fought for them, albeit with little success, until the close of the League commission's sessions.

The French government's colonial policy and attitude towards mandates also disturbed Cecil. The discussions at the Council of Ten revealed that Clemenceau mistrusted the mandates plan and thought it unworkable; he disliked the idea of a League which laid down laws

¹Cecil Diary, 1 Feb. 1919

²House Diary, xv. 30 Jan. 1919

about the administration of these regions.¹ France's colonial minister, Henri Simon, was afraid that the new system might erode the basis of power in existing colonies.² Moreover, Cecil thought that France's determination to stay in control of areas historically sacred to the Arabs - in Syria - in particular Damascus, would be dangerous to future peace; the Arabs, Colonel Lawrence had warned, would go to war with the French if they received a mandate there.³ Cecil thought the French had a right to some administrative responsibility somewhere in the Near East; he suggested Constantinople.⁴ It was intended, in the mandates plan finally accepted, that areas such as Syria should be largely self-governing. The duties of the mandatory powers would be concerned with affording such protection from internal and external trouble as would give mandated territories the stability to stand on their feet. French rule, he feared, would mean economic exploitation and less independence for the Arabs. Further, if the French did not fulfil their duties, they would discredit the League.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter it had proved impossible to persuade the French to abandon the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and Lloyd George had chosen not to insist on this, as part of a policy of gaining French support for certain British demands at the Conference. Cecil

¹F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 768-769

²Ibid., p.760

³Cecil Diary, 28 Jan. 1919

⁴Ibid., 4 Feb. 1919

tried repeatedly to point out the dangers to him. He set out his views in a memorandum of 4 February.¹ In this he reminded the Prime Minister that he was bound by his speech to the trades unions of the previous year not to impose on the Arabs any government they did not desire. British policy had indicated that the government wished the Arabs to have Damascus in full sovereignty, by flying the Arab flag there, and insisting 'quite rightly' that the Arab ruler Feisal be treated as a belligerent. Feisal had pointed out, and the British knew, that it was impossible to run an Arab country without Damascus, as it was the chief market in that region. To fail to give it to Feisal would not be actually a breach of faith, but it would disrupt hopes that had been raised. The British would be hampered by French intrigues if they tried to help Feisal in other ways; and in Palestine, they would be unpleasant neighbours. Cecil thought that the French might be allowed a mandate in Lebanon, on the coast, as they had done something to develop the area round Beirut in the past, but it would be preferable to let that area be independent and give the French Constantinople instead. It would suit them better and cost less to govern. Lloyd George was impressed by these arguments which he himself set out in a memorandum after reading Cecil's paper.² However this brought about no change in French intentions. Cecil was preoccupied with other matters during the weeks that followed, and did not raise the question until after the

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/4: memo by Cecil for Lloyd George, 4 Feb. 1919

²Cecil Diary, 5 Feb. 1919

League commission had finished their draft Covenant.

Cecil had only a few talks with representatives of other Allies about the League. He found willingness to help, but some ignorance of what was involved.¹ The greatest encouragement he received was from Premier Venizelos of Greece,² who agreed with Cecil's view that the great powers should have general direction of the League, and that, though disarmament should be an aim, there should be no attempt to enforce it until international confidence was restored. He was less encouraged by Hymans, the Belgian Minister of foreign affairs,³ whom he thought sceptical. Vesnitch,⁴ the Serbian plenipotentiary who was to sit on the commission, struck him as evasive and 'likely to be tiresome'.

He talked a little with neutrals at this time. He took note of a request by Sweden⁵ that the neutrals should be allowed to suggest their views before the Covenant was finally settled.

¹Cecil Diary, 24 Jan; 1 Feb. 1919

²Ibid., 12 Jan. 1919

³Ibid., 29 Jan. 1919

⁴Ibid., 1 Feb. 1919

⁵Ibid., 28 Jan. 1919

Chapter Seven

The First Draft of the League Covenant

February 1919

On the afternoon of 3 February, the drafting of the Covenant reached its next stage - that of review by the commission of the five great powers and five - later nine - lesser allies. Cecil later wrote of the commission's work: 'This story is set out in great detail by Hunter Miller. But I'm not sure if he has succeeded in giving an adequate impression of its prodigiously concentrated work - in some respects amateurish, but lit up by genuine conviction and even enthusiasm'.¹

The U.S.A. were represented by Wilson and House, Great Britain by Cecil and Smuts.² Smuts had asked Cecil to take the major share of this work³ and effectively, Cecil was the only British delegate who had an important influence - though he was sometimes a mouthpiece for British Empire delegation views which were not his own. M. Bourgeois and M. Larnaude - dean of the Faculty of Law at Paris - represented France, Premier Orlando and Senator Scialoja Italy; Baron Makino and Viscount Chinda, both diplomats, Japan; M. Hymans, Belgium; Senator Epitacio Pessoa, Brazil; China was represented by V.K. Wellington Koo,

¹Addit. MSS. 51073, f.113: Cecil to Churchill, 8 Jan. 1929

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 229-230

³Cecil Diary, 31 Jan. 1919

her minister at Washington; Portugal by the diplomat Jayme Batalha Reis, and Serbia by Vesnitch, her plenipotentiary at Paris.

The Hurst-Miller draft was used as the basis of the discussions which were so intensive that a draft covenant for approval by Plenary Conference was available after ten meetings, ending on 13 February - as Wilson had hoped. The commission was then adjourned; it met again to revise the Covenant on 22 March. The commission discussed only the League and did not concern itself with other aspects of the peace negotiations. Wilson dominated the meetings; whenever he pressed for a clause it was always passed.¹ Tact and determination gave Cecil, also, a commanding position.

According to Miller:

'Lord Robert Cecil had also great influence upon the meetings. Not only his views but his manner were obviously those of a statesman of long experience. His patience and his willingness to listen to argument gave his statements in reply great and even convincing weight'²

Cecil stated his views with authority. He answered many questions, but unlike Wilson³ and Bourgeois, he spoke briefly.

House regretted the stress on detail rather than on League spirit, at these meetings, but was enthusiastic about the work done and was proud that:

¹Cecil Diary, 26 March 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 126

³See House Diary, 13 Feb. 1919

'Practically everything originates from our end of the table; that is, with Lord Robert Cecil and the President, I acting as advisor'¹

Cecil was also pleased with the final results of these talks; but found much of the discussion tedious and dispiriting while it was going on:

'I cannot say I am impressed by the work we are turning out. I cannot share A.J.B.'s enthusiasm for the President. He is to me very unattractive - almost repellent but an able man...'²

He thought Wilson hard and vain with an eye for effect. He suspected him of being less idealistic than he pretended to be. (A criticism which he was subsequently to retract).

'The President is exceedingly courteous to me and I think listens to me more than he does to any other members of the Commission; also in 99 cases out of 100, we are agreed, but all the same, I do not like him'³

The draft Covenant was presented to the Plenary Conference

¹Ibid., 7 Feb. 1919

²CHE 6/18: Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 7 Feb. 1919

³Cecil Diary, 6 Feb. 1919

on 14 February¹ - not at this stage to be passed by that body, but in order to bring the attention of the world to the creation of a League. Cecil was keen that there should be no delay in giving the draft this publicity.²

What did the draft contain? First, the preamble declared the aim of the League of Nations to be the promotion of international co-operation and peace through acceptance of covenants not to resort to war, by open and honourable relations between members, and by the establishment of the rule of law in international relations. All this was in line with Cecil's thinking, though he would have preferred it to have been more dramatically put.

The League members were to meet in two conferences - the Executive Council and the Body of Delegates - regularly, and in emergencies. Their functions were the same - but in fact most of the work would be dealt with by the Executive Council because it could work faster, and its membership corresponded more with the realities of power, in the world. Cecil himself was anxious that the Body of Delegates should not come to take over the tasks more appropriate to the Executive Council, and was against the idea that it should meet as often as the smaller body.³

¹F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 208-239

²Cecil Diary, 13 Feb. 1919

³D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 145

The Executive Council was to consist of the representatives of Britain, France, Japan, Italy and the U.S.A., and four lesser powers by rota. The decision to have four smaller powers on the Council was the result of pressure from the lesser Allies. It had been strongly opposed by Cecil. He would have preferred a Council of great powers only. He was against the idea of basing the League's constitution on any notion of the equality of the member nations. If all powers in the League were to be treated on an equal basis, he said, the council would have to be elected by all the members of the League and this might lead to a greater power being voted out by the lesser ones.¹ Moreover, he said, the drafters of the plan had started out with the idea that the Council should be small; this was important because it would be difficult for members to accept anything but the unanimous decisions of the council. If the council was bigger, it might be necessary, in the interests of speed, to take a majority decision. This could mean that a greater power was dragged along by a lesser power.² He also feared that an enlargement of the Council might lead to a conflict between the great and lesser powers as such - which had not happened before, but which would clearly defeat the ideal of co-operation

¹Ibid., i.146

²Ibid., i.147

which should animate the League.¹ He encountered opposition from many of the commission - in particular from Bourgeois who said he feared that the great powers would tend to go for peace at any price rather than one based on justice. He feared a sell-out at France's expense.² Hymans said that Cecil's plan would give the lesser powers no confidence in the Council.³ The Americans, in spite of Wilson's earlier plan to have four minor powers on the council, tended to side with Cecil in these discussions.⁴

Hymans wanted five lesser powers to be represented; moreover he wanted provision for further expansion of that body; some of the lesser powers, he said, would develop into great powers with automatic membership; other smaller powers would be added to balance these.⁵ Vesnitch proposed that four lesser powers should have membership of the Council. Cecil said it was hard to say whether two was better than five or four better than three; but the League would stand more chance of success if it attempted too little rather than too much. He preferred therefore to be prudent and to say two. If the Covenant had a provision for amendment this could be altered.⁶ Hymans accused him of proposing a Holy Alliance;⁷ though he had himself avoided answering when Cecil asked him if he contemplated letting Germany come onto the Council as a great power.⁸

Cecil was very angry.⁹ He said that there seemed to be a curious

¹Ibid., i. 148

²Ibid., 147-148

³Ibid., i. 147

⁴Ibid., i. 148 & i.146

⁵Ibid., i. 159

⁶Ibid., i. 160

⁷Ibid., i. 161

⁸Ibid., i. 159

⁹Ibid., i. 162

misapprehension that the Council was the only organ of settlement in the League. It should be a small group to reach decisions quickly; but matters could always be referred to the Body of Delegates. The view that his plan would create a Holy Alliance was wholly false, and such distrust came badly from Belgium. Whatever the Constitution, the real security of the small powers must lie in the sense of justice of the greater powers, who, through their position, inevitably decided things. What mattered, therefore, was the kind of council that would make the best impression and most readily be adopted by the majority of countries; in his view it would be a Council that seemed likely to be effective. He thought that in view of the differences of opinion they should pass the rest of the article and leave the Council numbers to be decided later. The Commissioners agreed to do this. Afterwards the Americans assured him that he had done right in speaking so strongly; they were exasperated by the endless abstract justice that had been forced on them at the meeting.

Cecil complained, in his diary:

'It is curious how foreigners perpetually harp on principle and rights and other abstractions, whereas the Americans and still more the British are only considering what will give the best chance to the League of working properly...'¹

On 13 February, the final decision to have four non-permanent minor powers by rota was decided. Cecil said that in his view the form of the article as regards the future expansion of the Council should not be fixed; it would become unwieldly if it grew in the future and the League's work would be handicapped.²

¹Cecil Diary, 4 Feb. 1919 - this entry properly belongs to 5 Feb.

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 301-302

For a recommendation of either conference to have binding force, it was assumed by the League Commission that voting must be unanimous - the parties to the dispute not voting - except over procedure. The unanimity rule had not, however, been laid down in the text. Cecil himself had declared that it went without saying;¹ however, he took the trouble to stress it at the Plenary Conference of 14 February; there had been a careful effort by the Commissioners to avoid infringement of national sovereignty, he said; no state need feel oppressed by a decision by the League conferences, because all such decisions must be arrived at un-animously.²

It had emerged during the discussions of this matter that Wilson himself was far from clear about these very important details. His pre-occupation with other important Peace Conference work explains his somewhat sketchy knowledge of drafting details, but in assessing his role as pilot of the Covenant, this vagueness of his should be remembered. His force and authority at the meetings shaped the Covenant, but he had a very much less definite scheme in his head than Cecil or Bourgeois. Everything for him was subordinate to his 'territorial guarantee' article; because of it, he argued on one occasion, it was hard to conceive of any injustice that might be done to the smaller powers by having only two representatives on the Executive Council.³

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 235

²F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 216-217

³D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 161-162

In the completed draft, no decision had been taken about where the seat of the League was to be. Nor had the name of the first secretary-general - as the Chancellor was now to be called - been chosen. The change of title did not much alter the function of this officer, but it emphasised his role as head of the secretariat, rather than giving the impression of an independent elder statesman in charge of a supra-national organisation. Venizelos had been unwilling to take on the office of Chancellor and partly because of the absence of a suitable figure of international standing to replace him, Cecil had accepted the change.¹

The Allied signatories to the Treaty - the 'High Contracting Powers' (exclusive of the enemy) - were automatically to be members of the League.² States who wished for subsequent admission had to be 'fully self-governing countries, including Dominions and Colonies'. Cecil did not much care for the use of the words 'self-governing' because of the impression of exclusiveness it gave.³ But as Wilson had met British wishes about admitting the Dominions by not insisting that ambassadors should be the delegates in the League - and India, for which Cecil himself felt that there was no very defensible case as far as admission was concerned,⁴ he did not quibble about terms used.⁵ Admission would require the assent of not less than two thirds of the body of delegates.

¹Visc. Cecil, A Great Experiment, p. 89

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 329

³Ibid., i. 164-165

⁴F.O. 608/241, f.1627 2/1.620, p. 254: note by Cecil, undated, on memo by Sinha, 22 Jan. 1919

⁵D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 167

At Bourgeois' request, prospective members were to be required to give effective guarantees of their intention to observe their international obligations; to the French this meant that the Germans must have fulfilled the terms of the Peace Treaty.¹ Cecil accepted that internal instability might be an argument against immediate admission of a country - i.e. Russia - but he resisted any argument for exclusion based on wartime alignments or war guilt (he had resisted mention of responsibility for the war in the preamble).² Moreover, in order to prevent the impression among neutrals that the Covenant created a Holy Alliance, he suggested that a protocol should be added to the Covenant containing the names of the non-signatory powers who would be invited to join immediately. Cecil stressed that this would not mean that the neutrals would be invited to join in the Conference work, as the French feared. And he stressed, too, that no distinction should be made between 'egotist' neutrals and those who retained Allied approval during the war.³ Cecil was keen that the League should start on a new basis, unconnected with past alignments or past practice; for this reason he consistently opposed any references to the Hague Conferences of the past.⁴ The League should not be associated with the prejudices of the war or the failure of the Hague peace organisation, he thought.

A disarmament article stated the principle of reducing arms to as low a level as possible consistent with national safety; it required

¹See: D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 260

²Ibid., i. 225; and ii. 298-299

³Ibid., i. 236-240

⁴Ibid., ii. 299

the Executive Council to make recommendations to the member governments on what they considered to be a reasonable military establishment. Owing to French objections, nothing was said about conscription.¹ The council was to take into account the circumstances and geographical situation of each state. It was laid down that 'these limits, when adopted, shall not be exceeded without permission of the Executive Council'. In general it deplored private manufacture of arms, and promoted frank exchange of information on military programmes. For Cecil it was a statement of a principle which he strongly approved. But he still doubted whether it could be put into action. In the Covenant the Americans were trying to make the minimum possible inroads into sovereignty, and the security provisions had been cut down; the Commissioners were therefore obliged to cut down the disarmament provisions. Cecil supported this policy. The French however were ready for major inroads, claiming that their public opinion supported them in this. France was more concerned about security than sovereignty after the war. Effectively Bourgeois wanted an international army - a permanent military organisation to preserve world peace - as well as international control of troops and armaments. Troop numbers, he thought, should be reduced according to relative strengths and vulnerabilities; France's own frontier problems were particularly in his mind in this context. A minimum quota of troops would be maintained for League use by the members. Such a requirement, Cecil pointed out, would be quite unacceptable in England.² He warned the

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 264

²Ibid., ii. 290-297

French delegates that the League would be destroyed if they introduced clauses unacceptable to the other powers; and if that happened France would lose every friend she had.¹ Partly at his suggestion and to meet French anxieties, a separate article was drawn up which set up a commission to advise on the preparation of military action when need arose, instead of the French plan for a staff planning strategy in advance. The French were not satisfied, and raised the matter repeatedly; Bourgeois did so at the Plenary Conference on 14 February in what Cecil described as a 'dismal' speech:

'The French are to me quite amazing. They seem to be elaborately and laboriously engaged in destroying the last remnants of sympathy felt for them by the Americans, and doing so without getting any real tangible result in return'²

Article Ten, the 'territorial guarantee' - Wilson's key article - was no longer, in the 14 February draft, an undertaking to go to war if necessary whenever the territorial integrity of a country was violated. Cecil had objected to the idea that members were bound to 'preserve' each others' territorial integrity and political independence: against external aggression.³ This was he said an obligation to go to war if it meant anything.⁴ He and Smuts doubted whether the Dominions would

¹Cecil Diary, 11 Feb. 1919

²Ibid., 14 Feb. 1919

³Ibid., 6 Feb. 1919; and: D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 264

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 168

be ready to go to war on behalf of Bohemia, for example.¹ He objected to a measure which he believed could not be carried out literally and in all respects²; and he knew that it conflicted with the U.S. constitution which required the consent of Congress for each individual declaration of war. The phrase was not cut out, but owing to Cecil's pressure the Executive Council was given discretion to decide whether to do anything at all in given circumstances.³ This did not worry Wilson much, as he really wanted to set up a moral obligation; but the French who had regarded the earlier article as a way of getting Anglo-American aid automatically if attacked by Germany, did not like this weaker formula.

Cecil had tried to get a treaty revision clause written into the article; the guarantee would be:

'Subject, however, to provision being made by the body of delegates for the periodic revision of treaties which have become obsolete and of International conditions, the continuance of which may endanger the Peace of the world'⁴

Wilson did not think this could go through the Senate and it was not adopted. However Cecil introduced the revision idea later, as a separate article, without the words connecting it with Article Ten, but otherwise identical.

¹Cecil Diary, 6 Feb. 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 169

³Ibid., i. 169

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 550; Ibid., i. 170

The same constitutional objections were made; Miller pressed them on Wilson. Cecil defended the article on the ground that revision could only take place if there was a unanimous vote. In the end Wilson met him by suggesting instead a formula by Miller. This laid down that the Body of Delegates should only make recommendations, not decisions, about periodic revision of 'inapplicable' treaties.¹ This made the article very feeble and was far from satisfying Cecil, but it was accepted in that form.

The obligations of the members were listed in article twelve. Members were not to go to war without submitting questions, insoluble by normal diplomacy, to arbitration, or enquiry by the Council, and until three months after the award or recommendation by the court or council. Thereafter they were bound not to go to war with any country complying with the recommendation. The Executive Council had to make a recommendation in six months and the arbitrators in reasonable time. Cecil had asked for these times to be stated, in accordance with British ideas.² The arbitration article stressed the non-universal nature of the obligation to arbitrate; the parties to the dispute were to approve the arbitrators, if there was not already a stipulation about this in an existing arbitration agreement between them; Cecil had always been anxious to bring other arbitration agreements under the League, and had pressed this point on the commission.³ The members were to agree to carry out any award given

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 202-203; and: Ibid., ii. 288-289

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 173-174

³Ibid., i. 174-175

(it should here be stressed that an arbitration court of its nature has to find an award in all cases and can therefore do so by majority vote). The Executive Council was empowered to propose measures if a country failed to carry out an award.

In the 14 February Covenant, the Executive Council was to formulate plans for a permanent international court, which would hear cases deemed by the parties . . . suitable for arbitration under the arbitration article. No attempt was made in this draft Covenant to lay down its constitution.

Under article fifteen, dealing with the procedure of the Executive Council, if that body reached a unanimous decision on a dispute (the parties to the dispute not voting) the members would agree not to go to war with any party who complied. If a party refused to comply, the Executive Council had discretion to propose a course of action to give effect to their recommendation. Cecil had been largely responsible for the inclusion of this last proviso: it had started with a point raised by Hymans, who, because of his country's wartime experience, was afraid that an aggressive power might ignore a Council decision. He therefore wanted to make a unanimous decision actually enforceable by sanctions, and a majority vote to have the force of a recommendation. Bourgeois supported him.¹ Cecil opposed the suggestion. It was plain that such a clause would be unacceptable to either the British or American legislatures. But as his later actions showed, Cecil did appreciate that there was a

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 269

weakness in an article which was powerless to stop a determined aggressor. He therefore sympathised when Venizelos suggested that a modification should be made to maintain the principle that an injured party should be secured some satisfaction in a dispute where the Council found unanimously in its favour. Miller would not permit the plan whereby a unanimous report should be enforced - which amounted, he said, to compulsory arbitration; he wanted the article kept weak, in effect. But Cecil finally secured a clause stating that if a party to a dispute should refuse to comply with the unanimous report of the Council, the council should 'consider what steps can best be taken to give effect to their recommendation'.¹ In other words the possibility was implied, though not stated, that the council might recommend that the injured party should go to war; it will be remembered that League members were bound not to go to war with a nation complying; therefore the nation which refused the recommendation would if it resisted the injured party's military attacks, bring down the sanctions of the League upon itself; it would thus be isolated. This alteration, subsequent to revision by the final drafting committee of this session, on 12 February, was adopted; the revised clause was even stronger; it read:

'If the report is unanimously agreed to by the members of the Council other than the parties to the dispute, the High Contracting Parties agree that they will not go to war with any party which complies with the recommendation, and that, if any parties shall refuse so to comply, the Council shall propose the measures necessary to give effect to the recommendation'² (Author's italics)

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 192 - 194

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 312

Here an executive function was laid down for the Council; the whole implication was that the Council would be prepared if necessary to take action to authorise sanctions and swing the whole weight of world opinion and League against the aggressive party. Cecil thus was not so much bent on excluding the possibility of war, as on making the League strong enough to make an aggressor fear the consequences of an unjust action. Unlike the territorial guarantee article - as it appeared in the Hurst-Miller draft - it did allow the Council freedom of choice in imposing sanctions on the aggressor. That inflexibility in the guarantee article had been eliminated, as we have seen, during the course of these meetings. It was because of their inflexibility as much as because they were blatantly unacceptable to the British and U.S. legislature that Cecil had opposed Hymans' proposals.

In the 14 February Covenant a majority decision of the Council was not to carry any binding force. But it would be given publicity to try and encourage a peaceful settlement.

The sanctions article in the 14 February draft applied only to breach of obligations under article twelve. Bourgeois had wanted sanctions also to be applied to enforce awards and recommendations, in accordance with the French view of a strong League, but this was not adopted.¹ A non-member could be invited to have ad hoc membership in a dispute with a member, and if it refused this and took action which for a

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 208

League member would constitute a breach of article twelve, sanctions would be applied against it also.

Other articles, in line with Cecil's thinking about the spread of peaceful attitudes, gave the League wide supervisory responsibilities on such matters as labour, mandates and transit. It is appropriate here to say something about Cecil's views on labour, during this period. The election had impressed him with the urgency of the issue of industrial peace in England after the war, and, internationally, the possibility of widespread communist revolution had grave implications for the future of the League. His pre-war views on industrial co-partnership were aired again in public, during the election¹ and in the months that followed, and he kept in touch with left wing opinion throughout the Conference.² The proposed new International Labour Organisation, for procuring fair conditions of labour throughout the world was canvassed by its supporters partly as a foundation of peace: 'universal and lasting peace', declared their resolution at Paris, 'can be established only if it is based on social justice'.³ This argument impressed Cecil profoundly.

He was aware too that the League might gain greater working class support if it were connected with a new institution designed to improve their conditions. The declared aims of the International Labour Convention,

¹Addit. MSS. 51162, f.56: address by Cecil, 26 Nov. 1918

²Cecil Diary, 18-24 Feb. 1919

³Margaret Stewart, Britain and the ILO, The Story of Fifty Years (London, H.M.S.O. 1969), p.1

which began with 'Labour shall not be regarded as a commodity or article of commerce',¹ accorded well with Cecil's own views, on 'industrial revolution', as he put it. He endorsed the principles on which the British, led by Barnes, proceeded, and the cautious, not over-ambitious programme that they favoured, and which like the British League scheme, won the day. He encouraged the British labour representatives to work closely with his League section.² They, on their part, were keen that the International Labour organisation should have the prestige of connection with the League.³ The Plenary Conference of 25 January resolved that a commission of enquiry investigating the enforcement of labour legislation would operate in co-operation with, and under the direction of, the League;⁴ and on 8 February Cecil proposed at the League commission that a permanent commission on labour would be part of the organisation of the League, assisting League members to secure fair and humane labour conditions in their countries and those of their associates. This was adopted.⁵

In accordance with Wilson's original trade equality point in his wartime peace programme, an article on economic equality was included. Cecil voted for it, though like many others on the commission he did not

¹ Ibid., p. 9

² Yale, House Collection; Gordon Auchincloss Papers: Cecil to Auchincloss, 13 Jan. 1919

³ D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 417

⁴ F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 202-203

⁵ D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 191, ii. 273

think it could apply during the reconstruction period, and the article was modified to say so.¹ Cecil was in general sympathy with the ideal. He wished to prevent the revival of discrimination against British trade through most-favoured-nation clauses in continental commercial treaties - which had broken down or gone into abeyance during the war.² The need to retaliate against these treaties before the war had been one justification for the British tariff reform policy that he had opposed. In fact no convention was acceptable to the Allied and Associated powers and the Covenant contained the only expression of this ideal.²

In the 14 February draft, treaties inconsistent with the Covenant were to be registered with the secretary-general, and published as soon as possible thereafter. One article, eleven, was passed unchanged, from the form it had taken in the Hurst-Miller draft (article nine of that document). This article declared every war, or threat of one to be a matter of concern to all the members of the League; the members reserved the right to take any action deemed wise and effectual to safeguard peace; it was also regarded as a friendly right of each member to draw the attention of the Body of Delegates or council to circumstances

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 278-279

²F.O. 374/22, pp. 43-48; 11th meeting of B.E.D., 1 March 1919

³A.J. Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking, p. 121-123; and: D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 19-22 and ii. 16-22

threatening to disturb peace. This subsequently important and useful article, originally conceived by Senator Root, aroused little discussion at the Conference.¹ A final article provided for amendments to the Covenant when voted for by members of all the Executive Council and three-quarters of the Body of Delegates.²

One or two ideas propounded earlier, and in the Hurst-Miller draft, were not included, as a result of the commission's discussions, in the 14 February draft, but throw interesting light on Cecil's views. First there was the religious equality article. Wilson had always been in favour of this and his formula was used for discussion. Wilson's article forbade governments to make discriminating laws - i.e. against pacifist religions etc. Cecil proposed instead an article authorising the Executive Council to take preventive steps against a state whose persecution of a religious group within its borders was likely to be a cause of war. This involved far less interference with sovereignty than did Wilson's; in this Cecil aimed at making the Covenant as acceptable to its prospective members as possible.³ The article was examined by a drafting committee, which ended up with a formula with similar wording to that of Cecil but going much further. It sanctioned outside interference not merely in response to action by a League member, but against any general policy of intolerance anywhere; neither this article

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 265

²Ibid., i. 204

³D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 273, 276 and: Ibid., ii. 237

nor Cecil's version ruled out armed intervention. Miller was alarmed by this and it was replaced by a milder formula: an undertaking by members not to prohibit any form of religious practice unless public order or morals were involved. League action to enforce tolerance was not mentioned in it.¹ In the end, however, it was dropped altogether. This was because the Japanese wished to tack a race equality clause to it.

The League was not universally popular in Japan. A large militarist element disliked it - in particular the controls that would be imposed by the mandate system in Japan's new Pacific Island acquisitions. However, the Japanese government hoped that the League might provide them with a way to secure the removal of the humiliating immigration laws in California and Australia which discriminated against Asiatics. A racial equality clause would be in the spirit of the Fourteen Points.² Wilson personally agreed with this; but he knew that a clause that would encourage the revival of Japanese immigration would be unacceptable in the U.S.A. The British Empire delegation did not want such a clause either. Wilson asked the Japanese to submit a milder formula,³ but they explained that Japanese public opinion demanded that a strong clause be proposed - namely that League members be requested to drop all domestic

¹Ibid., i. 196-196; and: Ibid. i. 221

²F.O. 608/211, f. 642/2/1.335: quotation from 'Kokumin' enclosed with report from Greene to Balfour, 12 Nov. 1918

³The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, ed. Seymour, iv. 322

laws based on race discrimination. At the commission, Cecil praised the nobility of thought inspiring the speech made by Makino on the subject, but explained that owing to British Empire attitudes it was better to postpone examination of the question. Venizelos said, and others agreed, that questions of race and religion were best left at the moment. Cecil therefore took a vote on whether the religious equality article should remain in the text; because of drafting difficulties it was dropped, and Wilson, who was absent, later acquiesced, owing to the embarrassment caused him by the Japanese request.¹

Finally, Smuts raised the question of an extra conference - a kind of international parliament containing representatives of national parliaments, or their equivalent - and all shades of opinion. He believed that public opinion would be disappointed if there was not such a body. The idea had been discussed earlier by the British, and something of the kind had appeared in the 17 December 'Draft Sketch' drawn up at the Foreign Office. Cecil, however, came out against the plan at the commission; he thought that public opinion would have to grasp the idea of the League first, and to reveal its attitude towards it, before such a body could be set up.² He was anxious that the League should not be a bear garden of multifarious national representatives, who disagreed with each other, within delegations, on the functions and purposes of the League.

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 323-325

²Ibid., ii. 300, i. 231

Such was the form of the new draft Covenant. In the next two months it was to be modified considerably; and, as in these first sessions of League commission, Cecil was to play a major part.

Chapter Eight

The Revision of the Draft Covenant

February - May 1919

On the whole the February draft was a triumph for Cecil and his assistants. Wilson was not altogether satisfied with it. He felt he had compromised too much; he and House preferred the 'Magnolia' draft of the previous summer; 'Certainly', House commented, 'our document was more human and a little less legal/[istic].... I think it has been unfortunate that we have had so many professional lawyers on the committee they are nearly always technical and unsatisfactory'.¹ Wilson left Paris shortly after the Plenary Conference to present the draft Covenant to the Foreign Relations Committee of the U.S. Senate in Washington.

Between 14 February and 7 May, when the Covenant was presented to the Germans with the Peace Treaty, a number of important modifications to the League constitution were made, and others were attempted but were not adopted. It will be seen that in nearly all the changes of importance again it was the British and Americans who got their way.

Cecil, however, did take trouble to see that neutral opinion was consulted. The French at first resisted this plan; they wanted no one but the wartime Allied and Associated powers to draw up the treaty for

¹House Diary, xv. 13 Feb. 1919

presentation to the Germans.¹ Some neutrals suspected that a 'Holy Alliance' had been created.² Cecil did not want these countries to be alienated, for he wished the League to have as wide a membership as possible from the outset. He told 'that old image' Bourgeois, that if the French refused to allow the neutrals a say, Britain and the U.S.A. would have to act independently.³ House backed him.⁴ Finally he secured Clemenceau's agreement, on 8 March - provided the meeting with the neutrals was unofficial, and any changes proposed by them were put forward at the League commission - when it met again - as coming from the Allied delegates.⁵ President Wilson subsequently authorised a meeting with the neutrals to take place on 20-21 March.⁶

Before describing in detail the changes made in the Covenant, it is desirable here to give a brief list of events at this time as far as they were connected with Cecil's League work. Also, something further must be said about his relations with his own and the American delegations.

Between 14 February and Wilson's return a month later, Cecil was engaged in encouraging publicity for the League in England and in

¹See: House Papers, Cecil to House, 8 March 1919

²F.O. 608/243, f. 1641/1/2.3670, p.116; Noel-Baker minute for Cecil, 27 March 1919

³Cecil Diary, 17 Feb. 1919

⁴Ibid., 27 Feb. 1919, and House Diary xv. 25 Feb. 1919

⁵House Papers, Cecil to House, 8 March 1919

⁶D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 303

reviewing the draft Covenant in the light of his section's views, and of opinions received from home; he had established an advisory committee at the Foreign Office chaired by Phillimore; this maintained touch with British opinion.¹ The British Empire delegation examined the Covenant at a meeting on 13 March, and submitted paper criticisms as well.² Cecil also tried to settle differences with the French at this time.

He saw Wilson on 16 March³ and again on 18 March,⁴ when the important changes desired by the British and by the U.S. senators were discussed. The League commission reopened its sessions on 22 March, and met again on 24 and 26 March and on 10 and 11 April.⁵ On 1 and 2 April, there were meetings of the final drafting committee of the commission.⁶

Three other matters occurring during this time should be noted: first, Cecil was appointed as chief British economic representative on questions about European reconstruction.⁷ The work in this capacity took up most of his time. His exasperation with the French over the economic settlement, his desire to secure American assistance in Europe, and his growing realisation of the chaos in central Europe inevitably coloured

¹Gilbert Murray Papers, Cecil to Murray, 4 Jan. 1919

²F.O. 374/22, p.53: 13th meeting of B.E.D. 13 March 1919; and D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 354-362

³Cecil Diary, 16 March 1919

⁴Ibid., 18 March 1919; and: D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 283-296

⁵D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 336-394

⁶Ibid., i. 390-418

⁷Cecil Diary, 17 Feb. 1919 (1st meeting of Supreme Economic Council)

his League work at this time as well. Secondly, as a result of a proposal to conclude a preliminary military peace settlement, because of the slowness of the Conference in making a comprehensive treaty, there grew up an idea that the Covenant was not to be included in the Peace Treaty with Germany, but would be signed later.¹ This idea was accepted by many in the various delegations who were not particularly in favour of the League;² Lloyd George did not attempt to deny the rumour as far as the British delegation was concerned. Cecil and his fellow supporters of the League were very worried by this, and he tried to secure a public denial;³ in the end, however, the idea of excluding the Covenant faded away, as did that of a 'military treaty'. Thirdly, by the latter part of March it came home to Lloyd George and other leading members of the British delegation that the reparations policy and the detachment of large areas of Germany as planned in the Treaty might result in Germany refusing to sign the Peace Treaty and throwing in her lot with Bolshevist Russia. He and his advisers prepared a memorandum which advocated some moderation of the terms; a draft of this 'Fontainebleau memorandum' was shown to Cecil on 25 March, and he was invited to make comments, some of which will be referred to later.⁴ He personally believed that the terms should be moderated still further.

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 85-100

²Cecil Diary, 16 March 1919

³Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/19: Cecil minute for Lloyd George, 26 March 1919

⁴Cecil Diary, 26 March 1919; and Lothian Papers, GD 40.17.61, p.90 et seq.: memorandum - Some Considerations for the Peace Conference before they Finally Draft their Terms. Draft dated 24 March, Cecil's comments are dated 25 March, though his diary records seeing memo on 26 March

Cecil returned to England again on 12 April and returned on 19 April.¹ On 21 April he explained the Covenant at a meeting of the British Empire Delegation.²

The German delegation had arrived to receive the Treaty on 17 April but were kept waiting for three weeks; partly at Cecil's urging, the Covenant was laid before the Plenary Conference on 28 April, and accepted.³ The general drafting committee of the Conference performed the task of incorporating the Covenant in the treaty;⁴ a few amendments were made or attempted at this stage. The treaty was handed to the Germans on 7 May.⁵

Cecil continued to enjoy good relations with the Americans. House fell out of favour with Wilson because of his negotiations during Wilson's absence, but this did not affect Cecil's dealings with either man at this stage. Wilson, House and Miller had all come to appreciate Cecil's work. 'Cecil bears the brunt of the explanation, and his patience is marvellous', wrote House.⁶ But Cecil did not come to like the President

¹Cecil Diary, 12-19 Apr. 1919

²F.O. 374/22, p. 168 and p. 171: 26th and 27th meetings of B.E.D., 21 Apr. 1919

³See: Library of Congress, Woodrow Wilson Papers, series 5B, box 24; Cecil to Wilson, 21 Apr. 1919; and F.R.P.C. 1919 iii. pp. 285-330

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 498

⁵Ibid.

⁶House Diary, xv. 11 Apr. 1919

much more than before.¹ His first meeting with Wilson after his return from America was in fact inauspicious.² Wilson had handled the presentation of the Covenant to the Senate tactlessly; he had insisted on treating the criticisms of it in a personal light. A majority of the senators - enough to prevent consent to the ratification of the treaty - had voted, in a resolution drawn up by Wilson's arch-enemy Henry Cabot Lodge, for keeping the Covenant separate from the Peace Treaty. There was an element of personal opposition to Wilson in this, and of party feeling in a largely Republican Senate. But there was also a truly disinterested concern that the President was rushing the country into a radical new foreign policy based on a largely British scheme. By no means all were wholly against the Covenant; but they wanted time to consider and amend it. Republican senators like Elihu Root, who were strong supporters of a League, presented suggestions for changes to be made in the Covenant if it were to be acceptable to them.³

Cecil found Wilson reluctant to accept these changes and convinced that the American public was against them; Wilson said that a League dictated by the Senate would not be popular. Cecil was very depressed by Wilson's attitude which would he felt lead to the League's rejection in the U.S.A. Many of the changes wanted by the British

¹See Cecil Diary, 6 May 1919

²Ibid., 16 March 1919

³See: F.O. 880/222, L. of N. 17: Lord Reading tel. for Lloyd George & Balfour, 9 March 1919; and: F.O. 880/222, L. of N. 19: Lord Reading tel. for Lloyd George and Balfour, 16 March 1919; and: D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 276-278

delegation were the same as those requested by the senators, though he avoided saying so.¹ He was still more discouraged when he learned from Thomas Lamont, an American financial delegate, that the League's prospects in the U.S.A. were far worse than Wilson had made out.² Fortunately the President had swallowed his resentment and had become more realistic when he saw Cecil on 18 March;³ he was willing to make the changes. After that, they had few disagreements.

Cecil's relations with his own delegation continued to be uneasy. The British government did not regard themselves as committed to the 14 February Covenant.⁴ It suited Lloyd George that Cecil was not in his government, and this fact was as inconvenient for Cecil as it was convenient for Lloyd George. The members of the British Empire delegation were unenthusiastic about the Covenant drafts where they were not definitely opposed. They worried chiefly about inroads on British sovereignty. Cecil found himself on the defensive at the 'rather tiresome' meetings of the B.E.D.⁵ He had developed a very low opinion of most of his Dominion colleagues:

'Personally I am fed up with this idea that on every body of importance one or more of these very secondrate individuals is to be put but I do not know that I should feel so bitterly

¹Cecil Diary, 16 March 1919

²Ibid., 18 March 1919

³Ibid., 18 March 1919

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 241-242

⁵See: F.O. 374/22, p.53: 13th meeting of the B.E.D., 13 March 1919, and F.O. 374/22, p.168 and p.171: 26th and 27th meetings of B.E.D. 21 March 1919; and Cecil Diary, 21 Apr. 1919

about it if it were not for the ineffable Hughes,¹

He continued to criticise Lloyd George also; he thought him a poor diplomat.² The worst row between the two men was over the issue of American naval building; this blew up at the end of March. In 1916, the U.S. Congress had authorised the building of a great new naval fleet; during the war priority had been given to the construction of anti-submarine vessels; after the armistice, however, the navy department placed their orders for the battleships authorised in the same programme. These dreadnoughts would give the U.S.A. a naval strength almost equal to that of Great Britain. The navy department presented a further programme in December 1918 which would give them actual superiority. Wilson backed this; he felt it would increase his bargaining power at the Conference.³ Lloyd George was deeply committed to British naval superiority; he could argue with justice that it was hypocritical for the President to preach disarmament on the one hand and try to outbuild Britain on the other.⁴ Unfortunately Lloyd George used tactics which put him in the wrong. One of the changes in the Covenant wanted by the U.S. senators was a clause safeguarding the Monroe doctrine. Wilson had assented to this. Lloyd George, disliking what he regarded as selfish reservation of a large sphere of American

¹Cecil Diary, 27 Feb. 1919

²CHE 6/34: Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 27 March 1919

³See: D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 422-424; and: Arthur S. Link, American Epoch (1st edn., New York 1955), p. 278

⁴Cecil Diary, 3 Apr. 1919; and Lord Riddell, Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, p. 118

influence tried to strike a bargain with Wilson - if the Americans wanted the Monroe doctrine clause they would have to stop their naval building programme.

Cecil was disturbed when he learnt about this.¹ Though he agreed with the justice of Lloyd George's criticisms of the President's attitude, and was equally dedicated to upholding Britain's maritime strength, he believed that this type of bargaining, which had answered well with the French, would simply antagonise the Americans;² they had already been antagonised over French attempts to bargain over the League; this plan would put all of U.S. opinion behind the President if it became generally known, and the result would be that America would refuse financial aid to Europe - which Cecil had now come to think was essential for European economic recovery. It would also endanger the League itself; the League could only work through the 'heartly cooperation' of Britain and the U.S.A. Cecil felt that Lloyd George's attitude showed that he valued the League little, and, this being the case, Cecil said, 'I doubt very much whether the League can be a success as long as this government remains in office.'³

He pointed out that the Monroe doctrine had nothing to do with the U.S. navy programme; and he did not think that the Americans would be willing to abandon all their naval plans. Nonetheless he believed that if fairly handled they would go a long way to meet the British; they had

¹Cecil Diary, 26 March 1919

²CHE 75/143-146, Cecil to Balfour, 5 Apr. 1919

³Ibid.

already consented to a largely English Covenant, and had allowed the separate representation of the Dominions - against their own principles.

Cecil told Balfour that he had undertaken his work on the understanding that the government would give him the fullest support; he expected to be told if the government had decided to change their policy; he was not going to carry out a policy he felt to be intrinsically wrong, '... and exceedingly hazardous to a cause in which I passionately believe and to which I am pledged by every obligation of honour'.¹

Lloyd George at first ignored Cecil's criticisms, but the total deadlock in the talks between the American and British naval delegates - who were both equally chauvinistic - forced him to let Cecil find a way round through private talks with House.²

When he wrote to House, Cecil stressed very strongly that Britain must have a margin of safety in her maritime defences:

'... if I were British Minister of the Navy and I saw that British naval safety was being threatened, even by America, I should have to recommend to my fellow countrymen to spend their last shilling in bringing our fleet up to the point which I was advised was necessary for safety'

This must come even before Anglo-American friendship. To inaugurate the League of Nations with a naval rivalry between its two chief supporters 'would doom it to complete sterility or worse'. But if the Americans would say that after the Treaty was signed they would abandon

¹CHE 75/143-146, Cecil to Balfour, 5 Apr. 1919

²See Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/25: Cecil to Lloyd George, 4 Apr. 1919; and: Cecil Diary, 8 Apr. 1919; and: House Diary, xv. 7 Apr. 1919

or modify their programme, and if the British gave reciprocal assurances, that would be a fitting inauguration.¹ House aided by Cecil wrote a reply - which was approved by Wilson - to be shown to Lloyd George. This did give hope that the U.S. might agree to some modification of naval plans if the Treaty was satisfactory and they received assurances in return;² there was no promise that the current naval programme would be stopped; Lloyd George was therefore not satisfied; he still held out against the Monroe doctrine though Cecil said such a tactic damaged his case.³ At a further meeting House refused to discuss the Monroe doctrine clause at all, and stated finally that naval strengths could not be debated further until after the treaty; Wilson could be relied on not to start a competition. Cecil asked House to keep the talks secret to avoid a major controversy between Britain and the U.S.A.⁴ He told House, and later Lloyd George, that he was very discouraged by the whole incident and was thinking of leaving Paris for good.⁵ In the end, owing to the American determination to press on with the Monroe doctrine article, and the convincing case against interfering with it, Lloyd George put up no further resistance to it.

The incident illustrates clearly Cecil's isolation from his government, even on an issue where he and they were largely in agreement. In spite of his now large responsibilities and heavy work at this time,

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 419-420

²Ibid., i. 422, 425, and: House Diary xv. 7 and 8 Apr. 1919

³Cecil Diary, 8 Apr. 1919

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 425

⁵Ibid., and: Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/33: Cecil to Lloyd George, 10 Apr. 1919

Cecil was finding that he did not have his government behind him. His estimate of their qualities and policies should not perhaps have led him to expect this. Certainly he was confirmed in his opinion of Lloyd George. It would be false to say that Cecil carried no weight with him; but Lloyd George was not dependable in his support. Like many another 'expert' at the Peace Conference, Cecil was conscious of being produced when needed to prove a point, and ignored and even obstructed at other times. Cecil began at this stage to lean a little more on those of his colleagues who gave unqualified support to the League. The indispensable Noel-Baker, for example, exercised a greater influence on Cecil's views from this time, and this is evident even in the remaining months of the Conference.

The changes in the 14 February draft, before the Covenant was submitted to the Germans, must now be described. As far as possible the topics are dealt with in the order in which they appear in the revised text.

There was no change in the preamble; but the Japanese did attempt, unsuccessfully, to have the principle¹ of racial equality stated in it. In New York, on 14 March, the Japanese ambassador had proclaimed his country's determination to achieve this aim,² and this had created great apprehension in the U.S.A. Cecil appreciated the importance of placating American opinion on the question, to diminish opposition to the

¹F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 321 (Preamble)

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 295

League;¹ but he did not want Britain to give public assurances of support to the U.S.A. on the immigration question, at least until after the Covenant had been signed.² Furthermore, he was in sympathy with the latest Japanese proposal as it had been worked out with members of the British Empire and Americans. This new proposal contained no reference to 'race', because it was felt that it would be hypocritical for the Empire leaders to proclaim the principle of racial equality.³ The proposal called instead for: 'the endorsement of the principle of equality of nations and just treatment of their nationals'.⁴ All the British delegation were willing to support this proposal, except Hughes, and Massey, who followed his lead.⁵ Hughes had threatened to stir up public opinion in the Empire and America if anything of the kind were attempted.⁶ As the vote of the British Empire delegation had to be unanimous, this effectively vetoed the amendment as far as that body was concerned. Cecil therefore had the duty of opposing the proposal at the commission on behalf of his delegation. Smuts, who had conducted most of the negotiations with the Japanese, was called away at the last minute, and Cecil had to put the case unaided; he was very impressed by the speech with which Baron Makino

¹F.O. 608/244, f.1651/2/I.3525, p.145: Geoffrey Butler to Cecil 2 March 1919; and p.143, note by Cecil

²Ibid.

³Sir James Butler Papers, note by J.R.M. Butler, 26 March 1919

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 461

⁵Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/29: memo by Cecil for Lloyd George, 15 Apr. 1919

⁶House Diary, xv. 27 March 1919

accompanied the proposal;¹ Makino warned the commission that the rejection of such a claim involving national pride might destroy faith in the League among the countries involved.² Cecil said that he was 'personally entirely in accord with the idea advanced by the Japanese delegation'; however, his own government, though recognising the importance of the principle, did not feel the problem could be solved without infringement of sovereignty. The Japanese could, he suggested, raise the matter later on the Executive Council on which they had a permanent place.³

Miller, who watched him speaking on this occasion, recorded: 'It seemed to me at the time that Cecil felt that he was performing a difficult and disagreeable duty. After making his statement Cecil sat with his eyes fixed on the table and took no part in the subsequent debate'.⁴ In fact Cecil did add a comment later in the proceedings - a reflection that questions of right were best left out of the Covenant.⁵ He was always more interested in the establishment of workable machinery than in the propounding of controversial abstract principles.

Wilson did not want the clause, because of its effect in America. But to avoid the charge of racial intolerance he simply cautioned against

¹Cecil Diary, 11 Apr. 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 387-389

³Ibid., ii. 389

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 461

⁵Ibid., ii. 392

the proposal and abstained from voting, so that the onus of attacking the proposal fell on Britain alone. Then he ruled that it was rejected, because the voting was not unanimous, though this rule had not operated on the occasions when the French had been the only Commissioners to make reservations.¹ Cecil felt Wilson had let him down; he

'did not show quite as much courage as I could have hoped in resisting the amendment. He is a very curious mixture of the politician and the idealist, reminding me more and more in his point of view of Gladstone. He is not to me very attractive'²

After the commission meeting, however, Cecil tried to retrieve the situation. He wanted the Japanese to get their way but he feared the consequences if they tried to raise the proposal again at the Plenary Conference. He wrote to Lloyd George on 15 April:

'If the amendment is moved by the Japanese and opposed only by the Australian member of the British delegation we shall be put in the somewhat difficult position of opposing our Japanese allies on an issue on which the sentiment of the Conference will be overwhelmingly against us. Possibly Mr. Hughes might reconsider his attitude'³

He sent Lloyd George a further formula which he thought might be acceptable to both the Australians and Japanese. Lloyd George apparently did not use it,⁴ and Hughes, in any case, remained obdurate. At the Plenary session on 28 April, however, the Japanese did not try to press their

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 462-465

²Cecil Diary, 11 Apr. 1919

³Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/29: memo by Cecil for Lloyd George, 15 Apr. 1919

⁴Sir James Butler Papers: Noel-Baker to Butler, 17 Apr. 1919

proposal, but simply expressed their disappointment.

The consequences of the rejection were serious, and justified Cecil's fears; in May, the British naval attaché in Tokyo wrote:

'It is regarded as a "slap in the face" and the conviction that this insult has come from Britain and America, the two nations who stand before the world as the champions of Freedom not only makes the situation more puzzling for the ordinary individual; it affords a ready weapon to agitators and to a large body of opponents to the idea of a League of Nations, among whom are included the Militarist Party...' ¹

The membership clauses in the 14 February draft were a source of dissatisfaction. Neutral and German press criticisms revealed a fear that the League would be a Holy Alliance scheme from which the Allies' wartime diplomatic and military enemies would be indefinitely excluded; L.S. Woolf, in 'The International Review' also voiced these suspicions.² Lloyd George's view, expressed in the Fontainebleau memorandum, was that Germany should be admitted at once. Cecil endorsed this but qualified it with the words: 'at any rate as soon as she has a stable government'.³ However French and Belgian feelings did make it impossible to insist on Germany being a founder member. The words 'High Contracting Parties' used throughout the February Covenant had therefore to be changed to 'States members of the League' or it might appear that the Germans, as

¹F.O. 371/3821. f.95945.95945: memo 'Racial Discrimination' by Brig.Gen. Woodroffe, 5 May 1919, enclosed in a letter from Woodroffe to D.M.I., 5 May 1919

²F.O. 608/243, f.1641/1/2. 3724. p.136-140: Townley to F.O., 27 Feb. 1919; and: F.O. 608/243, f.1641/1/2.6249. p.205

³Lothian Papers, GD 40.17.61: p.98: comment by Cecil, 25 March, on draft memo; and: D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 280

signatories, were to be founder members; on the other hand, Cecil insisted on keeping 'High Contracting Parties' in the preamble so that the Germans definitely assented to the League as a first step towards joining.¹ He also introduced a revised form of wording so that there was more impression of welcome into the ranks of the League for those states not mentioned in the protocol as founder members.² Cecil was keen that a number of neutral countries should be named in this first list, and continued to oppose the suggestion of Hymans that only the war victors should have that honour.³

On the other hand, he resisted the claims of various small countries like Monaco to belong at the beginning, because of the incongruity of accepting them and excluding the Central Powers; he told Wilson on 27 April:

'If the application of San Marino is granted we cannot refuse that of Monaco or, if it is made, that of Andorra! & the League would run some risk of becoming ridiculous'⁴

Cecil won his way on all these matters, and the protocol that was drawn up contained the names of fourteen non-belligerent members, while the revised Covenant contained the changes he had suggested.

A further change made in the membership article gave members the right of withdrawal.⁵ This was requested both by the American senators

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 280, 284

²Ibid., ii. 340

³Ibid., ii. 341

⁴Library of Congress, Woodrow Wilson Papers, series 5B, Box 26; Cecil to Wilson, 27 Apr. 1919

⁵F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 322 (Article I)

and by the British League section. Wilson had proposed that there should be withdrawal upon one year's notice, ten years after the ratification of the Treaty.¹ The French felt that this gave the impression that the League was intended to last only ten years and not to be permanent. Cecil himself had no objection to a time limit, but he agreed that Wilson's ten year period gave the wrong impression. He put forward a plan for a time limit of fifteen to twenty years. After this the Treaty should cease to be binding and modifications could be made to both it and the Covenant; following that a nation could declare its intention to withdraw. This was in essence his original revision proposal of Autumn 1916, though there the period suggested was five, not twenty years. The commission did not adopt his plan; they decided to set no time limit and to allow withdrawal at any time, on two years notice.²

Cecil played a leading part in the choice of the first four lesser powers to be on the Council.³ He and Miller met on the 20 April. They decided on Belgium, Brazil (to represent Latin-America) and Greece - a Balkan country whose contribution to the League through Venizelos had been by far the most constructive.⁴ For the fourth, Cecil was determined to have a neutral. Spain was his choice, as its government alone among the neutrals had applied for membership without reservations. He resisted repeated attempts by the Portuguese to gain Council membership; if Spain and Portugal were on the Council together, it would give an undue

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 277, 293; and ibid., ii. 357-358

²Ibid., ii. 358-360

³'Council' was now official title of smaller conference - see p. 251

⁴Ibid., i. 477

representation to the Iberian powers; and if Spain was left out, then it would simply be a Council of victor powers. As he told Lloyd George on 28 April, the League must be given a world wide character from the start.¹ Spain was chosen and these choices were approved by the Plenary Conference.

Cecil was responsible for the introduction of a clause empowering the Council to co-opt new permanent members. It was an arrangement which had been proposed in the 16/20 January British League drafts²; Noel-Baker once more urged it on Cecil as a way of meeting criticisms that it was to be a Holy Alliance League; for it would provide for German - and Russian - membership in the future, when they wished for it and the time was ripe; at the same time in this form it would not, Cecil hoped, arouse accusations of softness towards Germany - which had to be taken into account.³ Cecil explained to Wilson that in his view the Council must have the guiding hand in the process of co-opting, otherwise it might find itself swamped. He pointed out also that if France continued to wish to prevent Germany joining the Council, she was always able to do^{so} as a Council member.⁴ Wilson approved this clause and it was passed by the commission on 22 March.⁵

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/36; minute by Cecil for Lloyd George, 28 Apr. 1919; and: F.O. 608/243, f.1643/1/4.5899: memo from Portuguese delegation, 31 March 1919; and F.O. 608/243, f.1643/1/4. 9529: note from Portuguese delegation transmitted to British delegation by sec.gén. de la Conférence de la Paix. 8 May 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 108

³F.O. 608/243, f.1641/1/2. 3670 pp. 113-117: Percy to Cecil, 25 Feb. 1919, and comments by Cecil and Noel-Baker

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 284-285

⁵Ibid., ii. 338

This new clause gave rise to a complaint from the Dominions.

It provided only for the co-opting of 'States' as new permanent members; hence the Dominions, who were not technically 'States' were apparently barred from permanent membership of the Council in the future. Cecil agreed at the B.E.D. meeting on 21 April to propose that the words 'Members of the League' should be substituted.¹ He explained to House the following day that though it was inconceivable that the Dominions would ever be permanent Council members while Britain was, he did not wish them - or anyone - to enter the League on an inferior basis; they must be in on equal terms or not at all. House first resisted the idea,² then, believing that the change might hasten the break-up of the British Empire - which he thought he saw beginning - he advised Wilson to accept it.³ The change was accepted by the Big Three on the 6th May.⁴

Both the British Admiralty and U.S. senators wanted the unanimity rule stated explicitly, so as to safeguard national sovereignty.⁵ Cecil and Wilson agreed about this on 18 March⁶ and this proposal was passed by the League Commission when Cecil introduced it on 22 March.⁷

¹F.O. 374/22, p.168: 26th meeting of B.E.D., 21 Apr. 1919

²House Diary, xv. 22 Apr.

³Ibid: 23 Apr.

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 489: see F.R.P.C. 1919 iii. 322 (Article IV)

⁵F.O. 374/22, p.53: 13th meeting of B.E.D., 13 March 1919; and D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 277

⁶D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 285

⁷Ibid., ii. 339

However, as the article was careful to state, there were exceptions to this rule. It did not apply to questions of procedure - which might include the selection of an investigatory commission, and ~~were~~ therefore important. The parties to a dispute did not vote. Finally, if a member broke its covenants, then it was automatically expelled from the League and hence had no vote on its own fate.

In the revised Covenant, the Executive Council and Body of Delegates were called the 'Council' and 'Assembly';¹ this change was introduced by Cecil, to avoid misunderstanding about their functions. 'Council' was a truer title, Cecil told the British Empire delegation, since no superstate organisation was intended.²

As before, the great powers were mentioned by name in the revised Covenant article on the Council.³ There was a moment, however, in late April, when it seemed as if the Italians would refuse to sign the Treaty; they had walked out of the Conference after meeting resistance to their claim to the Adriatic town of Fiume. The General Drafting Committee of the Treaty received directions from 'the Big Three' - Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau - to leave out the names of the great powers in the Covenant, in case Italy did not sign. Similarly the name of Italy was not to appear on the list of founder members.⁴ Cecil was against any such move to exclude the Italians from membership. He pointed out that if Italy was a member - and the Italian people desired that she should be - she would be bound to accept the territorial settlement in the Treaty;

¹F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 322 (Article II)

²F.O. 374/22, p.168: 26th meeting of B.E.D., 21 Apr. 1919

³F.R.P.C. 1919, ii. 322 (Article IV)

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 499

if on the other hand she refused to join, she would put herself far more in the wrong with world opinion than if she was excluded; for there were no conditions laid down in the Covenant by which she could rightly be excluded. 'Apart from this', he added, 'there is the danger that critics may say that the League is being used to enforce the decisions of the Big Three and not for its true purposes'.¹ The crisis was averted by Italy's decision to return, and to postpone the decision about Fiume. The episode again illustrates Cecil's anxiety that no state of any importance should be kept out of the League at the start unless it was absolutely against the League's interests to admit them.

Cecil and House between them chose the first League Secretary-General. For a time the leading candidate was Hankey. Cecil did not like Hankey's conception of the League² and was unenthusiastic about this choice. Hankey however finally decided against the post, despite support from Milner and Balfour.³ Cecil and House put forward instead the name of Sir Eric Drummond of the British Foreign Office.⁴ The Council of Four (Lloyd George, Wilson, Clemenceau and Orlando) accepted the choice and it was passed by the Plenary Conference.

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/40: minute by Cecil for Lloyd George, 3 May 1919

²Cecil Diary, 5 Feb. 1919

³Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/32: Cecil to Lloyd George, 21 Apr. 1919; and: Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/25: Cecil to Lloyd George, 4 Apr. 1919

⁴House Diary, xv. 28 Apr. 1919

Cecil - with House - also successfully pressed for the choice of Geneva as League seat. He had rejected the idea of The Hague because of its association with a previous international experiment of limited success. He dismissed the suggestion of Tangier - 'The planet Mars would also have many advantages'.¹ Hymans put in a plea for Brussels - as a reward for Belgium's sufferings. Cecil said that the League organisations must meet in a place which would not arouse any mistrust in their decisions. Geneva was cosmopolitan, more central and already a home of international work. These arguments were backed by Wilson and accepted by the Commission.²

The French continued to press for League inspection of arms programmes and for an international general staff. They really wanted British and American assent to their plan for severing the German provinces on the left bank of the Rhine and setting up an independent buffer republic there; but as Clemenceau admitted to Cecil on 8 March, he had directed Bourgeois to insist on the military arrangements, because he wanted it to be seen that he had done all he could to gain French security before pressing for the Rhine scheme. Cecil thought it the wrong way to go about pleasing the Americans and British,³ and he asked Clemenceau if the amendments could be dropped; Clemenceau was willing to accept Cecil's League, but he said he must use it as an argument for another

¹F.O. 608/241, f.1632/1/1. 6594, p. 323: comment by Cecil on letter from Sir G. Grahame, 28 March, 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 365-368

³Cecil Diary, 28 Feb. 1919

kind of guarantee.¹ With this made clear, Cecil was able to ignore Bourgeois when he relentlessly revised his ideas at a commission meeting.² Cecil dismissed his suggestions rather roughly, and offended him;³ this did not stop Bourgeois from raising - ineffectively - his 'silly old amendments' again, at the Plenary Conference of 28 April, to Cecil's disgust.⁴

The French difficulty was met at length in the Treaty by a joint Anglo-American guarantee of France's eastern frontiers against unprovoked aggression by Germany.⁵ Cecil saw this idea proposed in the draft of the 'Fontainebleau Memorandum' which he read on 25 March. Then he expressed the view that such a guarantee must be given 'within the League' - it must be consistent with its articles and spirit.⁶

Both the Admiralty and the American Senate critics wanted it made clear in the disarmament article that the arms limits laid down by the Executive Council must have the consent of the individual governments and legislature concerned.⁷ Cecil and Wilson agreed to propose this and it was accepted by the Commission.⁸ Cecil was against a French proposal

¹House Papers, Cecil to House, 8 March 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 344-346

³Cecil Diary, 22 March 1919

⁴Ibid., 28 Apr. 1919

⁵F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 379

⁶Lothian Papers, GD 40.17.61: Cecil comment 25 March, on draft memo

⁷D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 277, 281.

⁸Ibid., ii. 342

that the terms of the sanctions article should apply to the disarmament article - because that could mean that military sanctions could be applied simply for a failure to produce information.¹ Despite all this, and although he told the B.E.D. that he 'doubted whether the time had come when any far-reaching agreement for the reduction of armaments could be brought about'² there were signs that Cecil was more hopeful about the possibility of an early disarmament plan than he had been - in addition to his hopes of a naval agreement with the U.S.A. Further, he did not want to make the League's article on disarmament quite ineffective.

For instance, he thought this would be the effect of an Admiralty proposal which he showed Wilson on 18 March; this was that members could change the arms limits laid down by the Council 'upon notice to' the Council, instead of with its 'permission'. Cecil shared Wilson's dislike of the proposal and did not press it.³

Moreover he received much encouragement about disarmament from Noel-Baker. Their agreement was evident at the Commission meeting of 11 April; the Japanese proposed that military preparations by parties to a dispute brought before the League should be forbidden during the period that the dispute was under discussion and for three months after the settlement. Cecil pointed out that this would be to the disadvantage of small weak states who would be insufficiently prepared. Noel-Baker, who

¹ Ibid., ii. 352

² F.O. 374/22, p. 170: 26th meeting of B.E.D., 21 Apr. 1919

³ D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 281, 286

attended the meeting, was particularly worried that the amendment would force everyone to maintain the maximum permitted arms establishment; this would defeat the League long term aim of complete disarmament. He passed round a note to this effect, and Cecil showed his agreement by raising this point.¹ The Japanese amendment was not adopted.

The 'territorial guarantee' article, ten, despite Cecil's efforts was unaltered, in the revised Covenant.² He still disliked the article though he had weakened it. Borden expressed the fears of the Dominion premiers about this article in his paper on the 14 February Covenant; he was concerned about the possibility of Canada being dragged into a European war which had no connection with its interests.³ When Cecil saw Wilson on 18 March he put forward what he felt was not an altogether satisfactory proposal that members should no longer undertake to 'pre-serve' but simply to 'respect' the territorial integrity of the others. He personally wanted a reference to the treaty revision article put into this article to make it clear that the League was not dedicated to guaranteeing an unacceptable status quo.⁴ These ideas received no favourable response from Wilson. Wilson felt that this weakened the one article on which the French relied; the previous weakening of the article did not worry him, and he ignored the fact that the French did not now have the same confidence in its value as he did.⁵ Miller, as before, was

¹Ibid., i. 454; and: ibid., ii. 376

²F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 324 (Article X)

³D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 356

⁴Ibid., i. 281-282

⁵Ibid., i. 289

unsympathetic with Cecil's attempts to give the treaty revision article prominence.¹

When he explained the Covenant to the British Empire delegation on 21 April, Cecil told members that he had had to assent to the inclusion of article ten, because of Wilson's insistence and the French wish for a guarantee article. And he emphasised that it did no more than express a principle that no state could henceforward take the law into its own hands and alter the territorial settlement by force. Article Ten was qualified by the treaty revision article; further, the Council was to have complete discretion about action; if aggression took place; any member of the League concerned would be allowed to attend Council meetings; if they objected to going to war, their refusal would end the matter.² Thus Cecil was determined to reduce the importance of the 'territorial guarantee article'.

To eliminate fears that some kind of universal compulsory arbitration plan was contemplated, Cecil introduced an amendment defining broadly the cases which could be thought suitable for arbitration; this used wording similar to that in the Phillimore report:

'a dispute ... as to the interpretation of a Treaty, as to any question of international law, as to the existence of any fact which, if established, would constitute a breach of any international obligation, or as to the extent and nature of the reparation to be made for any such breach, if such dispute cannot be satisfactorily settled by diplomacy'³

¹Ibid., i. 282

²F.O. 374/22, p. 169-170: 26th meeting of B.E.D., 21 Apr. 1919

³D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 352

This was accepted and incorporated in the revised Covenant.¹ In making his case for the article, Cecil also emphasised again that categories of arbitrable dispute could not be too strictly laid down because in so many cases of legal interpretation vital interests were involved.²

He successfully resisted suggestions from Senator Root and M. Larnaude that the international court's constitution should be included in the Covenant. He felt that the court would have a better chance if constituted after the League had become a going concern.³

He himself introduced an amendment to this article which was incorporated in the revised Covenant.⁴ This made the international court competent 'to hear and determine any dispute of an international character which the parties thereto submit to it'. This was in line with Cecil's wish to give the court an important position in the future so that international law could grow there on as many cases as possible. But the proposal shocked Miller: '... the amendment of Lord Robert Cecil has included all questions of an international character. That is an enormous addition to the jurisdiction and is going the whole road to

¹F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 325 (Article XIII)

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 378

³Ibid., i. 298-299; and: Baker Library, Harvard, Thomas W. Lamont Papers, 165.27: Cecil to Lamont, 24 March 1919; and: D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 378-379

⁴F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 325 (Article XIV)

compulsory arbitration',¹ - a rather panic-stricken reaction from an American constitutionalist who seems to have anticipated more immediate progress with the court than even Cecil at the height of his optimism expected.

Cecil also opposed a suggestion - from Root - that there should be machinery for reviewing and codifying international law;² once again he used Britain's experience of the Declaration of London as an argument against this idea.³

There were some important changes in article fifteen - on Council action in settling disputes. On 18 March, Cecil submitted a proposal to Wilson. He felt that it was not clear what would happen if the Council unanimously arrived at a solution unacceptable to both parties to the dispute. The Council, in the 14 February Draft, had the power to propose necessary measures if the recommendation was not accepted; this might involve coercive sanctions or giving League blessing to military action by one party against another; clearly such measures would be absurd in a case where neither party accepted the settlement. Cecil therefore proposed that it should be stated clearly that this discretionary action should only take place in cases where one party had

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 328-329

²Ibid., i. 378

³F.O. 880/222, L. of N. 22; Balfour to Lord Reading, tel. message from Cecil, 4 Apr. 1919

accepted the recommendation and the other had refused to do so.¹

Unfortunately Wilson had turned against the arrangement in the February Article as it stood. As the senators had pointed out, he said, under the present arrangement America could be coerced into accepting a settlement to which it was opposed. Cecil's amendment did not alter that fact; and Wilson therefore decided to eliminate altogether the clause giving the Council discretion to act if a power refused to accept a unanimous recommendation. The article would go back to its original form - members would simply be bound not to go to war with anyone complying with a unanimous recommendation.² Cecil had no choice but to accept this, and despite the previous fear of Hymans and others no objection seems to have been made to Wilson's suggestion at the commission on 24 March.³

On the April drafting committee, however, Cecil tried to give back to the Council the discretionary power of action in the event of failure to comply with a settlement. Cecil's plan of the League involved the establishment of the rule of law and giving the Council power even of altering an existing treaty if necessary. But if that power were to have any meaning, it had to involve power of enforcement. He therefore proposed: 'In the event of any party to the dispute failing to comply with these recommendations, the Council shall consider what steps, if any,

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 290-291

²Ibid.

³Ibid., i. 331

shall be taken to give effect to them.¹

There was a further argument for this proposal: if it were known that the recommendation of the Council were less effective than that of an arbitral award, a state which knew itself to be in the wrong would always elect to go before the Council rather than arbitrators - which would discourage the use of arbitration. 'This would be a most unfortunate result', the author of the British section explanation wrote, 'as it is desirable to encourage a resort to arbitration whenever possible'.²

Cecil submitted another amendment to the drafting committee to meet a further difficulty in this same article. This difficulty was that if the Council could not agree on a settlement, it seemed as if the other clauses of the Covenant would stop a member state from going to the aid of one of the parties if it were attacked by another. Though the principles of the 'territorial guarantee' article were supposed to meet this difficulty, Cecil wanted it stated that if there were no unanimous recommendation the members should be free to act as they thought fit for the maintenance of right and justice.³

The second of these amendments appeared in the final version.⁴

As desired by the American Senators, and agreed on by Cecil and Wilson, a new clause in article fifteen put domestic affairs outside

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 670

²Ibid., i. 416-417

³Ibid., i. 417

⁴F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 325-326 (Article XV)

the scope of the League.¹

On 22 March Cecil proposed a new article on behalf of the Dutch, providing for the use of commissions of conciliation by the Council when arbitration was unsuitable - a suggestion similar to one by Noel-Baker which he had earlier rejected. Wilson said that the Council already had such powers. Cecil agreed to drop the article if that was recognised.²

Cecil failed notably in one respect - over giving the territorial revision article the prominence he wished it to have; it remained ineffective, came towards the end of the Covenant and was not referred to in article ten or elsewhere,³ although he had tried repeatedly to draw attention to it and was to continue to do so.⁴ Unanimity was of course required in this article - there was no possibility of majority voting on revision having effect.

It was with reference to the League's work in revising treaties that Cecil defended the article on registration of all treaties with the League secretariat when he spoke to the British Empire delegation on 21 April. This article - which had not been changed - would, he said, lead to open diplomacy; if a treaty were bad the article gave members the chance of bringing it before the Assembly, under article nineteen, for revision.⁵

¹F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 326 (Article XV); and: D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 276

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 351

³F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 327 (Article XIX); and: 324 (Article X)

⁴See, for example: Sir James Butler Papers: cutting from Times, 27 Dec. 1918, Cecil to Thomas, Dec. 1918 and: Times, 14 June 1919, p.16, col.3: speech by Cecil, 13 June 1919; and: F.O. 374/22, p.169, 26th meeting of B.E.D., 21 Apr 1919; and: Letters of the League of Nations, from the Files of Raymond B. Fosdick (1st edn. Princeton 1966), p. 22

⁵F.O. 374/22, p. 173: 27th meeting of B.E.D., 21 Apr. 1919

Cecil was at first unwilling to meet the U.S. senators' wish for a clause in the Covenant safeguarding the Monroe doctrine. This was because criticisms would inevitably be levelled against the League if it were felt that Wilson had secured a special exemption for America; and, as he and Wilson both agreed, on 13 March, it would be hard to allow this and not also allow reservations for similar understandings, such as the 'Asiatic' doctrine recently proclaimed by Japan - a doctrine which would make China far more vulnerable to Japanese exploitation.¹ For his own part Cecil did not believe that the Monroe doctrine did conflict with the Covenant. Senator Root wanted it stated that though the participation of the U.S.A. in the Old World and of the Old World in the New was henceforward to be accepted when the peace of the world was in danger, normally such participation would be an interest secondary in importance for the peoples of the two hemispheres to those in their respective regions.² Cecil said that the Covenant would only operate in disputes threatening world peace. He therefore felt the reservation of the Monroe doctrine to be unnecessary.³ When he was asked to write a draft of a possible article to that effect, he did not mention the Monroe doctrine by name.⁴

However, Miller persuaded both him and Wilson of the need to meet the Senators on this matter, and since he was at least convinced that the Monroe doctrine reservation was not inconsistent with the Covenant, he

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 295

²Ibid., i. 299

³Thomas W. Lamont Papers, 165.27, Cecil to Lamont, 24 March 1919

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 297-298

supported it when it was proposed as an amendment to the 'territorial guarantee' article at the commission. It was phrased so as to safeguard international engagements such as arbitration treaties, 'or regional understandings like the Monroe Doctrine for securing the maintenance of Peace'.¹ Larnaude, speaking for the French, was afraid that it would weaken the guarantee; Cecil did not think so:

'I think that if he will consult diplomatic history he will find that the Monroe Doctrine has never in a single instance been in effect as a guide of the policy of American participation in Europe, but always with regard to European interference in American affairs. When American statesmen or international lawyers make any objection to the interference of America in European affairs they never have done it on the basis of the Monroe Doctrine, but always on the basis of Washington's farewell Address'.²

The French were not wholly satisfied, but the reservation was accepted; it was put into a separate article to mollify their fears about the guarantee.³ To quieten China the previous article bound members to abrogate inconsistent understandings as well as treaties. Cecil admitted the Monroe doctrine article was not well drafted when he defended it to the B.E.D.; and he agreed with Borden that it would be helpful if Wilson would explain the doctrine clearly to the Conference to end misunderstandings.⁴

Cecil tried late in April to get the President to accept

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 369

²Ibid., i. 449

³F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 327 (Article XXI)

⁴F.O. 374/22, p.173-4: 27th meeting of B.E.D., 21 Apr. 1919

Switzerland's traditional position of military neutrality as one of the regional understandings which secured the maintenance of peace, under this Monroe doctrine article. He wanted him to make a public declaration to that effect.¹ Wilson did not do so.

Cecil's stand for Switzerland illustrates that Cecil, whatever his shortcomings as an expert on foreign affairs, did not invariably take a lawyer's line, and insist on legal consistency where the political facts were more important. Switzerland wished to be a member of the League; her traditional policy made her unwilling to take part in military sanctions; as a small nation she was excused from these - as opposed to economic sanctions. But she wished, in addition, to be excused from the obligation to allow passage of League troops through her territory in the event of a League war. She wanted a clause requiring the assent of a member before League troops could go through. But the French - and Miller - were against allowing any kind of neutrality within the League: a breach of the Covenant committed all others against the breaker. Cecil backed the Swiss; he wanted the League seat on their territory, and he felt that their interest in the League was of more importance than the argument that to make exception for one nation was to encourage others to seek it too. Subsequent events justified his view - it was found in later years that sanctions could not, in any case, be applied uniformly.² But on 11 April, when Cecil attempted to introduce an amendment to meet this problem, it was rejected.³ Wilson's subsequent refusal to

¹House Papers, Cecil to House, 24 Apr. 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 428-438

³Ibid., ii. 381

make exception for the Swiss under the Monroe doctrine defeated Cecil's efforts to achieve this at the Peace Conference.

The American senators did not want America to be burdened against her will with mandatory responsibilities; the taking of a mandate, they insisted, must be clearly stated to be optional. There was no important disagreement about this change, which appeared in the revised draft.¹

The mandates article, twenty-two, laid out in nine paragraphs the general terms decided on by the Council of Ten on 30 January.² The question was still fraught with controversy. First, it had still not been decided, by 7 May, whether Armenia and certain regions of the near East were to be mandates at all or to what mandatory powers they were to be assigned. Secondly, the terms of the individual mandates had still to be worked out in detail.

In general, the settlement was going in the wrong direction as far as Cecil's hopes of international administration were concerned. For example, his desire that there should be an end to the system of foreign concessions in China had received a blow when Wilson had allowed Japan to have the former German lease of Shantung, as agreed in her secret treaty with the Entente powers. The League was to have no special duties in the Far East, and the 'sacrifices' and neutralised or international administration advocated again by Cecil in February 1919,³ were not considered. He was uninfluential because he had no expert knowledge of that region and the Chinese delegates had made no attempt to enlist his aid about this.⁴

¹F.R.P.C., 1919, iii. 328 (Article XXII)

²Ibid.

³F.O. 608/209, f.634/1/2.1298, p.336: minute by Cecil, 6 Feb. 1919, on dispatch by Jordan, 23 Jan. 1919

⁴Beer Diary, 15 May 1919

He had learned, too, that British Empire representatives were contemplating the total dispossession of the goods of all German nationals in the former German colonies by forced sale and confiscation and to expel all but a few who would be permitted to reside under licence or after relinquishing German nationality. The French had a similar plan.¹ Noel-Baker had pointed out - and Cecil agreed - that such action would discredit the mandate/² system. The section in the Treaty which dealt with the transfer of the German colonies did provide for compensation - by the German government; but its terms, even so, did not tend to enhance the reputation of the mandate system.

In February and March, Lord Milner had written a memorandum on the possible terms for the different categories of mandate that would be acceptable to the British Empire delegation.³ In this he recommended that the territories to be mandates should be ceded first to the principal Allies by the Peace Treaties with Germany and Turkey, and then assigned by other treaties to the mandatories. Cecil however wanted these areas to be transferred directly to the mandatories, to be named, along with the terms of the various mandates, in an annexe to be appended to the Treaty. These could be decided on while the Germans were considering the

¹F.O. 608/241, f.1614/5/1.7679: French draft text of clauses on treatment of Germans in ex-German colonies, under mandate, 18 Apr. 1919

²Ibid., f.1614/5/1.4721: memo by Frederick N. Green, 17 March 1919, comments by Noel-Baker, 25 March 1919 and Cecil, undated

³F.O. 374/22, p.58, memo by Lord Milner, 8 March 1919

Treaty.¹ He was keen that the transferred territories should be under the League from the start. His advice was not taken; in the treaty of 7 May the territories were assigned to the great powers.

The actual choice of the future mandatories for the 'B' and 'C' class regions - those which had no possibility of self government in the near future - did take place at the Supreme Council on 7 May.² Cecil had been particularly anxious that these territories and, more especially, the former possessions of Turkey in the Near East should not be allotted before the general terms of the various categories of mandate had been drawn up by an interallied commission and accepted by the Allies. Otherwise, he feared the powers named would fight for terms that would bring discredit to the League. He saw signs of this within the British Empire delegation; it was accepted that there would be no 'open door' policy for the Pacific mandates; and Milner's specimen 'C' class mandate in his 8 March memorandum also left out any provisions for the 'open door' or for freedom of conscience.³ French action at the beginning of May had confirmed Cecil's fears; there was a prohibition in the Covenant mandate article against the arming of natives for purposes other than for the defence of the mandate itself; unfortunately, Wilson had compromised this principle on 30 January, by telling Lloyd George, and Clemenceau -

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/30/3/52: minute by Bonar Law for Lloyd George, 3 May 1919

²A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, ed. H.W.V. Temperley, vol. vi (1st edn. London 1924), pp. 503-504

³F.O. 374/22, pp. 63-64: memo by Lord Milner, 8 March 1919; and see: F.O. 608/242, f.1634/1/I.4005, p.31: Cecil to Bliss, 12 March 1919

who wished to raise troops in French mandates for the defence of France - that it was intended only to forbid use of mandate native troops abroad 'for the purposes of aggression'¹; Clemenceau therefore tried to insert a last-minute change in the Covenant while it was being incorporated in the Treaty; his amendment permitted the recruitment of troops in the mandate for the defence of the mandatory's home territory.² Despite his earlier attitude, Wilson now took exception to this; he directed the Treaty drafting committee to scrap Clemenceau's amendment. Cecil agreed with the President. He felt that the amendment would effectively have destroyed the prohibition against arming the natives in the mandates, and have made the new system seem little different from annexation. Balfour backed Wilson, and Clemenceau did not fight the decision; but it was open to him to try again later, when the detailed arrangements were to be decided.³

The fate of the Near East remained a serious problem. French claims to be overlord of the whole of Syria continued. On his part the Emir Feisal did not relent, and the populations of the Syria region were still intensely opposed to a French 'A' class mandate there.⁴ One of the clauses of 30 January resolution on mandates, said of the 'A' class regions: 'The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of a mandatory power'. Cecil warned his government that if the French were given the mandate of Syria without the inhabitants

¹T.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 804-805

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 501-503

³Cecil Diary, 5 May 1919

⁴Temperley, History of the Peace Conference, vi. 145

being consulted, it would violate this undertaking, as well as the Anglo-French agreement of November 1918, and it would constitute a breach of faith with the Arabs in that area by the British and Americans.¹ His own prejudice against French control in that region had been reinforced by the news - in March - that the French intended to replace American missionaries there with French ones - and thereby jeopardise the educational programme already begun there. 'What idiots the French are!' he commented. 'This ... is a good instance of why the French are so unpopular in Syria etc'.² He continued to prefer the idea that France should be given the Constantinople mandate instead, if the Americans would not take it.³

On 20 March, Lloyd George again attempted to make the French drop their claims. He told them that they only had a reasonable claim to the Lebanon coastal zone. Wilson proposed an interallied enquiry into the wishes of the populations; but, owing to French reluctance, this had not been constituted by 7 May, and in fact never functioned.⁴

Nor had the commission to draw up the terms of the mandates started work by 7 May, in spite of Cecil's urging; he gave further reasons why such a body should complete its work before the mandatories were formally appointed, when he wrote to House on 16 May,⁵ and it is

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/13: minute by Cecil for Balfour, 4 March 1919, sent to Lloyd George

²F.O. 608/242, f.1634/I/I.4314, p.35: comments, undated, by Cecil on memo sent by Gulick for House, 25 Feb. 1919

³Cecil Diary, 18 March 1919

⁴Temperley, History of the Peace Conference, vi.145-148

⁵House Papers, Cecil to House, 16 May 1919

appropriate to record these here. First, he said it would lead to better, more uniform terms, as they would all be drawn up together. Secondly, it would prevent delay of ordered government when the mandates were allotted; he pointed out that already, in Armenia, uncertainty about that country's future status was having a destructive effect. Thirdly, it would help to impress states who were not going to be mandatory; it might help in England to diminish the suspicions of those who felt that the mandate system was simply a cloak for annexation. He admitted that certain conditions could not be laid down until the mandatory was named - he was thinking in particular of Syria - but the general safeguards and restrictions which the different mandates should include, should, he thought, be drawn up without delay.

In the revised draft of the Covenant, the three articles on League supervisory duties - subject to the provisions of existing or future international conventions (on arms trade control, on fair and humane labour conditions and on freedom of communications and equitable treatment for the commerce of members) - were put together in one article, twenty-three.

There was some rewording of the clauses on labour.¹ Miller wanted the Labour Convention to stand on its own, and was against mentioning it in the Covenant.² Finally there was a compromise - the members of the League were to 'establish and maintain the necessary organisations' for securing fair treatment for labour.³

¹F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 328-329 (Article XXIII)

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 392, 396, 400

³Ibid., i. 417; and ibid. ii. 671, 681

Cecil was likewise keen that all the signatories of the International Labour Convention should be members of the League:

'He held that if the League of Nations was to succeed it must enjoy a continuous activity and be given a definite position in regard to international problems of an ever-present character. The League of Nations would fail if it only came into operation when a state of war was imminent, and Labour was the most important example of international co-operation with which it could be concerned. He felt that if Labour would regard the League of Nations as an instrument of international progress a very valuable step would have been taken. Such action would prevent the assumption of claims by independent Socialist conferences that were inconsistent with the authority of the state'¹

Despite objections from Borden and Hughes 'who seems merely out to prevent things being done', Balfour secured the support of the British Empire delegation for a resolution favouring closer ties between the two organisations;² and later in the Treaty, the I.L.O. was established as an integral, though autonomous, part of the League.

Also in article twenty-three were some new items; members undertook to secure just treatment for the native populations under their control, to supervise the execution of agreements preventing traffic in women, children, and dangerous drugs, and to take steps towards international control of disease. Once again Cecil favoured a widening of the League's scope, and was backed by Noel-Baker;³ both supported the inclusion of a new article, twenty-five, put forward by the Americans, by which

¹F.O. 374/22, pp. 103-104: 18th meeting of B.E.D., 8 Apr. 1919

²Cecil Diary, 8 Apr. 1919

³See, for example: F.O. 608/240, j.1614/3/1.1518: minute by Noel-Baker for Cecil, 5 Feb. 1919

members were to promote, and co-operate with, the Red Cross organisations.¹

Cecil proposed the creation of a financial section of the League when he saw Wilson on 18 March;² this would maintain contact with, and could summon, expert financial opinion. Wilson opposed the plan; the difficulty was that Klotz, the French finance minister, had also proposed such a section, with the idea that it should 'control the execution of the financial terms of the Treaty of Peace in the event of the League of Nations receiving general control of the Treaty',³ - namely that it should enforce the indemnity which was going to be almost the greatest cause of grievance from the Germans. Hurst warned the British League section of the damage the League would incur if it were seen as 'an organisation for riveting the chains of capitalism upon the modern world'.⁴ Cecil agreed. He still hoped, however, that shorn of Klotz's clauses on the indemnity, it might be acceptable;⁵ but it was felt that even if it was innocuous, it might be misrepresented as having some connection with the Interallied debts; the French and many of the British wanted these to be cancelled; the Americans, who were the chief creditors, did not.⁶

¹D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 401-403, 407-408

²Ibid., 282-283, 292

³Ibid., i. 282 (note 2)

⁴F.O. 608/242, f.1641/1/1.1011: Hurst minute for Cecil, 6 Feb. 1919

⁵Ibid., f.1641/1/1.2973: comment by Cecil, undated, on memo by Montagu, 24 Feb. 1919

⁶D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 401

In consequence the idea was dropped.

These were some of the important ways in which the League Covenant was revised before it was submitted to the Germans. Wilson wrote to Cecil on 2 May thanking him: 'I feel, as I am sure that all the other members of the commission feel, that the labouring oar fell to you and that it is chiefly due to you that the Covenant has come out of the confusions of debate in its original integrity'.¹ This was only partly true, for Cecil had tried during the past months to strengthen the Council, diminish the importance of the 'territorial guarantee' and to make treaty revision a more central function of the League conferences. These alterations did change - or would have further changed - the character of the Covenant. Cecil was after a strong and effective organisation which not too obviously but quite definitely overrode national sovereignty in some cases. The principle in the Covenant was, as he explained to the B.E.D. on 21 April, that unless sovereignty on a matter was specifically taken away, sovereign power remained.² He personally was ready for a sacrifice of sovereign power by Britain - for more, indeed, than was demanded in the Covenant; he put this view clearly and vehemently to a meeting of the Friends' League of Nations Committee, a month later; some interference with sovereignty was necessary, he said - 'The fundamental principle of the League was that the preservation of peace was more important than the satisfaction of any national'³

¹Library of Congress, Woodrow Wilson Papers, 5B, box 27: Wilson to Cecil, 2 May 1919

²F.O. 374/22, p.171-5: 27th meeting of B.E.D., 21 Apr. 1919

³The Times, 22 May, p.14 col. 1

ambition or aspiration'. Wilson himself, far more than Cecil, was concerned with preserving states' rights and national sovereignty, though his imprecise and less consistent thinking often led him into ideas which conflicted with those rights.¹ However Miller's presence had acted as a restraint on such inconsistencies, as had British government views on Cecil's own thinking about sovereignty.

Cecil replied to Wilson's letter of thanks, on 4 May. He concluded:

'The acceptance of the Covenant which owes so much to you is the first step. But in itself the Covenant is no more than a bare skeleton. We have next to clothe it with flesh and muscle. Even so it will be but a dead body unless a spirit can be infused into it. For that we must look under God to the peoples of the world & especially to those of America & England. May they be rightly inspired'²

He had already been hard at work on this task of inspiration. First he had worked through the press; he gave a number of explanatory interviews to British and foreign journalists.³ Wickham Steed, the new editor of The Times, undertook in February to give the League friendly coverage.⁴ Cecil was anxious that after 14 February the press should boost the Commission's Covenant and not simply the League idea.⁵ Secondly,

¹ Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, pp. 216-217

² Library of Congress, Woodrow Wilson Papers, 5B, box 27: Cecil to Wilson, 4 May 1919

³ See: Cecil Diary, 9 Jan.: 11 Jan.: 18 Jan.: 23 Jan. 1919

⁴ Ibid., 27 Feb. 1919

⁵ F.O. 608/243, f.1641/3/2.3163: Balfour to Lord Curzon, draft telegram for Percy from Cecil, 27 Feb. 1919

he kept in touch with the League of Nations Union, and asked them to co-operate with the press; some of their representatives visited him in Paris in February.¹ The society was faced with difficulties; there were rumours that the League was holding up the peace settlement, that it was the brainchild of the followers of the unpopular Mr. Asquith, and that Republican American criticism was stifling it.² In general, the British public were friendly towards the League, but it had not yet caught their imagination; and their minds were fixed on vengeance and reparation as far as the peace was concerned. Cecil wrote to Lloyd George in March to ask him to make a public statement which would end the rumours damaging the League's reputation.³ He wrote also to Grey, to encourage further efforts by the L.N.U.⁴

'It is the strength of public opinion that has created the League, and for that strength, so far as the United Kingdom is concerned, you and those who are working with you are in great measure responsible. But.... I desire.... to urge that your efforts are just as necessary now. The action of Governments can create a body; the will of the Nations must give the living soul. We provide that, at least every year the leading statesmen of five great and four lesser powers should meet face to face to consider whether danger is threatening the world's peace. They must go to that meeting fortified by the knowledge that the Nations they represent ardently desire that they should work in the true spirit of international co-operation and will steadfastly support them in all measures they may take to that end.

No one can doubt that such is the real feeling of the British nation, but many still remain to be converted, and many more have not yet realised how they can give effective expression to what they feel'

¹Cecil Diary, 26 Jan. 1919

²Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/19: minute by Cecil for Lloyd George, 26 March 1919

³Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/19: Cecil minute for Lloyd George, 26 March 1919

⁴Ibid., (enclosure) Cecil to Lord Grey, 24 March 1919

By April, however, the L.N.U. was in danger of collapsing altogether, through lack of funds and support. Cecil undertook to help the society by asking a number of prominent men to join the L.N.U. Council - including his brother-in-law, Selborne; he promised more active support himself, and again sought out Lloyd George's assistance.¹ Through his efforts and those of others, the L.N.U. was saved from disaster, but it was still 'creaking and groaning along' in October and was not yet out of trouble.²

Cecil made a point, too, of discussing the League with Labour representatives. He talked with J.H. Thomas, and George Lansbury of the Daily Herald,³ and received British representatives of the Paris committee of the Berne Socialist Conference;⁴ from all of these he secured a good measure of agreement and support, despite differences on what could be attempted at once.

He addressed parliament on the subject of the League on 16 April,⁵ emphasising its world-wide character. His brother Hugh had also spoken up for the League in the House.⁶ Members of his family circle gave him

¹Gilbert Murray Papers, League of Nations and Allied Subjects, 1918-1921: secretary of Organisation Committee of L.N.U. to Murray, 14 Apr. 1919

²CHE 6/46: Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 8 Oct. 1919

³Cecil Diary, 18-24 Feb. 1919; and: ibid. 23 Jan. 1919

⁴Ibid., 31 March 1919; and: The Times, 2 Apr. 1919, p. 14, col. 1

⁵Cecil Diary, 12-19 Apr. 1919

⁶Hansard, 5th series, 1919, vol. 112.93

support in his League work during this time. His brother Salisbury sent his views on the mandate idea;¹ and William Ormsby-Gore, who had married Cecil's niece, and was a technical expert on Oriental affairs at the Conference, contributed to the discussions on League responsibilities in the League section as well as helping the colonial section to frame the mandate terms.²

His hopes of launching the League, while public opinion against war was still strong, led him to urge that the secretariat should be organised and the League's agenda prepared as soon as possible.³ House took the same view; he wrote out a draft resolution calling for the appointment of a committee on organisation. Cecil read this to the League commission on 11 April.⁴ The Plenary Conference passed a resolution on the same lines on 28 April.⁵ The organisation committee, which included Cecil, House and Drummond, together with other Allied and neutral representatives, first met on 5 May. At this meeting, they passed resolutions on the provision of funds and on other matters, and charged the acting secretary-general (Drummond) with the preparation of a plan of organisation which they could discuss.⁶

¹CHE 52/56: 4th Marquess of Salisbury to Lady R. Cecil, 4 Feb. 1919

²Private information

³D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 360

⁴D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 393

⁵P.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 330. House Diary, xv, 13 Apr. 1919

⁶D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 500-501

Such was the nature of the League of Nations scheme, and such had been Cecil's involvement in it, when the Treaty was presented to the Germans on 7 May. Before describing his views on the Peace Treaty, and his final work on the League during the conference, Cecil's part in the economic aspects of the settlement must now be considered.

PART FOUR

LORD ROBERT CECIL AND ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION AT PARIS, 1919

Chapter Nine

Economic Reconstruction

December 1918-March 1919

Economic stability in Europe and a just economic settlement were essential to the success of the League. Unfortunately, French obstruction in this field proved more serious and the Americans less co-operative than on the League commission. Cecil had little support or guidance from his own government; and even had conflicting national policies played less of a part the complexity of the problems was bound to make much of this work frustrating. Some of Cecil's best qualities - energy, persistence, far-sightedness - showed in his endeavours; but once again, his unwillingness to join the government did contribute to his difficulties.

After the Armistice, 230 million Europeans faced the prospect of 'the worst famine since the Thirty Years War'. Countries had been overrun and plundered, their manhood decimated; their populations, weakened by wartime requisitioning and blockade, fell easy victims to plagues of influenza and typhoid. Railway and communications systems had been disrupted. The blockade had disorganised the pre-war commercial arrangements between nations. There was a shipping shortage - despite an American and Allied net tonnage gain of half a million tons: the threat of a combined coal, dock and transport worker's strike in Britain led to shipowners taking precautionary measures, such as double bunkering of

ships, which reduced the amount of cargo space; overdue repairs were undertaken; some of the longer pre-war routes were resumed; troops had to be taken home overseas en masse; the German merchant fleet could not be made immediately available for use - as will be seen. All this increased the problem of providing food and materials where they were needed, and throughout Europe, malnutrition, overwork and in some cases defeat, dispirited factory workers on whose productive capacity recovery depended. The blockade caused suffering to neutrals as well as to the former enemy powers. Germany, the former Austrian Empire regions, Russia and Rumania were among the worst hit. Their economies were paralysed and they could not feed themselves until the next harvest nor pay for raw materials for recovery. Finally political difficulties added to the problems. Russia was in the throes of civil war. The break-up of Russia and Austria-Hungary caused confusion and altered the economies of the regions thus divided. German patriotic military groups were trying to gain control of the Baltic states. The Czechs and Poles were fighting for the possession of central European territory. Portugal, Spain, Germany, Hungary and Austria were politically insecure.¹

¹W. Arnold-Forster, The Blockade, 1914-1919, Before the Armistice - and After, (Oxford pamphlets on World Affairs, No. 17, Oxford 1939), p. 28; and: The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover, i. Years of Adventure 1874-1920 (London 1952) pp. 282-286; and: CHE 71/27, memo by Cecil, 2 March 1919; and: Keynes Papers, Marshall Economics Library, Cambridge, PT/3/2: note submitted by Cecil 5 Apr. 1919, and: Hansard, 5th series 1919, vol. 114, 2961-1971; and: J.A. Salter, C.B., Allied Shipping Control, An Experiment in International Administration (Economic and Social History of the World War, British series, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Oxford 1921), pp. 216 - 225; and: Temperley, History of the Peace Conference, i. 137-163, 288-296

The economic future of these countries was in the hands of the U.S.A., France and Britain - and in their capacity to agree on a policy. Unfortunately agreement proved difficult.

In the long term, the British government aimed chiefly at the recovery of her imperial trade. There was much jealousy of American commercial power.¹ Though the Paris resolutions of 1916 could not be put fully into practice their spirit remained, and Britain wished to maintain superiority over her chief pre-war rival, Germany; in consequence, the government did not want Germany - and the other enemy powers - to have immediate full access to raw materials which might enable her, through a major industrial effort, to flood world markets with cheap goods. They therefore favoured keeping the blockade controls for the next few months; they defended this partly on the grounds that supplies were short though, as explained, shipping and finance were really the problem.

British policy on reparations had been affected by the same ideas, though it had not developed in a coherent or deliberate way. The Allies had agreed with the German government that peace should be made in accordance with Wilson's Fourteen Points and subsequent addresses. Lansing sent the terms to the Germans on 5 November; the wording on reparations had been drafted by the British: '... Compensation will be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by the aggression of Germany^{by}/land and sea

¹ See: Lloyd George Papers, F/28/3/14: Hughes to Lloyd George, 19 March 1919

and in the air'. The provision was made lest Wilson's declaration that there should be no indemnities, and no punitive damages, should be interpreted as excluding restoration or financial payment. The word 'aggression' had been substituted for 'invasion' so as to include loss of merchant shipping. The British share of civilian damage would otherwise have been confined to the results of a few zeppelin raids.

This constituted a legal obligation to Germany. However Hughes protested vehemently at a Cabinet meeting in November; he pointed out that the Dominions, whose sacrifice had been great, would get almost no compensation under this arrangement. Germany was responsible for the war and should pay the full costs. The Northcliffe press started to attack the government decision at the same time, and demanded that Germany pay the total cost of the war.

According to a Board of Trade memorandum presented shortly before the Armistice, Germany had the capacity to pay \$3,500 million in damages; the authors of ^{the} memorandum thought it likely that the bill for damages would be so colossal that the figure paid would probably be determined by the capacity to pay rather than by what was deemed to be the necessary reparation. Lloyd George asked the Treasury to produce a report on the question; and he appointed a cabinet committee chaired by Hughes to report on the amount to be exacted and the means of payment.

In his election campaign Lloyd George shifted his ground and met popular clamour by saying that Germany was responsible for the war and must pay full costs; he did this because he believed that it would make

little difference: Germany would only pay as much as she was able to do; on the other hand, a war costs bill rather than a reparations bill for civilian damages, would mean a redistribution of the sum paid in favour of the British Empire.

When the Treasury report (by J.M. Keynes, unsigned) appeared, it confirmed that Germany's capacity to pay would be below the sum that could legitimately be demanded for reparations - let alone for full war costs. Keynes thought the Germans could pay £2-3,000 million, but that even £4,000 million would not cover the reparations bill.

The Hughes cabinet committee also presented its report. This pronounced that Germany was liable for the total cost of the war - which was estimated at £24,000 million. Total liability - including interest at 5% - would be about £40,000 million (if Germany paid over a period of 30 years). Germany would have to pay about £1,200 million annually in sinking funds and interest - that is, more than half of the figure Keynes calculated that she was capable of pay^{ing} at all. Lloyd George, after reading this, became incautious about the amount Germany could pay, and now claimed it had been underestimated. Thus he was fatally pledged by election speeches to extract a sum too large to be extracted and on terms which could only increase European instability; moreover this broke the pre-armistice agreement. Lloyd George argued that it did not go against Wilsonian principles, since it was the equivalent of damages for breach of the peace under civil law.¹

¹ See: R.F. Harrod, John Maynard Keynes (Papermac edn., London 1963) pp. 228-231; and: Ferdinand Czernin, Versailles 1919, ch. viii

The policy had opponents in the government. Churchill was against it; and Cecil endorsed, with his signature, the findings of the Keynes report, late in December.¹ In his own election addresses he had said only that: 'Compensation and reparation for the devastation and destruction wrought by Germany and her Allies must be exacted...'² and that: 'to the utmost of her power Germany must pay for all the damage she had caused'.³ This was vague language and promised little; there was nothing about paying for the total cost of the war. He never believed that the Germans would be able to pay the sum the government were preparing to demand.⁴ However, it was a long time before he took much active part in campaigning against the government's policy at the Conference. He was not privy to the early discussions at the Conference by the commission on reparations.

In the short term, the British wished to prevent Germany recovering her strength sufficiently during the armistice period to resume the war or to resist the terms of the Treaty. Manpower needs at home, and pressure by the troops for demobilisation meant that troop numbers must be reduced; but by keeping Germany semi-starved and depriving her of the means of obtaining war supplies, the Allies could stop Germany taking advantage of this. The military pressed these considerations and were

¹F.O. 371/4369, f.655.655: Treasury memo, Nov. 1919; memo by Headlam-Morley, 20 Dec. 1918: comment by Crowe, 23 Dec. 1918; Cecil signature, undated.

²Addit. MSS. 51162.f.60: election address by Cecil, 20 Nov. 1918

³Times Weekly, 20 Dec. 1918, p.1049

⁴Cecil Diary, 12 March 1919

supported by the Foreign Office.

Like the British government, the French, in the short term, wished to check German military revival before the peace was signed by keeping a stringent blockade. In the long term, the French wished to see the German economy crippled past hope of recovering its pre-war economic ascendancy and effective war economy; for this reason as well, they were in no hurry to raise the blockade; and they wanted Germany to pay a very large sum in reparations, over a long period. Like the British, they were intent on punishing their enemy as well. France was in a far worse state, economically, than Britain. She had a heavy adverse balance of trade. The devastations wrought by the war involved her in daily expenses as great as those of the war itself. While British and American troops remained in France she had enough dollars and sterling to pay for food and raw materials in the U.S.A. and the Empire - but this source was ending. The shipping shortage increased her food supply problems.¹ There was a large budget deficit. The franc had been kept at an artificially high level, and the government was apprehensive of conditions which might force this to crash, so restricted imports.²

As a result of the French financial position, the finance minister, Klotz, insisted also that France must demand the full costs of the war from Germany. Neither he nor Hughes could understand that if Germany

¹See F.R.P.C. 1919, x.3: S.E.C. 1st meeting 17 Feb. 1919

²See Cecil Diary, 14 March 1919; and: Firestone Library of Princeton University, Bernard M. Baruch Papers, IV.IV., 172 : Cecil to Baruch, 13 March 1919

was going to be able to pay the Allies such huge sums, she would have to recover so successfully that she would become the greatest economic power in Europe - the reverse of what they wanted. Nor could they appreciate that, equally, if Germany was economically crushed now, the result might be the strengthening there of the Bolshevism or right-wing nationalism that they feared so much. Already the new German socialist republic was faced with communist efforts to seize power and was seeking the assistance of the most potentially dangerous elements of militarism, the Free Corps, to defeat them.

French policy had its roots in the Paris policy of June 1916; but the attitude of Klotz and others was not a rational response to the new situation. France's appalling ordeal during the war, and the exhaustion of her leaders, was as Cecil observed, largely responsible for this failure in good sense. Clémentel, the normally urbane minister of commerce was particularly overtaxed and unable to face the fact of France's dependence on the U.S.A.¹ In this frame of mind, the French were unwilling to get to work. They waited passively for money to come to them from Germany. Like the British they owed huge sums to the United States; both nations hoped that payment of these sums might be postponed, if not cancelled, and France wanted further loans.²

¹Cecil Diary, 14 March 1919

²Ibid., 13 Feb. 1919

Italy was crippled. Her external war debt was proportionately the highest. She was dependent on imported raw materials - such as coal and iron - to maintain her industry. Her merchant navy was small. Finally her exports had chiefly been purchased by Austria, Russia and Germany, who were now unable to buy, and owing to their chiefly non-essential nature could not find purchasers elsewhere. She was completely dependent on her allies, but though keen for international co-operation, she did sometimes insist on measures which were against the general interest.¹

The U.S.A. had the advantage of an overwhelmingly superior economic position, and of being the belligerent which had suffered least. It was possible for them therefore to take a more detached and just view of the situation; and indeed much good sense was talked by the American delegates. But there was lack of nerve and judgement on their side also, which, as it lay in their power to save the situation, was fatal. As with the League, a break with their traditional policies was involved; and for this they were not yet prepared. The American commercial delegates were suspicious of British aims in particular, where they concerned the establishment of imperial preference, and the boosting of the Dominions' international position. And, as George Louis Beer observed: 'In all these commercial men there is markedly developed an American group spirit and a competitive attitude. They are extremely

¹ F.R.P.C. 1919, x.3: S.E.C., 1st meeting, 17 Feb. 1919; and: R.S. Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement (London, 1923) ii. 302 et seq.

nationalistic and all that is American is right and must be defended, whilst what is foreign is wrong.¹

The American delegates wanted a return to normal conditions and the removal of wartime restrictions which hampered their trade. They believed that the activity of private enterprise would then bring about a swift recovery. The U.S. treasury wished to withdraw from financing Europe, which they had done liberally over the past months, though finance was now needed more than ever.² The Americans were entitled to no reparations payments. There was serious friction between the British and Americans when it was revealed that the British were after full war costs.³

The inadequacies of these national policies and the fatal effects of their conflicts was to be felt in the months of the Conference.

As previously related, the Americans had turned down the Allied plan, supported by Cecil, of carrying out reconstruction through an organisation based on the wartime interallied supply bodies. American officers were withdrawn from the raw materials committees, and without them, the other allies could do little.⁴ Wilson asked Herbert Hoover, the U.S. food administrator, to take charge of economic reconstruction after the Armistice, and to erect new machinery for the purpose.

¹Beer Diary, 20 March 1919

²See Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement ii. 316-318

³Cecil Diary, 15 Feb. 1919

⁴F.O. 382/371 f.901.33924: minutes of 1st meeting of S.E.C. and comments by Leslie, 11 March 1919

Hoover had always believed in self-help and was suspicious of Europeans; he liked people to work for him, not with him; the interallied bodies' proud claim - that they had worked out successful policies informally, trans-nationally and on a basis of equality - was therefore of no interest to him.¹ He recommended a temporary relief programme to tide Europe over a period of food shortage until the harvest, and until it could resume production and obtain credit for food purchases; in the new advisory council he set up - the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief - the Allies only had influence in proportion to what they could provide in the way of surplus food and finance - which was very little. Hoover was overlord of the relief programme, directly responsible to the supreme council of the chief European Allies, and America. The independence of American economic policy was made clear - the U.S. Admiralty helped Hoover to get his food ships past the blockade.² The British and French disliked this arrangement. Clémentel still wanted Allied control of world resources for the period after the war.³ At the first meeting of the new council, on 11 January, the British again asked for interallied control until conditions improved.⁴ Cecil had himself told Hoover on 7 January that he had made a serious mistake in not using the Allied Maritime Transport Council with its central position and large experience.⁵ Hoover was unmoved;

¹ Lord Salter, interview, July 1967

² Herbert Hoover, Memoirs i. 287-299

³ Stanford University, The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace. The Herbert Hoover Archives, ARA Paris files, box 72-7: Hoover to House, 10 Dec. 1918

⁴ Herbert Hoover, Memoirs, p.298

⁵ Cecil Diary, 7 Jan. 1919

but he respected Cecil, who was among those who had defended his management of Belgian relief during the war.¹ He asked Cecil to come on the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief, largely, Cecil guessed, because he reckoned on Cecil being more malleable than the British government representatives, Lord Reading and Sir John Beale, about removing blockade controls. Cecil did not commit himself.

Reading had replaced Cecil on the A.M.T.C. and other supply bodies after his November resignation. It was a bad appointment. Though his views were reasonable, he was unfamiliar with the work, exhausted and ill; and, as Salter pointed out to Cecil in a stormy interview after his resignation, Reading was not capable of initiating policy quickly from day to day, which was essential in control and supply work. He could not act without a brief; and unfortunately he received little guidance from Lloyd George who had not given his mind to reconstruction questions during the end of 1918.² Reading's unwillingness to act over the blockade came close to destroying relations between the Americans and British in January.³ On 11 January he asked Cecil if he would consider taking on his work in a few days.⁴ Cecil did not decide at once; in the end he took over nearly a month later. Meanwhile,

¹ See F.O. 800/195, Belgium: Cecil to Lord Islington, 2 May 1916

² Lord Salter, Interview, July 1967; and: H. Montgomery Hyde, Lord Reading: The Life of Rufus Isaacs, First Marquess of Reading (London 1967) pp.307-8

³ Yale, Edward M. House Collection, Vance C. McCormick papers, Vance McCormick Diary 1918-1919, 11 Jan. 1919

⁴ Cecil Diary, 11 Jan. 1919

the blockade wrangles continued.

Under the existing blockade machinery, imports by neutral countries were restricted to the basic minimum domestic requirements. Neutral mail and cables were subject to censorship - 'the eyes of the blockade' - which enabled the Allies to detect the ultimate destination of goods and to regulate the distribution of essential commodities.¹ Neutral firms suspected of trading with the enemy were blacklisted. The neutrals had made agreements with the Allies to give them the option of buying a certain percentage of their exportable surplus, and to restrict re-export to the Central Powers of any such surplus, to specified quantities. Neutrals were rationed at the ports of supply. The enemy countries were cut off from most vital necessities and this applied to the liberated countries which had formerly been a part of them. The blockade was actually harsher after the armistice, because the presence of Allied ships in the Baltic prevented blockade evasion there, and stopped the Germans from fishing.²

One of the original armistice undertakings was that Germany should be allowed some food supplies. This had not been implemented by the time of the renewal in January; and at that time the Germans agreed to put their merchant fleet under Allied control for the duration of the armistice period. In return it was to be allowed to import a certain quantity of food. The French however, were unwilling to let the Germans

¹Hoover Papers, ARA box 83, Lord Derby to McCormick, 11 Jan. 1919, enclosing F.O. memo on censorship

²H. Arnold-Forster, The Blockade, pp. 3-28; and: see Temperley, History of the Peace Conference, i. 46-48, 320-323

pay for this in gold, the readiest means of payment, because the French had earmarked the gold for reparations, in order to replenish their depleted reserves. Moreover, they were content to make Germany go hungry for the next few months. The Germans therefore refused to release their fleet.¹ One of Cecil's first economic duties at the Conference was as member of a committee to discuss how the Germans could be made to keep to their agreement. Cecil was against increasing blockade pressure on the Germans, and was shocked that the French seemed intent on doing this, not simply to solve this problem, but as a general policy of intimidation. He was keen that the uncertainty of the armistice period should be ended by an immediate military and naval treaty.²

He was aware of the food shortage in Germany, and heard alarming reports from the U.S. food expert, Alonso Taylor, about conditions in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Bread and prostitution were the only things money could buy in Vienna. Metal was so scarce that every clock in Prague had gone. Adequate relief depended on transport, and transport had completely broken down.³ Cecil told G.L. Beer that he was convinced that the only hope for European peace lay in a stable and regenerated Germany.⁴

¹A.J. Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking, p.505

²Cecil Diary, 8, 10, 11 Feb. 1919; and F.R.P.C. 1919, iii. 970, 980-986

³Cecil Diary, 16 Jan. 1919; and: Vance McCormick Diary, 16 Jan. 1919

⁴Beer Diary, 10 Jan. 1919

On the other hand, during January and February he accepted the military arguments for keeping on the blockade. He cautioned Lloyd George against accepting the views of Sir R. Beveridge, who had advocated major relaxations.¹ Cecil shared the view of Sir John Beale that relaxation was desirable - but only if a preliminary military peace could first be made.²

The Americans wanted the controls removed - in particular the censorship. Hoover believed that the English were using it to hamper American trade, to their own advantage.³ McCormick approached the British Blockade Ministry early in February about this matter, and also asked them to consider the proposal that the neutrals be allowed to import a limited quantity of food and re-export some to Germany.⁴ It was not only the Americans who disliked the restrictions. The British Board of Trade advocated drastic relaxation because of the difficulties the blockade made for British trade; the Shipping Ministry found the blockade increased their difficulties.⁵ The Supreme Council of Supply and Relief made little progress towards a solution. However they did recommend slight relaxations of the quantitative controls over certain food imports by neutrals, and by the end of January some controls, too, were removed from imports by the

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/49/3/1: memo by Cecil, 16 Jan. 1919

²F.O. 382/2371, f.901.3155: memo by Beale, 21 Feb. 1919

³Hoover Papers, ARA box 83: Hoover to McCormick, 26 Feb. 1919

⁴F.O. 800/250, p.2: McCormick to Harmsworth 1 Feb. 1919

⁵F.O. 608/72, f.148/1/1.273: Harmsworth to Balfour for Lloyd George, 18 Jan. 1919; and Lloyd George Papers, F/35/3/3 MacLay to Lloyd George 22 Jan. 1919

liberated countries.¹

Even such mild relaxations alarmed the Foreign Office; Cecil Harmsworth, the new minister of blockade, told Cecil he feared that irretrievable damage might be done to the blockade machinery; it must be maintained until the treaty. He said that it ensured that the Allies got first consideration, the discontent that would follow if Germany got food and the Allies went short would be more dangerous than Bolshevism. He was only willing that some more food might be allowed to the neutrals, the liberated areas, and, quite soon, the Turks.² He and Curzon thought Lloyd George was not sufficiently aware of the importance of the blockade³ and he asked Cecil to keep an eye on anti-blockade tendencies.

Harmsworth was not forceful and tended to be led by the more dominating voices in his department - particularly Curzon, who, unlike Grey and Balfour, disliked dividing authority with a blockade minister. Cecil told Curzon that the Americans had assured him that they would take no action against the blockade without consulting him. Cecil warned, too, that some relaxation soon was unavoidable, if the Supreme Council decided to let food into Germany; and he told Curzon that he thought that the blockade of Austria must be relaxed because her existence as an organised state was threatened: 'We cannot afford to see another great territory given over to Bolshevism and anarchy'. He agreed, however, that the

¹F.O. 608/72. f.148/1/1. 2069: British Embassy, Paris, to F.O., 13 Feb. 1919, transmitting minutes of Supreme Council of Supply and Relief, 6 Feb. 1919

²F.O. 382/2369.f.901.23783. Harmsworth tel. for Cecil, 10 Feb. 1919; and F.O. 800/250, p.18: Harmsworth to Lord Curzon, 11 Feb. 1919, and note by Lord Curzon; and pp. 10-13: Harmsworth to Cecil, 11 Feb. 1919

³See Lloyd George Papers, F/12/1/2: Lord Curzon to Lloyd George, 18 Jan. 1918

structure of the blockade should not be dismantled.¹

When Cecil did take over from Reading, it was not as British representative on the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief. By the end of January, it had been recognised that the body was a failure. It was overcrowded with experts, and as Salter later wrote:

'The Council of Supply and Relief, restricted to one not clearly separable part of the many economic problems facing the Allies, without the assistance of a staff accustomed to work together, without the unifying force of the war, and without the personal authority of Lord Robert Cecil, proved ineffective'²

Hooover therefore had asked for a new body with wider terms of reference, greater power, and containing men of ministerial status prepared to take responsibility for policies.

The Supreme Council therefore voted, on 8 February, for the setting up of the Supreme Economic Council, which supervised reconstruction work during the rest of the Conference. Its purposes were to execute economic measures during reconstruction, to ensure sufficient supply of raw materials for the recovery of the devastated areas, to restore the hardest hit economies and to supply neutral and enemy countries without depriving the Allies of essential goods.³ It co-ordinated the functions of the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief with work previously performed by the

¹F.O. 608/72, f.148/1/5.2196: draft tel. Cecil to Lord Curzon, 15 Feb.1919

²Lord Salter (J.A. Salter), Memoirs of a Public Servant (London 1961) p.133

³F.R.P.C. 1919, x.4: S.E.C. 2nd meeting, 25 Feb. 1919

interallied control organisations, like the Superior Blockade Council; the food, shipping, raw materials and blockade sections of the new council took over most of these duties. Communications and finance sections were also created.¹

Cecil was appointed to this new council as Reading's successor; he was convinced that Lloyd George was reluctant to employ him;² certainly Lloyd George may well have had mixed feelings, because of finding Cecil an increasingly awkward colleague; however he accepted Cecil's terms³ - that he should not have to join the government, that a minister should speak for him in parliament and that he should be allowed to choose his assistants; Cecil assumed in making his services available that this would be a purely temporary arrangement.⁴ All relevant correspondence was to be sent to him from the Foreign Office.⁵ He was made senior English delegate in preference to Beale, who had quarrelled with Hoover and had less national standing. Even so, the British could not normally be represented on the council by men of equal political weight with American delegates like Hoover and Baruch, who were some of the most powerful men in the U.S.A. British ministers were busy at home. Cecil therefore worked out an arrangement by which British ministers were the members but were represented permanently on the council by experts.⁶ Cecil, as chief

¹ Ibid., x.2: S.E.C., 1st meeting 17 Feb. 1919

² CHE 6/16: Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 1 Feb. 1919

³ Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/10: draft tel. by Lloyd George, not dated

⁴ Ibid., F/6/6/9: Cecil tel. for Lloyd George, 8 Feb. 1919

⁵ F.O. 382/2370, f.901.25427, Balfour (from Cecil) to F.O., 13 Feb. 1919

⁶ Cecil Diary, 18-24 Feb. 1919

British member of the Economic Council, and chairman of the British Empire Economic Committee, received all proposals for action on behalf of the British delegates. He was always present at the meetings, except when he was out of Paris. The council met twice a week, and the various sections - he was a member of the raw materials section - met separately to prepare findings for it. He usually acted as chairman of the council. Britain, the U.S.A., France, Italy and later Belgium were members, with five delegates each, two attending at a time on a rota basis.¹

R.S. Baker described the S.E.C. as 'the most powerful economic organisation the world has yet known'; and the Council of Ten ruled on 5 March that it had full executive authority within the limits of its charter and needed no higher authority for its decisions.² In fact it was not powerful, and this ruling had no effect where long term political decisions were concerned - it only in practice had authority to decide about transitory measures.³ It reported directly to the Heads of State in council, but its reports were often ignored by them; it had no say in drafting the economic clauses of the treaty - which was the task of the reparations, financial and economic commissions. Its only executive power was through the interallied organisations it took over, but these had lost many of their former powers. It was without a special fund, or

¹Temperley, History of Peace Conference, i.299

²R.S. Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, ii. 341

³F.R.P.C. 1919, x.4: S.E.C. 2nd meeting, 25 Feb. 1919

control of expenditure by governments.¹ Hoover ran his relief organisation quite independently of the S.E.C., though he found it useful as a clearing house for some questions.² Cecil recognised its limitations, but hoped still for results.³ The Foreign Office were, unfortunately, suspicious of his position - and indeed of the whole organisation: 'Everything is extremely vague here from Cecil's position downwards...' wrote O'Malley, '... The British department of the S.E.C. has no constitutional position'.⁴ The functions of the Council struck Foreign Office officials as incoherent, and its constitution as overcomplicated - 'almost as bad as the Athanasian creed'.⁵

The S.E.C. was to disappoint more optimistic expectations: its minutes were inadequate and arrived late; Cecil himself found that it was a rare occasion when it dealt with agenda quickly;⁶ and like the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief, it grew rapidly too large; by April there were sometimes sixty people present; it became as **one official** said 'a perfect bear garden'.⁷

In February Cecil felt apprehensive about the work he had undertaken: 'My new work looks as if it will be a very big thing.'

¹Temperley, History of Peace Conference, i. 298

²Herbert Hoover, Memoirs, i. 298-299

³F.O. 382/2371, f.901.31476: Cecil to Harmsworth, 22 Feb. 1919

⁴F.O. 382/2375, f.901.553640: O'Malley to Robinson, 18 Apr. 1919

⁵F.O. 382/2375, f.901.49330: comment by Leslie (March?) on memo by Salter

⁶See Robert Cecil, Peace Conference Diary, 19 May

⁷F.O. 382/2375, f.901.55731: ^{/Sir P.} Interview to Leslie, 10 Apr. 1919

It is all about commerce, of which I know little and finance of which I know nothing'.¹ However he proved to be an effective chairman. Cecil Harmsworth, when he visited Paris, was impressed: 'He is an admirable spokesman - taking a strong lead when necessary and exercising remarkable influence over the mixed and refractory gathering'.²

In particular, he handled the American economic delegates with skill. He found them aggressive and domineering in public: 'For democrats they are extraordinarily autocratic, as I told them'.³ But, though often critical of Hoover, he never quarrelled with him, and he liked Vance McCormick, the former chairman of the War Trade Board, now handling commerce questions. Bernard Baruch, who had headed the War Industries Board he thought conceited and egotistic, when they first met: 'a man of great power but not attractive'.⁴ However their relations improved. Baruch's blatant flattery embarrassed Cecil but it engendered friendliness in the end, as flattery usually does. Cecil also formed a strong friendship with Thomas Lamont, one of the financial delegates; with him, with another, Norman Davis, and with Baruch, he exchanged many letters after the Conference.

Part of his difficulty in handling these powerful men lay in their jealous and competitive attitude towards one another; each was trying to control economy policy; much of this revolved round the question

¹CHE 6/24: Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 1 March 1919

²Private information

³Cecil Diary, 28 Apr. 1919

⁴Ibid., 14 Jan. 1919

whether the problems were fundamentally those of trade or finance.¹

Hoover enraged his colleagues by his dictatorial attitude,² and Baruch embarrassed them with his ignorance of many elementary commercial facts.³ Cecil avoided taking sides; Baruch paid a characteristic tribute to his work:

'His fearlessness, directness and unshakable integrity gained the admiration of the entire American group. He repeatedly overruled ambition and intrigue when presented to the supreme economic council no matter by whom fostered. One's faith in human nature remains unshaken to see the fearless manner in which Lord Robert Cecil refused to be a party to subterfuge'⁴

The Supreme Economic Council first met on 17 February. For the next month, the Americans, with little success, tried to end the blockade;⁵ they began by proposing the relaxation of restrictions on imports for the northern neutrals; this was blocked by the British, the French and the Italians. McCormick, on 25 February, took up, too, the censorship question with Cecil;⁶ he took the view that since the Armistice, the Germans had found new ways of evading it, and that it was therefore no longer effective in stopping German securities being sold abroad. Cecil was

¹Ibid., 30 March 1919

²McCormick Diary, 11 and 13 Jan. 1919

³Beer Diary, 10 Apr. 1919

⁴Baruch Papers, XX, Baruch to Cecil, 19 Feb. 1919

⁵See F.R.P.C. 1919, x.3: S.E.C. 1st meeting, 17 Feb. 1919

⁶McCormick Diary, 25 Feb. 1919

⁷Hoover papers, ARA box 24 folder 5: McCormick to Hoover, 27 Feb. 1919

sympathetic, but said that his government were against ending it, and he could do nothing.

The topic that dominated S.E.C. activities during its first month of work was the feeding of Germany. Negotiations were in progress in February, at Spa, between the Allies and Germans, about supply of food and the surrender of the German merchant fleet. The French still refused to let the Germans pay in gold. The Germans feared being cheated and insisted on a definite guarantee of all their food requirements up to the harvest. The Allies refused, because this made nonsense of the blockade. They gave the Germans several days in which to obtain new instructions from their government; otherwise, they said, they would break off negotiations on 6 March. Unfortunately, Reading had not pressed these difficulties strongly enough on the Prime Minister at the outset, and Lloyd George had not decided on a policy nor overruled the French.¹ The situation in Germany was dangerous for the Allies; lack of food made the likelihood of Bolshevik revolution greater daily. The head of the new Bavarian Republic, Eisner, was murdered on 21 February; following this, a wave of revolutionary strikes spread over Germany, reaching Berlin on 3 March.² The German government made the most of these scares, in the hope of gaining concessions from the Allies; Cecil was inclined to be suspicious; but insofar as he believed such reports, he regarded the threats as disastrous.³

¹CHE 6/28: Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 5 March 1919

²A. J. Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking, pp. 503-506

³Cecil Diary, 2 March 1919

While the Allied delegates awaited the German reply, at Spa, they asked their governments how far they should yield in making an agreement. But at the S.E.C., the French blocked every proposal on the question.¹

Meanwhile Cecil had been considering the problems generally. He talked with Baruch on 25 February about how to get people to work.² Credit had to be found to pay for raw materials for industry. Baruch's solution was the American one already familiar to Cecil - removal of all government controls, and private enterprise left to find a way. Cecil could sympathise with the view; he was a Free Trader. But he doubted whether the continental governments would accept this. He suspected Baruch of aiming at a plan that would give America commercial predominance in Europe, and watched with interest as he drew an elaborate portrait of himself as a disinterested man.

He was impressed the next day by the ideas of the Swedish banker, Marcus Wallenberg, who thought like Baruch, that if controls were removed, the traders and financiers would find a way. He said all hung on the industrial recovery of central Europe; without it, the neutrals would never get what they were owed, nor could they finance German industry, and if that was not financed, nobody, including the Allies, would get a penny. He suggested setting up a committee of neutral financiers to

¹ McCormick Diary, 1 March

² Cecil Diary, 25 Feb. 1919

advise the Allies. Cecil liked this plan.¹

Cecil concluded that the only way of ending paralysis was by getting the U.S.A. to undertake additional financial obligations.² He prepared a paper on the situation for the British Empire delegation on 2 March.³ After outlining the general problems, he discussed the problem of credit, which, for many reasons, the countries who could supply food and raw materials could not readily give; the buyer countries were not in a favourable enough export position to barter commodities either. The Allied governments were now prepared, he said, to extend limited credits to Austria. If the U.S. would give large credits to France and Italy, France might not object to the export of German gold, and then Germany could purchase food and raw materials, and the way to European recovery would be open. Only then could there be any hope that indemnities would be paid.

He criticised the attitude of British traders who feared that if Germany was allowed to export, British home and foreign trade would be damaged; he pointed out that Germany was in no condition to be a serious rival for a while; but in any case recovery was worth that risk. He also now recommended raising the blockade, though not completely, until Germany was disarmed under the treaty. He still accepted the military arguments for blockade, but he recognised that commercial and

¹Cecil Diary, 26 Feb. 1919

²Ibid., 1 March 1919

³CHE 71/27: memo by Cecil, 2 March 1919 (WCP. 187)

financial activity were strangled by it and that if it were removed, private firms might be prepared to give credits to other private firms, even if governments were not. Finally, he pointed out that the present uncertainty about the size of the indemnity to be exacted made people unwilling to enter financial transactions with enemy countries. The indemnity and disarmament must be settled. Anarchy and destruction were inevitable if these problems were not solved: 'If such a catastrophe took place in Central Europe it is at least doubtful whether the political institutions of any of the European countries would be strong enough to resist this new strain put upon them'.

Two days later, the bankers Robert Brand and André Lazard reinforced his views. They believed that the financial situation could probably be righted if America would lend a great lump sum to start the restoration of France and Belgium. Then, when confidence was restored, the ordinary commercial transactions would do the rest. Cecil felt that perhaps they were too optimistic; he wondered if Italy, too, and certainly the Central Powers, should not be given such financial assistance, if the scheme were to succeed. But he agreed with the idea as far as it went.¹

On 3 March, the S.E.C. decided to recommend that the Spa delegates should be instructed to tell the Germans unofficially that they would be allowed to pay for their food with the proceeds of exports

¹Cecil Diary, 4 March 1919

(including coal) or with exported goods.¹ This decision was not achieved without a wrangle with the French who insisted that the Germans must pay entirely in coal, not with the proceeds of coal. The French needed coal; neither the Americans nor the English did; as Cecil put it to Baruch, a few days later:

'The French cannot get back to normal conditions without a considerable import of machinery and raw material. To pay for this will shatter their exchange and destroy public confidence in their financial stability; that will prevent them from obtaining loans and capital... '2

Moreover the French did not want to see the Germans engaged again in profitable commerce. Clémentel told the S.E.C. that this was an ultimatum. Cecil replied angrily that the council would not accept an ultimatum; if the French thought the matter was so urgent they could withdraw from the Alliance and go it alone.³ The French gave way. But the problem had not been solved; the German workers needed more food before they could produce any exports.

Such episodes raised Cecil's standing with the Americans. McCormick had found him helpful - 'Lord Robert Cecil big as usual', he wrote on 1 March. 'How easy it would be if they were all like him';⁴ and after the 'hot meeting' of 3 March, Baruch was particularly friendly,

¹ F.R.P.C. 1919, x.31-32, 34-36: S.E.C., 3rd and 4th meetings, 1 March 1919

² Baruch papers, IV.IV. 172: Cecil to Baruch, 13 March 1919

³ Hoover Archives, Stanford, Hugh Gibson papers, 57-3, HG small notebook, 3 March 1919

⁴ McCormick Diary, 1 March 1919

complaining, as an ally in this incident, of French selfishness and the impossibility of supporting their exchange.¹ The following day Cecil talked with Hoover and Norman Davis. The French, they decided, must henceforward be ignored as far as possible over the German food question. They also discussed Italy, who regarded her territorial gains as inadequate and had therefore picked a quarrel with Yugoslavia as an excuse for claiming part of the Dalmatian coast. This action was preventing Hoover from sending relief trains to Austria from Trieste on the Adriatic. Cecil and the Americans agreed that the Italians should be coerced into reasonable behaviour. The only way to make the Latins co-operate was to convince them that they were at the mercy of the British and Americans.²

On 5 March, the Council of Ten discussed the dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia.³ The British and French backed Hoover; Cecil, who was present, pointed out that unless the Trieste-Vienna railway was put to use immediately, Austria would starve, with repercussions all over Europe; even the Germans, he told the Italians, had let food go through to occupied Belgium. Sonnino, the Italian foreign minister, was given time for consultations. After the meeting, Cecil lectured Crespi,⁴

¹Cecil Diary, 3 March 1919

²Ibid., 4 March 1919

³F.O. 382/2373, f.901.40069; Balfour tel. to F.O. 5 March 1919

⁴Cecil Diary, 5 March 1919

the Italian economic delegate, on Italian obstructiveness. Crespi suggested joint allied action to solve the dispute; Cecil recommended this plan to Balfour, and though the Italians continued to be 'extraordinarily futile and perverse',¹ the Council of Ten adopted it and Hoover was allowed to proceed.

On 6 March, Cecil found Lloyd George really concerned to prevent the possibility of revolution in Germany. Reports were coming in all the time about starvation there, notably from General Plumer, Commander of the British Army of the Rhine.² Cecil was encouraged by Lloyd George's attitude, particularly when he heard later that morning that the Spa talks had finally broken down over the gold question.³

House, Cecil and the French presented draft resolutions for the terms for feeding Germany to the S.E.C. on 7 March.⁴ No agreement was reached, but the British and American plans were similar, and were amalgamated that evening. The next day the Italians backed them, but the French held out, and refused to let the Germans use gold.⁵ They tried to make the Americans lend money to the Germans. In the end it

¹Ibid., 7 March 1919

²A.J. Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking, pp. 502, 511-512

³Ibid., 6 March 1919

⁴Ibid., 7 March 1919

⁵McCormick Diary, 8 March 1919

was decided to submit both French and Anglo-American resolutions to the Council of Ten, for their decision.

Cecil afterwards told Clemenceau that gold was the only practicable means of payment for the Germans. He made no objection to Clemenceau's wish that the blockade should continue. He told him also of his views on American aid to France and promised to support the French if they asked for this in exchange for a concession on the gold.¹ Clemenceau was friendly but did not stop the French objecting to the Anglo-American resolution later that day at the Council of Ten.

Cecil introduced it: he reminded the council² that they had undertaken to feed Germany before they had asked her to surrender her merchant fleet. He emphasised 'the obligation of humanity and the grave danger of Germany drifting into Bolshevism unless food were sent into Germany'. He played on the fear that now carried great weight at the Conference; but his tone, as Keynes recorded, was restrained and indicated a distaste for 'red peril' arguments.³

The plan was that the Germans should hand over their ships; in return, they should receive 270,000 tons of food at once, and permission to import up to 370,000 tons monthly until September. They should pay with credits from neutrals, sale of foreign holdings, visible and invisible exports, and advances against foreign investments, gold, etc.

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/14: Cecil to Lloyd George, 8 March 1919

²F.R.P.C. 1919, iv. 274-277

³A.J. Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking, p.509, note 4

The French objected that the blockade would be meaningless if Germany was fed for more than a month at a time; and they insisted that Germany must pay for food with raw materials; till these were exhausted, they must not touch resources wanted for reparations.¹

Hoover and Lloyd George retaliated with blockbusting speeches. Lloyd George told Klotz that his policy was fomenting Bolshevism; Cecil enjoyed this attack though he thought it injudicious; however, Hoover and Lloyd George got their way.² The French finally agreed, after the resolution had been modified so that only half the gold would be pledged.

Cecil told his wife in a letter of 9 March that he had had 'rather a horrible week'.

'... The worst of all this interallied work is that it is so slow. The Italians are perverse, the French (except Clemenceau) tricky and both extraordinarily greedy. The American public manners - their private manners are unimpeachable - are very rough & Hoover is so sensitive and jumpy that he is rather difficult to deal with. I curse French and Italians impartially but they don't seem to mind. The French gave me a dinner last night & ... Larnaude ... and Clementel ... both pronounced eulogies on me!! though I have come very near to insulting both of them. Crespi too the Italian told Ian M. /Malcolm/ that he adored me though I was 'feroce' - a strange crew!!!'³

At Brussels, on 14-15 March, agreement was finally reached with

¹A.J. Mayer, Politics and the Diplomacy of Peacemaking, pp. 509-510

²Cecil Diary, 8 March 1919

³CMS 6/30: Cecil to Lady R. Cecil, 9 March 1919

Germany on the basis of the Council of Men decision. Unfortunately the provision of food was to prove very difficult.

Chapter Ten
Economic Reconstruction
March - May 1919

Under the Brussels agreement, there were some immediate alleviations; fishing restrictions in the Baltic were dropped.¹ But the first German ships carrying food cargoes were not destined to reach Germany from the U.S.A. under the agreement, until the end of May.²

Despite the release of German shipping, the shipping situation had become increasingly serious for all countries. Maclay, the British shipping controller, told Cecil that he was anxious to free British trade from all shipping controls, when they met on 9 March. Cecil agreed with the principle behind this, but feared that it might prevent Britain from providing the necessary European services.³ He reported afterwards to Lloyd George that Maclay had complained that cargo space was being used for supplying Britain's Russian allies, when it was needed more urgently elsewhere. Cecil said that he agreed with Maclay, and asked whether the government could not put Russian military aid last, with priority for Empire and Allied needs and for the prevention of chaos in Central Europe. He told Lloyd George that he believed it to be unnecessary now to keep

¹F.R.P.C. 1919, x.65: S.E.C., 8th meeting, 17 March 1919

²Temperley, History of the Peace Conference, i. 315

³Cecil Diary, 9 March 1919

British troops in the Caucasus, though some of the government still regarded that area as vital to Indian security:

'treating, I suppose, the Caspian, Trans-caucasia and Afghanistan merely as a kind of private avenue leading up to the actual Indian frontier. Even if this somewhat fantastic theory be accepted, may we not enquire what conceivable hostile Power is likely to attempt to invade India at this stage of the world's history'

And he no longer thought the Baku-Batum oil pipeline worth protecting - if it were indeed in danger.¹ Though he had not yet given up all hope of defeating the Bolsheviki, he thought it foolish to attempt anything of the kind at the moment.² The failure of the non-Bolshevik Russians to make progress, the removal of Curzon's influence after the Eastern Affairs Committee had finished its work, and, most of all, Cecil's views on the economic situation, account for this further modification of his views on Russia.

Shipping delays owing to labour troubles in England were largely responsible for the coal shortage in Italy. British coal was not reaching France who, in her turn, found it hard to supply Italy; but she agreed to do so as an emergency measure.³ Unfortunately she failed to carry out this undertaking.

¹OME 75/106-107: Cecil to Lloyd George, 9 March 1919

²Cecil Diary, 9 March 1919

³F.R.P.C. 1919, x.67: S.E.C. 8th meeting, 17 March 1919

Hoover, since 8 March, had been urging on Cecil the need for larger sacrifices by the British in order to release shipping for general use. America, he said, was carrying the largest share, but supplies were still inadequate. He asked him to persuade his colleagues on the Wheat Executive to divert cargoes to starvation spots during March.¹ Cecil reminded him that Britain had labour difficulties and many Empire troops to ship home; but in the end he agreed to help.² He therefore sent a telegram to the British shipping minister asking him to give priority to food relief:

'I am more and more impressed as reports reach me daily from different parts of Europe with the absolute necessity of taking every possible measure to supply food both to the enemy and liberated countries at once if starvation is to be prevented throughout Europe...

The state of Europe makes the provision of food more important than the immediate revival of industry in Great Britain, and it is of vital importance that considerable extra tonnage should be allotted for relief purposes even at the cost of revising the policy designed to expedite the return of industry to its normal conditions'³

Following the end of general strike threats in England, Orlando urged Lloyd George to divert available shipping to Italy.⁴ Cecil explained to Lloyd George that Hoover was alarmed about not being able to provide

¹Hoover Papers, ARA box 27: Hoover to Cecil, 8 March 1919

²Ibid., Cecil to Hoover, 11 and 20 March 1919

³P.O. 608/76, F.226/I/6.5457: Cecil to Lloyd George, 9 March 1919

⁴Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/24: Orlando to Lloyd George, 25 March 1919

food for Germany under the Brussels Agreement; Cecil therefore pronounced his intention of telling the British Shipping Ministry that everything possible must be done to provide shipping for German food and Italian coal, even at the cost of postponing supplies for Great Britain.¹ He asked for Lloyd George's approval, and general agreement was given. He therefore wrote a memorandum for the Shipping Ministry on 30 March: Italian coal was the chief requirement; the failure of France to supply Italy as she had promised was the main cause of this; he recommended therefore that coal intended for France should be diverted to Italy. Because of the food shortage over the whole of Europe, not including Russia, he also suggested the suspension of food imports to the U.K. for the next two or three months while the crisis was on.² This memorandum, which was submitted to Lloyd George, was an instance of Cecil's readiness not only to initiate policy but also to co-operate with America and to sacrifice short-term British interests in the cause of general recovery.

The blockade, too, continued to hamper food supply programmes and Cecil, by 12 March, had decided that it must be ended as soon as possible. Germany must not simply be fed, but her trade must be given freedom to revive; otherwise there would be no European recovery, and the

¹Ibid., F/6/6/21: minute by Cecil for Lloyd George, 29 March 1919

²Ibid., F/6/6/23: memo by Cecil for Royden, 30 March 1919

Germans would never pay any reparations, though 'Personally I never much believed in their being able to do so to any considerable extent'. To achieve such total recovery it was worth the risk to British commerce through flooding of neutral markets with cheap German goods.¹

When the raw materials section of the S.E.C. discussed the feeding of Germany under the Brussels agreement on 15 March, the French said they were willing to allow Germany to export any goods she liked - provided the Allies had right of pre-emption. Cecil agreed, because of the urgency of the situation, and he admitted that France had a case because of her own shortages.² The S.E.C., discussing this on 24 March, proceeded along these lines; Germany was to be allowed to export goods to the Allied and Associated powers, except those named on a prohibited list. Germany could also export anything over her frontiers where her privilege to do so already existed i.e. to Denmark and Switzerland, without control - except for gold and securities.³

The Ministry of Blockade in London did not support Cecil's new views on the blockade. Their doubts about his status, and about that of the S.E.C., made them lean more on the advice of naval and military leaders, who still favoured controls. Nor had Harmsworth fully grasped the

¹Cecil Diary, 12 March 1919

²Cecil Diary, 15 March 1919

³F.R.P.C. 1919, x. 76, 83, 89 - S.E.C. 9th and 10th meetings, 22 and 24 March 1919

situation. He said he had no objection to food relief for Germany and Austria, subject to controls - a policy defensible on the grounds that it would save shipping; but he showed that he appreciated neither the shipping shortage nor the desperation in Germany, when he recommended sending coffee to the Germans to lighten their depression and to assure them of Allied good intentions about food.¹

His representative at Paris, Mitchell-Thomson, took a similar line. He said there could be no further relaxation until the Germans had accepted defeat and their liability for reparations in a preliminary treaty - even though the blockade might harm British trade.² Cecil was depressed to see how little the Ministry of Blockade had changed its views while McCormick commented: 'little fellows still fighting the war'.³

The Supreme Council had earlier agreed that the blockade should be lifted on the Adriatic to help the struggling new nationalities like Yugoslavia. But Italy had failed to withdraw the original decrees which instituted that blockade, because of her quarrel with the Slavs. Cecil taxed the Italians with this on 24 March, and it was agreed⁴ that the Supreme Council should consider the matter, and, also, a resolution to lift the blockade, where it affected Poland, from 1 April. After hearing of

¹F.O. 382/2372, f.901.36363: minute by Harmsworth for Leslie, 6 March 1919, and: ibid., Harmsworth to Cecil, 5 March 1919

²F.O. 608/72, f.148/1/5.3925: Mitchell-Thomson tel. for Cecil, 6 March 1919, and: ibid., f.148/15.3926: Mitchell-Thomson tel. for Cecil 7 March 1919

³McCormick Diary, 12 March 1919

⁴F.R.P.C. 1919, x. 86, 87: S.E.C. 10th meeting, 24 March 1919

Turkish difficulties on 26 March,¹ Cecil agreed to recommend removal of trade controls there as well.

On 28 March, the Council of Ten discussed these recommendations, and the necessary measures were passed despite a further obstacle in the shape of Balfour: 'His desire to avoid taking a decision has now grown into a passion, charming as he is in other respects', reported Cecil.²

Cecil heard an alarming report on the German situation on 26 March. The Germans now knew that the Allies intended to deprive them of Silesia, the Saar coal basin and Danzig, together with a corridor of German territory connecting Poland and Danzig, and cutting off East Prussia from the rest of Germany. Rather than accept this, Cecil was told, German financiers were prepared to accept left-wing revolution - now regarded as inevitable. Cecil treated the threat seriously when he examined a draft of the Fontainebleau memorandum, which Lloyd George had drawn up to meet this danger. There it was suggested that Bolshevism in Germany would make her both powerful and hostile again; Cecil added in the margin: 'Yes & Bolshevism will overwhelm Germany's enemies & Germany will recover first'.³

He considered that the memorandum still recommended terms which would make a bad peace: 'They still insist on giving Danzig to the Poles, which seems to me a great mistake; and their reparations policy is still outrageous. Moreover, the French will say that all the moderation is to

¹Cecil Diary, 26 March 1919

²Ibid., 27 March, 28 March 1919

³Lothian Papers, GD 40.17.61. p. 90 et seq.: draft memo - Cecil comments 25 March 1919

come from them, while we get everything we want, in which there is some truth'.¹

At his recommendation, various remarks he deemed tactless to the French were removed; he did not otherwise significantly influence the presentation of British policy in the document.

When Lloyd George asked him to look at the memorandum, he also authorised Cecil to discuss finance with the Americans.² Cecil had in fact been discussing the general situation for some days with Baruch.

Cecil told Baruch of his view that only American aid could break the vicious circle of economic misfortune; Baruch thought that there was no vicious circle, only a refusal to face facts.³ He did not like the idea of an American loan: '... there is a limit to the credit resources of America, great as they are.'⁴ They talked together on 30 March. Baruch told Cecil that he had his own plans which he was trying to press on the President; he was keeping this secret from his colleagues because of the jealousies involved; he had told the President that the problems were commercial, so that the finance experts were not called in.⁵

Cecil saw Brand the next day; they agreed that an Anglo-American committee should review the situation, with the French if possible; at the

¹Cecil Diary, 26 March, 1919

²Ibid., 26 March, 1919

³Baruch Papers, IV.IV. 172: Baruch to Cecil, 13 March 1919

⁴Ibid., p. 173: Baruch to Cecil, 15 March 1919

⁵Cecil Diary, 30 March 1919

moment the Americans were unwilling to help the French, because they believed they were simply trying to hold out for American aid. Cecil took the view that the French in fact knew what they should do but had lost the energy or will to act.¹

On 3 April, Cecil woke feeling oppressed by the economic danger, and resolved to act vigorously to force understanding on his colleagues.² It was at this point that he warned the British government that making trouble with the Americans over the Monroe doctrine in the Covenant might prejudice efforts to secure American loans for Europe.³ In the evening, Cecil saw Monnet, the French interallied control expert, who confirmed Brand's views strongly; destruction of credit had locked the wheels of European industry - and he thought an American loan was the only hope.⁴

On 4 April, Cecil again urged complete relaxation of controls, at the Raw Materials section of the S.E.C. They could no longer afford to play with the situation. They might fear German competition - though actually America was likely to be their biggest competitor - but if they seriously intended to control German industry in the future, they would have to occupy the country and might thereby damage all hope of getting reparations; they would find that early and widespread economic freedom would

¹Ibid., 31 March 1919

²Ibid., 3 Apr. 1919

³CHE 75/143-146: Cecil to Balfour, 5 Apr. 1919

⁴Cecil Diary, 3 Apr. 1919

give greater advantages than control. Clémentel said he remembered Cecil had earlier been an exponent of control; he himself regarded it as the only fair way of apportioning supplies - it was thus in basic agreement with League of Nations principles. Without it, countries would respond to the situation with protection, and so economic freedom would lead, paradoxically, to the prevention of liberty of exchange.¹ These arguments cannot have been lost on Cecil; but he was committed to securing an American loan and had to work with the Americans to meet their wishes; moreover with financial assistance for Europe, relaxation would make sense, while control would not.

On 4 April, Cecil saw House and urged on him the need for an immediate peace to save the world from collapse. He had a scheme whereby the President could compel the powers to a peace. The President's illness prevented immediate action but Cecil sent House his scheme in writing the next day.² It was an attempt to break the deadlock created by French and Italian obstructive reactions to Lloyd George and Wilson's change of heart on the settlement. If the peace terms were too severe, Cecil thought, they risked driving Europe into Bolshevism, but would prevent a split among the Allies; if the terms were too moderate, they might prevent Bolshevism, but equally might cause a reaction among the Allies leading to Bolshevism. '... ought we to ruin the enemy countries in an attempt to save ourselves, or ought we to take a very grave risk of ruining ourselves

¹Ibid., 4 Apr. 1919, and: Baruch Papers, minutes of S.E.C. Raw Materials committee, 4 Apr. 1919

²House Papers, Cecil to House, 5 Apr. 1919

in an attempt to save the enemy countries?'

He advocated, therefore, that the President should effectively buy an 'American Peace' based on the Fourteen Points, in exchange for postponing payment of interest on American war loans (if the Allies did so among themselves) and for a new loan, without interest, to be repaid whenever it was possible to do so. If the Allies did not accept this promptly, Wilson should leave the Conference. Cecil believed that the economic concessions would eliminate economic objections to a moderate reparations and economic settlement and that territorial questions would be less important if France and Italy became economically stable again. He believed that America must come to see that their trade interests lay in delivering Europe from anarchy, and would therefore not hesitate to make even greater sacrifices.

The scheme was in the right spirit of urgency; but it was not realistic about American financial policy which was against further loans or delays on repayment of debts; nor was it realistic about French territorial wishes; he did admit that 'only half the difficulties' had been solved by the plan. The whole paper was very typical of Cecil's statements - to the point, ingenious, dramatic and urging action, but involving a leap of faith for which most opinion was not ready.

On 2 April, Cecil talked with Baruch, who admitted finally that something would have to be done to advance money to various countries for reconstruction; but finance could not be discussed profitably until the road had been cleared of other matters; in particular the latest

decision on reparations made things difficult.¹

The situation about reparations had developed as follows: there had been a deadlock about liability; the Americans had insisted that the Germans must pay for civilian damages only; the British and French had wanted total war costs paid; moreover, the French and British had disagreed about the distribution of the payments. In the end, Wilson had let himself be persuaded by Smuts, on 21 March, that pensions and separation allowances granted to soldiers' wives and widows, could be included in the category of 'damage done to the civilian population of the Allies'. This arrangement ensured that Britain got a larger slice of the reparations cake, so that they did not need to press for total war costs.² In the draft Fontainebleau memorandum which Cecil saw, this enlargement of Britain's share was illustrated in a list of figures which gave 50% to France, 30% to Britain, and 20% to the others. Cecil's view was that France was certainly entitled to a higher percentage.³

The question of size and duration of payments was still unsettled, and was contributing to the delay in making peace. Estimates of capacity to pay varied from £3,000 million to £30,000 million. The Council of Four therefore decided early in April that the actual sum should not be written into the Treaty, but should be worked out by a reparations commission which would report its findings in 1921. The idea was to allow time for

¹Baruch Papers, IV.IV. p. 129: memo by Baruch on meeting with Cecil, 2 Apr. 1919

²See: Ferdinand Czernin, Versailles 1919, ch. viii

³Lothian Papers, GD.40.17.61, p.100 et seq: draft memo - Cecil comments, 25 March 1919

war passions to cool and rationality to return, as well as to postpone decision. While desire for revenge was strong, it enabled Lloyd George to pander to the public with talk of huge payments - as he did to Lord Riddell a few days later;¹ at the same time he could still hope for a sane settlement later. But because it was indefinite, it was a bad plan from other points of view; uncertainty would not attract finance to Germany, as Baruch explained to Cecil on 2 April; but if it was apparent that she would be required to pay some reasonable sum, Baruch believed that money could be raised on this and the world be set to work.²

Cecil therefore wrote to Lloyd George on 4 April; he urged that peace should be concluded at once and the blockade ended, and:

'In this connection the rumours as to the latest proposals for "settling" the Reparation question disquiet me. As I understand it is proposed to leave the amount of the payment by Germany undetermined. In other words it will remain what it is now, a heavy cloud on all financial transactions. No one will be ready to lend money to Germany for they will not know if she will be allowed to repay it. France will refrain from making any effort to help herself in the hopes that she may get all she wants out of Germany. It will be impossible to raise money on the security of the indemnity for no one will know what it amounts to. In practice it will mean that after a very brief interval the position will be found so intolerable that everyone will agree to abandon all attempts to make Germany pay. In other words this plan seems to me to combine the maximum of financial disturbance with the minimum of actual result'³

¹Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference, p. 48

²Baruch Papers, IV.IV. p. 129: memo by Baruch on meeting with Cecil, 2 Apr. 1919

³CHE 75/147-148: Cecil to Lloyd George, 4 Apr. 1919

This was sound economic sense. He did not go into the long term effects of the interest arrangements after the war - his preoccupation as member of a reconstruction council was always with the next few years after the war - which were also the jumping-off platform for the League.

There was, finally, a last battle over the time limit at this time. Wilson had thought that if the annual payments were fixed according to capacity and for a limited time it would not in fact matter how much was assessed as total liability. Cecil's view was that the limit should be less than 15-20 years.¹ But on 5 April at the Council of Four, House, who was acting for Wilson in his absence, gave way and agreed that there should be no time limit.

Baruch was anxious that Cecil and Keynes, the two men in the British delegation the Americans trusted most about reparations, should be allowed to counsel the British delegates who were working out the reparations policy.² But Cunliffe, Hughes and Sumner, who shared the views of the Northcliffe Press, did not use their advice.

With House's approval³ Cecil also drew up, on 5 April, a paper on the European situation, largely Brand's work,⁴ to be submitted to the S.E.C. to provide material for 'a strong resolution' by that body. In it, Cecil and Brand stated that the key task was to get production and exchange going normally. Otherwise there would be starvation among the

¹Lothian Papers, GD.40.17.61., p. 92: draft memo - Cecil comments 25 March 1919

²Lloyd George Papers, F/23/4/48: minute by Hankey for Lloyd George, 6 Apr. 1919

³Cecil Diary, 4 Apr. 1919

⁴Keynes Papers, PT/1: Brand to Keynes, 9 Apr. 1919

rising populations of Europe; it was happening in Russia already. Piecemeal relief was no solution, and the Allies were too short of resources to waste a single unnecessary penny. A comprehensive policy was needed to ensure for each country the stable currency, raw materials, working capital and functioning plant and transport that were lacking.

The greatest difficulty was over working capital - who was to provide it for Europe? Was private enterprise enough?

'So far as possible... Government borrowing inter se, and consequently Government control should be abandoned. To whatever extent private enterprise can meet the problem, it should be left to do so... it is absolutely essential to return to the condition where the normal play of economic forces determines the conduct of the individual, where, in fact, it becomes expensive for the individual to do wrong, and profitable to do right. Where a country still has its head above water, like England, the greatest possible freedom should be allowed. Until it is clearly insufficient, the same policy should be applied elsewhere'

But, they admitted, the risks were often too great - particularly in cases of countries hardest hit, and therefore most likely to turn Bolshevik; risks grew greater with every day's delay; also, the amounts wanted were too large, and the credit required too long, for private businesses.

Insurance and guarantee schemes by the governments concerned might meet the case if only short term credit was wanted; but it seemed likely that credit would be wanted for eighteen months to two years, and the banks would therefore get nothing back for that period; they would be obliged to trade on those terms, but their resources in long term credit would be limited. American bankers, merchants and manufacturers

would not be ready to take such risks; they were unused to foreign trade, and would prefer to unload any surplus stocks elsewhere if they could. If Britain exported on credit it would depress the British exchange, and make British imports enormously expensive if obtainable at all.

So interallied, not independent, government finance was the only solution. The plan should be on the following lines: the minimum expenditure of each country should be assessed, together with the form it should take, and the priorities. Expert advice should be available to the new states to avoid wastage of money. Loans should be used for objects for which private enterprise was clearly not available; this would stimulate private enterprise by getting things started.

All hung on the United States, who alone had the resources (British credits simply meant equivalent borrowing in the U.S.A.). The present loans sanctioned by Congress for Europe in the Liberty Loan Act and through the War Finance Corporation, carried conditions - i.e. limiting expenditure to the U.S.A. only - which made them unsuitable for the new European plan; a new loan would therefore require fresh legislation, and here Congress's ignorance of European conditions was likely to be an obstacle. Cecil's and Brand's hope was that America's favourable trade balance would not last and that the decline would force her to see the position and act accordingly.

Meanwhile governments might try and help out areas like Poland where there was real scarcity, with any raw materials they could spare them. At the end of the paper, Cecil and Brand drew attention to the fact

that the present reparation terms meant that the Allies would have to advance what they received as reparations as loans to Germany to keep her going.¹ Of this Cecil-Brand document, only the assessment of the situation was placed before the S.E.C., on 7 April.² The suggested solution was circulated among the British delegates dealing with economic matters. The S.E.C. agreed on a rather inadequate resolution for the Supreme Council, drawing attention to the extreme urgency of the situation.

The next few days were tense and gloomy. The Economic Council on 9 April was the scene of wrangles over the blockade, over which the Americans displayed ill-temper - to some effect.³ Cecil heard reports of starvation in Bavaria and of the revival of military arrogance in Germany.⁴ Smuts had recently returned from a mission to Hungary, where a Bolshevik government under Bela Kun had taken over on 22 March. Cecil had promised to back the Allied offer of relaxations of the blockade as a price of Kun's co-operation;⁵ but the negotiations had broken down, and the Allies kept Hungary under full blockade; Smuts gave grim accounts of the collapse of civilisation in Eastern Europe.⁶

The situation in Russia was now appalling; hundreds of thousands were starving; Mansen, the Norwegian explorer and philanthropist, wrote

¹ Keynes Papers, PT/3/2, note submitted by Cecil 5 Apr. 1919

² F.R.P.C. 1919, x.103, S.E.C. 7 Apr. 1919; and see pp. 110-113

³ Cecil Diary, McCormick Diary, 9 Apr. 1919

⁴ Cecil Diary, 10 Apr. 1919

⁵ Ibid., 31 March 1919

⁶ Ibid., 10 Apr. 1919

to the 'Big Four' pleading for relief there, with cessation of hostilities - on humanitarian grounds alone.¹ The plan, which had been drawn up by Hoover, was in some ways similar to the one which Cecil himself had recently been urging - for a cease-fire in Russia in return for a promise of food.² But Cecil questioned whether such a scheme was not futile unless Russia could be put in order economically and politically. He emphasised that the Allies must insist on the establishment of definite frontiers - otherwise cessation of hostilities meant very little. He thought the Nansen plan was weighted too much on the side of the non-Bolsheviks and for this reason was unreliable; even if the Bolsheviks agreed to the terms: 'how would it bind Denikin and Koltchak not to speak of the new Baltic States and Poland?'. Thus Cecil, without having become in any way more sympathetic towards the Bolsheviks, saw the flaw in the plan which Hoover's extreme apprehensions about Bolshevism had caused.

He had further criticisms: shipping was overburdened as it was, and only the U.S.A. could possibly find the finance to pay for the food.³ Subsequently he joined a committee with Hoover, Clementel and Crespi to discuss the Nansen plan. As a result of his own and other criticisms the Nansen plan was modified: boundaries between the combatants were to be fixed; the neutrals were to provide shipping, backed by the Allies as a last resort.⁴ This plan was sent to the Soviet government.

¹ Hoover Papers, ARA box 27: Nansen to Wilson, 3 Apr. 1919

² CHE 75/126-127: memo by Cecil, 19 March 1919

³ Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/28: Cecil to Lloyd George, 8 Apr. 1919

⁴ A.J. Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking, pp. 479-483; and: Hoover Papers, ARA box 27, Hoover to Cecil, 9 Apr. 1919, and enclosures

On 9 April Cecil saw House and told him that the overall economic position needed further investigation as recommended in his recent paper. He and Brand had discussed the formation of a small committee for this purpose, informal and unofficial in character. The members should be appointed by House, Clémentel and by Lloyd George, who had asked him to take this matter in hand. House welcomed the idea, if a reasonable Frenchman could be found. Cecil recommended Monnet, and suggested Brand and Keynes as the British representatives. The report of the committee would be read by Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George. Cecil and Brand both hoped that the outcome would be the conversion of Wilson to a scheme for American financial aid.¹

When Cecil returned to London on 12 April it was in order to speak the truth - as he saw it - in the Commons, about the European economic situation; he hoped to 'damp down jingo follies' and counteract the disastrous reparations policy canvassed in the Northcliffe Press.² Lloyd George approved this plan. Cecil also wanted the Cabinet to give him authority to carry out the details of relaxing the blockade without constant reference to the department concerned; the Board of Trade and Treasury did not insist on this, but the blockade and censorship authorities did, and claimed that he had been overstepping his powers when he tried to meet American wishes about the censorship.³ He proposed to resign if he

¹House Diary, xv. 9-10 Apr. 1919; and: Keynes Papers, PF/1: Brand to Keynes, 9 Apr. 1919

²Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/26: Cecil to Lloyd George, 7 Apr. 1919

³Ibid., F/6/6/27: Cecil tel. to Lord Curzon 10 Apr. 1919

did not get the authority.¹ After a display of 'obstructive feebleness',² the Cabinet agreed to give him this, subject to Lloyd George's approval and that of Curzon, after he had consulted with the blockade department.³

His address to parliament was a powerful piece of sermonising - one of his finest rhetorical efforts. He described the difficulties that were hampering recovery, in particular the lack of coal; political difficulties were partly responsible; there was now a war over the Teschen coal district between Poland and Czechoslovakia which was stopping the coal production there. He paid tribute to American relief work, but urged that only stable conditions could bring about real recovery. The indemnities question must be settled.

The Germans did not know what they would have to pay; the neutrals hesitated to trade with them; moreover, countries which were to receive indemnities (he avoided mentioning France by name) were waiting to see how much they were going to get, and until then, were not prepared to make the greatest efforts to meet the crisis.

The blockade had been relaxed to a large extent, except in the case of Germany and Hungary; in Hungary this would cease when a stable government was assured there. Neutral trade still had to be restricted, while the blockade was in force; as soon as possible it must be ended.

¹ McCormick Diary, 9 Apr. 1919

² Cecil Diary, 12-19 Apr. 1919

³ CAB 23/10, WC 556 item 3: 14 Apr. 1919

He appealed for co-operative policies:

'We all believe we are on the threshold of a new era. It is so. There is no doubt some great changes are going to happen. What is that era to be? Is it to be gradual and gradually increasing chaos in these countries until they have engulfed the whole fabric of Christian civilisation? Or by a supreme effort are we going to start on the road of international confidence and co-operation? That is really the issue before us'

And he concluded by calling for Allied efforts and American financial aid:

'If Europe is to be saved it will be saved by the united efforts of all those countries which were associated in the war. It is useless to suppose that in this world you can accomplish anything worth having except by sacrifice. In no other way does one really do anything worth doing. I venture to appeal, not only to my own countrymen, but to all the Anglo-Saxon race throughout the world. I do not base my appeal merely on grounds of self-interest - though that is strong enough. If Europe should collapse the repercussion on this country and on America must be of a very serious kind. I venture to appeal to a still stronger motive. It is not the first time that the world has had to appeal for assistance to the Anglo-Saxon race. Never has the appeal been so urgent as it is now. The whole fabric of our civilisation is in danger...¹

Lloyd George made a speech the same day warning of the dangers of a harsh peace.² Cecil congratulated him enthusiastically. 'It was perfectly splendid. I expect N./Northcliffe³ will burst'.

¹ Hansard, 5th series, 1919, vol. 114.2961-2971

² Hansard, 5th series, 1919, vol. 114.2945-2956

³ Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/30: Cecil to Lloyd George, 16 Apr. 1919

On his return, Cecil saw Keynes¹ and they agreed that as the first step towards getting American aid, Cecil, with Lloyd George's approval, should see House and show him Keynes's ingenious new scheme for the rehabilitation of Europe which had received the warm support of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Keynes explained in a covering letter that he had drawn up the scheme in response to the urgings of Chamberlain and Cecil for 'some bolder solution for the rehabilitation of the credit and economic life than is now available'.² It was intended to tide Europe over the period when reparations came into force and if possible give the Allies time to change their reparations policy. The Allies were to guarantee jointly the issue of bonds by the enemy powers which would temporarily finance the immediate reparations requirements of the devastated countries, and the interest on Allied debts to the U.S.A. It would prevent Germany being stripped of her working capital and would enable her to buy food, and would relieve the Allies of a burden. It was also an attempt to avoid the consequences of having publicly demanded an impossible sum.³ Effectively, it meant a large-scale loan by the Federal Reserve banks of the U.S.A. Lloyd George backed the scheme and later undertook to show it to Wilson and Clemenceau as the British plan. No further

¹Cecil Diary, 20 Apr. 1919

²Lloyd George Papers, F/7/2/27: Chamberlain to Lloyd George, 17 Apr. 1919, enclosing Keynes plan and explanatory draft letter by Keynes

³Lloyd George Papers, F/7/2/27: Chamberlain to Lloyd George, 17 Apr. 1919, enclosing Keynes plan and explanatory draft letter by Keynes: and: R.F. Harrod, John Maynard Keynes, pp. 246-247

approved Cecil's plan to see House, and also his blockade policy which was now: 'to get rid of all restrictions possible provided the machinery is left unhurt for reinforcing the blockade if necessary'.¹

The next day Cecil proposed at the S.E.C. that all restrictions on the supply of food to Europe should be suspended, and a press statement be issued to that effect. The French were opposed to this, and the question was postponed until the next day, after a heated discussion. Both British and French however had announced their government's intention to end blacklisting of neutral firms. The S.E.C. also agreed to press the Supreme Council to a decision about whether Upper Silesia was going to Poland or Germany - as this was upsetting the coal supply. At Cecil's suggestion they recommended that tonnage restrictions on the Elbe should be relaxed.²

When he saw House that evening, Cecil was in a harassed and despondent state, partly because his papers were in confusion, and partly because he had recently heard accounts of American financial thinking which gave him little hope that they would help Europe any more.³ House was not very encouraging either, though he said he had agreed generally with Cecil's Commons speech and thought that the President should make a similar address. He agreed that the Keynes scheme should be shown to the President.⁴

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/32: Cecil to Lloyd George, 21 Apr. 1919

²McCormick Diary, 22 Apr. 1919; and: F.R.P.C. 1919, x.202 and 177-181, S.E.C. 13th meeting, 22 Apr. 1919

³Cecil Diary, 21 Apr. 1919

⁴House Diary and Cecil Diary, 22 Apr. 1919

On 23 April, Cecil heard a warning, at breakfast with Lloyd George, from a recent visitor to Germany, Captain Gibson, that the Germans were likely to reject the Allied peace terms; most of them were prepared to risk revolution in consequence of continued starvation, because they had concluded that the Allies simply wished to crush Germany; even the monarchist foreign minister, Brockdorff-Rantzau, felt she had nothing to lose by going Bolshevik and looking East for Allies to recover her position. Gibson believed some Germans in the delegation now arrived at Paris were still in favour of signing. These included Carl Melchior, Germany's leading financial expert. Cecil was told that these men should be supported by every means possible. He therefore again pressed Lloyd George for more positive action about the blockade. And since Lloyd George, later that morning, showed signs of hesitation about this, because of Clemenceau's opposition, Cecil proposed that the S.E.C. should pass resolutions calling for relaxation of the blockade which the 'Big Four' could act on as they wished; Lloyd George warmly agreed to this. Cecil had the impression that he did not clearly understand the overall economic situation; and he was more apprehensive than ever about British economic policy when Keynes told him and the Prime Minister of proposals by the reparations commissioners, which included a plan for general requisitioning by an Allied indemnity commission, and German slave labour for France - plans which were subsequently not adopted. Cecil wrote:

'... our British reparations people... have shown an exceedingly narrow view of their duties in the matter, apparently being in favour of the most extreme proposals provided they did not directly injure British interests'¹

In the afternoon, Cecil again proposed suspension of the blockade at the S.E.C., and asked the council to agree on proposals for the suspension of all food restrictions, for transmission to the Council of Four. He was backed by Keynes and Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, but many of the British opposed his policy, though they did not betray the division at the meeting. Cecil had heard the pro-blockade views at the British Trade Delegation a few hours before:

'The truth is that some of the members of the delegation are so much in love with blockading for its own sake that they cannot bring themselves to agree to its suspension. Others are afraid of what public opinion in England may say, and others again believe that the maintenance of the blockade is the principal lever for securing peace. The first proposition, though natural, is absurd. As to the second, the only safe rule about public opinion is to take the course you think best, and you will generally find it is not difficult to justify to the average Englishman. The weapon of blockade is indeed a very powerful one, but it would become more and not less powerful by being suspended. If you have starved a man for some months and you then begin to feed him with the threat that if he does not do as you wish, you will starve him again, it is more likely that he will be impressed than if you continue the former regime unchanged'²

¹Cecil Diary, 23 Apr. 1919

²F.R.P.C. 1919, x. 210-215: S.E.C. 14th meeting, 23 Apr. 1919; and: Cecil Diary, 23 Apr. 1919

The French at the S.E.C. said they had instructions not to discuss suspension. They were ready only to discuss emergency measures or relaxation after the peace, and they pleaded for interallied control as the best way of feeding Germany. America and Italy backed Cecil, and together they worked out the proposals without the French. They recommended that all regulations restricting the commerce with the northern neutrals should be suspended, including blacklist, rationing of imports, and guarantees against re-export - however simplified. All restrictions of imports from neutrals into Germany, and all exports out of Germany, except gold, securities, and war materials should be suspended; there was to be Allied pre-emption on 50% of dyestuffs - in which Germany had a monopoly - at a controlled price. The Allied and Associated governments were to decide individually the extent to which it would allow its subjects to trade with enemy subjects. These relaxations were temporary and would be withdrawn if the German government was hostile, or was succeeded by a government which could not guarantee stability. These terms were to be published.¹

Mitchell-Thomson was one of those who continued to differ from Cecil over the blockade. He cautioned Cecil on 23 April, advising only limited relaxation, and wrote to the Blockade department for support, and to Lloyd George and Balfour also.² The Admiralty advised the Blockade department against further measures, particularly in view of the fact

¹Ibid.

²F.O. 800/250, p. 45: Mitchell-Thomson for Lloyd George, 23 Apr. 1919; and: pp. 47-48: Mitchell-Thomson to Harmsworth, 23 Apr. 1919; and: pp. 49-51: Mitchell-Thomson to Cecil, 23 Apr. 1919

that the Germans were shortly to receive the Treaty.¹ Harmsworth backed Mitchell-Thomson - he did not believe the blockade could be re-imposed unless enough blockade machinery was maintained; so he was in favour only of an enlarged free list - including food, and some de-rationing and simplified guarantees.² Cecil complained of Mitchell-Thomson's conduct in writing to the Prime Minister: '... I was acting well within my powers & with the assent of the P.M. so I expect to be supported!' He told Mitchell-Thomson that the home Blockade department had been obstructive all along: it was not a question of helping Germany but the neutrals; there could be no normal trade - and no indemnity - until the blockade was lifted; the Germans might well not sign, and they had grounds for complaint, for they had been promised food in November and were allowed none until March. He said Smuts, Gibson and Thwaites favoured relaxation together with well-informed Americans, and Clémentel, privately. The only opponents were the French military, who were always wrong about Germany, and Mitchell-Thomson and some other British representatives on the S.E.C. He thought re-imposition would be no problem; his experience as blockade minister had taught him that what was really effective was rationing - and the Allies controlled the source of supply. The shipping and financial situation would prevent Germany accumulating

¹F.O. 800/250, p. 46: minute by Kennard for Harmsworth, 23 Apr. 1919

²F.O. 800/250, p. 52: Harmsworth tel. for Mitchell-Thomson, 25 Apr. 1919

large stocks.¹

Harmsworth wrote a worried reply to Cecil denying that there had been bureaucratic obstruction by the Blockade department, and arguing again against suspension of the blockade; but he admitted the cogency of Cecil's arguments and that a decision from the Supreme Council would be a relief and would extricate the Blockade department from an awkward situation.² Mitchell-Thomson resumed the attack on the same day. He said he thought Cecil only had Cabinet authority to relax, not to suspend the blockade. Further, Germany must feel it was receiving rations at the Allies' pleasure; he cited the views of the C.I.G.S. and the First Sea Lord, as against those of Gibson, Smuts and Thwaites. He disagreed about the ease of re-imposing a blockade; rationing took a long time to have any effect, and America was likely to object to re-imposing rationing after it had been stopped; only military and naval action could restore the situation if the blockade had been suspended. He shared the view that the Germans were bluffing and were well aware that they could be starved into submission.³

Cecil made another bid for Lloyd George's elusive help in this wrangle; he wrote to Kerr:

'Mitchell-Thomson has returned to the charge with the assistance of the Admiralty (who are always wrong). His point that blockade by rationing operates slowly is fatuous. Of course if there are large stores in the neighbouring

¹ Lloyd George Papers, F/92/4/2: Cecil to Kerr, 25 Apr. 1919: and copy, enclosed, of Cecil to Mitchell-Thomson, 25 Apr. 1919

² F.O. 800/250, pp. 56-57: Harmsworth to Cecil, 26 Apr. 1919

³ Lloyd George Papers, F/45/4/2: Mitchell-Thomson to Cecil, 26 Apr. 1919

neutrals or in Germany all blockade operations act slowly. But as the contrary is the case the moment imports into Scandinavia are cut down to the strict necessities of those countries - i.e. by rationing - the blockade will be in full operation. The difficulty in the present circumstances is not to restrict supplies which are automatically restricted by finance & shipping but to prevent starvation & revolution. The problem is in fact exactly the reverse of what it was during the war. The truth is the Departments are passive under an arrangement by which they have to take direction from a man who is not in the Govt. I always thought the plan would be difficult to work & it could not go on with any chance of success without the support of the F.M.'s

Harmsworth reported to Mitchell-Thomson that he himself warmly supported the S.L.C. decision to import food into Germany, and would be only too willing to suspend the blockade if, as Churchill had recently claimed, military opinion considered that to be the right policy; but the Cabinet had discussed Churchill's assertions, and had advised against suspension. Moreover, Harmsworth said he could not act until he heard from the Council of Four.² Cecil wrote to Harmsworth on 30 April, urging suspension again, and repeating the argument that re-imposition by re-rationing backed by naval and military action would be possible because the neutrals would not have a surplus to spare for Germany for some time to come, and in any case, could no longer be scared by Germany into exporting to her, as they had been when she was still at war.³ He sent

¹Ibid., F/92/4/3: Cecil to Kerr, 27 Apr. 1919

²F.O. 800/250, p. 63: Harmsworth to Mitchell-Thomson, 29 Apr. 1919; and: pp. 61-65, passim.

³Ibid., p. 67: Cecil to Harmsworth, 30 Apr. 1919

a similar letter to Balfour, urging too that the censorship must finally be removed **save perhaps in East Europe**; the Americans had been urging him again of late. '... it causes an immense amount of irritation and uncertainty which is extremely prejudicial to the revival of confidence and normality on which all trade depends'. Its value as a blockade weapon was exaggerated: 'I doubt very much if the censorship contributed 5% to the efficiency of the blockade at any time. Under present conditions its blockade value is negligible'. It had supported the blacklists, but these were now suspended, and it was a check on the untrustworthiness of individual guarantees against re-export, but these no longer operated.¹

While action on blockade suspension was thus held up, speedy action to ward off catastrophe received another setback - the American financial delegates disliked the Keynes scheme, and the U.S. treasury told Davis to inform the President that it was politically and financially indefensible. They felt it cast all the burden on the U.S. and subjected them to further inflation to provide the European Allies with American credit. It also would involve specific amendment of the Federal Reserve Act and an amendment to the U.S. constitution! Furthermore, congressional and public opinion about the recent Victory Liberty Loan had been such that a further - and very large - loan would produce a revulsion of feeling which would jeopardise the Treaty and America's readiness to join

¹ Addit. MSS. 51094, ff. 219-221, Cecil memo for Balfour and Prime Minister, 28 Apr. 1919

the League.¹ Lamont told Wilson that he thought it a bad plan.² At Wilson's request, however, he agreed that he, Davis, Baruch and McCormick should prepare a report on it. Wilson told Lamont that the U.S. must help the small nations:³ 'always provided America retains freedom of action and does not get involved in guarantees',⁴ and the other U.S. delegates were in favour, at least in theory, of making some further sacrifices. McCormick wrote:

'Of one thing I am certain, that if our great rich nation, practically untouched by the war, does not do something to help our bankrupt Allies, then we will come out of the war the most hated nation in the world'⁵

Lamont was also against Cecil and Brand's idea of a small informal committee to survey the general situation, which they had urged on House and which Wilson, subsequently, had approved. Lamont and Davis both thought it unnecessary; the U.S. treasury was now carrying out its own review of the situation. Baruch broke this news to Cecil, who had no choice but to accept it. Baruch took the chance to criticise his rivals, the financial delegates and the Treasury officials: ... 'the world would

¹Library of Congress, Norman H. Davis Papers, 16A, folder 3: Polk (from Leffingwell & Rathbone), tels. to Lamont and Davis, 26 Apr., 28 Apr., 2 May 1919

²Baruch Papers, IV: Memoranda, comments and notes in diary form by Baruch, from 12 Apr. 1919: 25 Apr. 1919

³Lamont Papers, 273.2/2: Lamont Diary, 25 Apr. 1919

⁴Norman Davis Papers, 16 A, folder 3: Davis and Lamont tel. for Rathbone and Leffingwell, 29 Apr. 1919

⁵McCormick Diary, 24 Apr. 1919

get into greater difficulties before it could get out, as what was wanted was greater vision and not the cold calculating point of the lead pencil,¹ He gave other views which Cecil afterwards described:

'I was there for nearly three quarters of an hour, and on the whole very much amused. Baruch wandered about all over the subject, interspersing a number of personal appreciations of himself, and many protestations of his complete honesty and high-mindedness. I really believe he is an honest man, and should have no doubts about it if he did not so constantly assert it. There was a long passage about his methods of doing business, which at the time I thought merely one of his usual irrelevancies, but from what I have heard subsequently I think he intended it to be a kind of indication of the way in which he thought the economic problems in Europe should be dealt with - namely on the lines that America should provide plenty of money, but should insist on those who received the money also putting in a large sum of their own'²

Baruch approached Davis with his own scheme - Treasury advances for reconstruction and industrial requirements should be controlled in co-operation with the War Finance Corporation through a central organisation in Paris; this would ensure that in each case the money advanced would be spent in the U.S. and not wasted in paying exorbitant prices. The situation - particularly in connection with railway equipment - was urgent: 'Unless some action is taken at once... Europe will suffer more during the coming year than it has suffered at any time during the war'

¹Baruch Diary, 29 Apr. 1919

²Cecil Diary, 29 Apr.

³Norman Davis Papers, 46: Baruch to Davis, 30 Apr. 1919

Davis said that the Treasury's opinion was that 'the Government should get out of the banking business at the earliest possible moment' - and that the larger part of industrial reconstruction should be through private finance and commerce. The Treasury's latest advances had been simply for food, not rolling stock. Moreover such a plan would require more legislation, and Congress had recently refused to pass a proposed advance for reconstruction. They might reconsider this but it depended on the kind of peace that was signed.¹

Baruch evidently resented the fact that the financial candidates had cornered the question; he wrote back with some sarcasm:

'You have always been of the opinion that no discussion of this kind should take place and the United States should not become a party to it, and were particularly anxious that the Committee should not function. The Committee will not function and we are relieved of any embarrassment in the situation which I am sure you will be glad to hear'²

Baruch reported these depressing results to Cecil after a meeting of the S.E.C. raw materials section on 2 May. Baruch suggested 'as if it were entirely his own idea' that payments on Allied loans should be suspended to give the Allies time to recover. He also advocated some financial assistance to the smaller countries to get them started. This was not enough to revive Cecil's spirits.³ He had himself moved a

¹Ibid., 46: Davis to Baruch, 1 May 1919

²Ibid., 46: Baruch to Davis, 2 May 1919

³Cecil Diary, 2 May 1919

resolution at the meeting - for the Council of Four - which said that without the supply of raw materials there was no hope of peace in Europe, and that the Council of Four should detail experts to find a solution.¹ This was passed. In the evening, however, he found the British treasury was unwilling to offer more help to launch the new countries.²

On 3 May, Lloyd George gave Cecil the Council of Four's present view about raising of the blockade - namely, that it was felt that on political grounds - i.e. the arrival of the Germans - the moment was not propitious, and it would be better to take no action for the next few days; this was put into a letter, expressing Lloyd George's appreciation of the S.E.C.'s action in putting it forward, in order to show to Mitchell-Thomson that Cecil's action had Lloyd George's approval.³

On 3 May too Wilson sent his formal rejection of the Keynes scheme to Lloyd George. 'How can anyone', he wrote, 'expect America to turn over to Germany in any considerable measure new working capital to take the place of that which the European Nations have determined to take from her'.⁴

Cecil spoke with Keynes the same day; Keynes was very depressed but Cecil thought that the paper had stirred the Americans into realising

¹Baruch Papers: minutes of Raw Materials section of S.E.C. 2 May 1919

²Cecil Diary, 2 May 1919

³F.O. 800/250, pp. 69-70: Lloyd George to Cecil, 3 May 1919, enclosed in Mitchell-Thomson to Harmsworth, 6 May 1919

⁴Lloyd George Papers, F/7/2/34: Wilson to Lloyd George, 3 May 1919

they had a responsibility, and that proposals on finance must come from them or nothing would be done. 'That is part of their youthfulness'.¹ Privately, he felt the Americans had been right to reject it;² the unpopularity of the Liberty Loan in America made him fear the effect that such a scheme would have on American attitudes towards the Treaty and the League in particular.

The Reparations articles to be presented to the Germans as part of the Treaty were now completed, and Cecil after reading them through sent his comments to Lloyd George on 5 May. First he criticised the plan of including pensions and separation allowances in the category of damage done to civilians. It seemed not to be so 'in any other sense than that all war damage has to be paid for by the civilian population'. He again criticised the plan of postponing decision on the amount. Getting down to details, the Germans were required to pay £1000 million in cash or goods between the date of the signature of the Treaty and May 1 1921; out of this, too, was to come the expenses of occupying the country in various parts and the value of such food and raw materials that the Allies thought essential for Germany-to recover enough to meet her reparations obligations. Cecil said these expenses would be so great that they would leave little for the reparations fund - though he thought that unavoidable.

It was further proposed that Germany should hand over most of her

¹Cecil Diary, 5 May 1919

²Ibid., 13 May 1919

merchant navy; further, that she might also build 200,000 tons of shipping for the Allies in the next ten years: Cecil thought that if, as seemed likely, there would be a glut of shipping in a few years, this plan would probably put British shipyards out of business. Also, because the Germans would not be paid for this, it would reduce their earning power for paying reparations.

Nor would the forcible return of all the livestock identified as belonging to the Allies help Germany to revive economically and pay her reparations debts; even more so, this applied to the provision requiring Germany to hand over any animals, machinery or goods required for repairing war damage. The reparations commission to be constituted would take into account, in this context, the domestic requirements of Germany and the disruption involved. Cecil wrote:

'If this limitation is fairly construed it seems very doubtful whether these elaborate provisions for what is called physical reparation will have any operation beside securing, or assisting to secure, a market for surplus German products'

There were also provisions requiring the German government to give full information to the reparations commission on the commercial enterprises of its subjects, and binding it to pass laws necessary to give effect to the reparations clauses; in Cecil's view, these would strangle the commercial life of Germany.

He summed up his criticisms:

'This scheme seems to me exceedingly harassing in many of its details; it will hamper and interfere with German economic life without producing any corresponding advantage to her enemies. Most important of all, it will create such a condition of financial uncertainty and unrest as to generally imperil at the very least the possibility of the economic recovery of Europe. The essential conditions of any good scheme seem to me to be: first, immediate certainty, and second, such provisions as would enable Germany to obtain the credit necessary for her re-establishment. It appears to me that this scheme fails in both requirements'¹

It was a depressing result of the months of controversy. For the time being, too, Cecil agreed with Baruch and Loucheur that at this particular moment when the Germans were on the point of receiving the Treaty, it was not politically desirable to press for further relaxation of the blockade.² But every day without a definite reconstruction policy meant deterioration. On 7 May, Cecil tried again to retrieve the situation; he suggested to Lloyd George that he should urge the President to resurrect the idea of the small committee which the American finance delegates had suppressed:

'Co-operative action is absolutely necessary at any rate by England and the U.S. & a scheme must be worked out together. I feel sure this is the best way to get ahead. As the U.S. have rejected the Keynes scheme, they cannot refuse to discuss alternatives'³

He went to see House the following day, to discuss the representation

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/41: memo by Cecil for Lloyd George, 5 May 1919

²Cecil Diary, Baruch Diary, 6 May 1919

³Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/42: Cecil to Lloyd George, 7 May 1919

on the proposed Committee; House warned Cecil there would be a big fight within the U.S. delegation because not one of them would consent to be represented by another. 'Truly their ideas of organisation are extraordinarily primitive' commented Cecil.¹

On 8 May too, Cecil informed Lloyd George that he intended to leave Paris for good in a month's time and asked him to find a successor who was a minister. He said that his position outside the government had been an uneasy, and, constitutionally, not a very defensible one.²

On 9 May, the Council of Four met to review the economic situation; Cecil attended, and opened the proceedings with a speech similar to his House of Commons speech; finance was the key issue. He said he had no specific proposal; but he wished to point out the special difficulty of Germany; she had now received the full amount of food that she had paid for; but there were large quantities afloat for which payment had not been arranged; Germany's warnings that she would not be able to find the money had proved true - attempts to solve this by allowing exports had broken down. A paper by the food and finance sections of the S.E.C. for delivery to the German Financial Commission had concluded that further shipments of food must stop unless Germany could find further gold; £7 million more was needed, Hoover said. Germany had succeeded in smuggling many of her securities abroad, and

¹Cecil Diary, 8 May 1919

²Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/43: Cecil to Lloyd George, 8 May 1919

this increased the difficulties. Cecil made another appeal for further relaxing the blockade; he also asked that the relaxations so far achieved should be published plainly, together with the plans for re-imposition should that prove necessary; and it should be made quite clear that the blockade would be completely raised after the peace was signed, except against Bolshevik Russia.

The Four decided that the report for the German financial commission must not be submitted in case it would affect the negotiations adversely, but there might be verbal discussion along these lines. They also agreed to Wilson's suggestion to set up the small committee that Cecil wanted. The Americans pressed Cecil to be chairman of this body. Serbia was to be told that she must allow more food through to Austria, and Germany that unless she could find more money she would get no more food. Cecil was struck by the casual way in which the Four reached these and other decisions at the meetings: '... in the same way as you make an engagement to go to tea with somebody'.¹

Thus began Cecil's last hope at the Conference of retrieving the situation; his part in the closing stages of the drafting of the treaty must now be examined in its various aspects.

¹Cecil Diary, 9 May; and: F.R.P.C. 1919, v. 521-524

PART FIVE
THE PEACE SETTLEMENT, 1919

Chapter Eleven

The Treaty

'While Statesmen talk and diplomats debate,
Nearer and nearer marches unrelenting fate'

(Lines by Lord Robert Cecil in commonplace book, Paris,
8 June, 1919)¹

The Treaty, presented to the German delegates on 7 May, was received by them, predictably enough, with horror. A large number of the Allied delegates was not vastly pleased with the document either. The American economic representatives unanimously condemned it. The plenipotentiaries, House, Lansing and Bliss contemplated refusing to sign the Treaty.² Smuts attacked the settlement. Lloyd George's grasp of the workings of economic and international realities had always been greater than many of the British delegation; but unfortunately he had allowed political weaknesses to encumber his natural statesmanship; now he began - too late - to act on his better judgement and fight for a more workable settlement.

Even Loucheur the French minister of industrial reconstruction came to admit that the reparations articles were a mistake, though Clemenceau and Klotz continued to uphold them.³

Wilson's attitude was the most surprising; the current saying,

¹Cecil Diary, 8 June 1919

²McCormick Diary, 22 May 1919

³Baruch Diary, 26 May 1919

relayed by the bitter House, fallen from favour, was that 'Wilson talks like Jesus Christ and acts like Lloyd George'.¹ Unfortunately it was not so; he could have retrieved the situation; but he no longer saw issues clearly; he was bemused by earlier defeats, and he had suffered from bad health which foreshadowed his collapse the following Autumn. He convinced himself that he had not let himself be led by his Allies, and he obstinately refused to alter the arrangements. The criticisms of the Treaty were to gather strength as it became clear that the Germans might refuse to sign. Wilson attacked this as 'funk'.²

Cecil himself was one of the strongest critics of the Treaty. For some time he had opposed the possibly permanent occupation of the Saar coal district of Germany and the severance of Upper Silesia from her; both areas were ethnically German; the arrangement - urged by France to weaken Germany economically and to compensate France for her own coal fields, destroyed in the war - contravened the principal of nationality, which had been accepted by the Allies as part of the pre-armistice agreement with the Germans. For the first ten days after the Treaty's delivery, however, Cecil's mind was almost exclusively preoccupied with the immediate economic situation.

The Allied delegates to the small - and unnamed - committee on European reconstruction had been chosen; Louchet and Clémentel were to

¹House Diary, xvi. 30 May 1919

²McCormick Diary, 3 June 1919

represent France, Attolico and Crespi, Italy, Brand and Keynes, England; after the usual power struggle among the American delegates, Davis and Baruch were appointed;¹ Cecil took the chair; the first meeting was planned for 10 May.

Cecil visited Davis on 9 May. He found him anxious that America should give assistance but nervous of suggesting anything. He recoiled at Cecil's suggestion that he should prepare anything so definite as a 'plan', for the second meeting; he read him a statement from the U.S. treasury about the unwillingness of Americans to invest overseas and about fears that American money would be wasted on Europe. He, and Baruch also, implored Cecil to keep the committee's existence secret; they insisted that it should have no public functions.² Cecil was shocked:

'Altogether a strange exhibition, which showed that irresponsibility to Parliament, which all American Ministers or quasi-Ministers possess, does not make for courage. The only two men of real courage among the Americans are the President who is of course responsible directly to the American people, and House, who holds no office and has no ambitions except for the success of the President'³

At the first meeting, a sub-committee under Brand was appointed to report on the facts of the situation. Davis was asked to write a memorandum 'as to the direction in which the solution of the question might be sought' - he refused to offer anything more specific.⁴ It was also

¹Baruch Diary, 9 May 1919

²Cecil Diary, Baruch Diary, 9 May 1919

³Cecil Diary, 9 May 1919

⁴Cecil Diary, 10 May 1919

decided to request states to stop fighting each other if they wished for help; Cecil afterwards told Lloyd George that he thought pressure might be put on them by refusing them all supplies if they did not desist.¹

At the next meeting of the European economic committee on 13 May, the French and Italians explained that they both needed large loans - partly from Britain and partly from the U.S.A. Keynes said that Britain could manage without loans, provided it did not have to lend to others.² Davis had talked over solutions with Lamont - he had not consulted Baruch.³ In fact he had nothing constructive; he submitted a memorandum that Keynes described as 'quite futile';⁴ and, Cecil recorded, 'made an interminable speech, always coming rather near to making a definite proposal, and always drawing back at the last moment, much like a little boy bathing in the sea for the first time'.

Cecil partly blamed Keynes for the failure of these discussions: 'He has a mind of very exceptional ability, slightly academic in its character and very intolerant of fools' and, following the rejection of his scheme, was 'bitterly grieved, and rather inclined to say "If you won't have my scheme, no other is any good"'.⁵

It was agreed that Keynes and Davis should work on a report for the President. Davis promised to seek Wilson's support for something more constructive.⁶

¹ Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/44, Cecil to Lloyd George, 10 May 1919

² Keynes Papers, PT/1/1, Keynes to Bradbury, 22 May 1919, report of Committee's proceedings

³ Baruch Diary, 10 May 1919

⁴ Keynes Papers, PT/1/1, Keynes to Bradbury, 22 May 1919

⁵ Cecil Diary, 13 May 1919

⁶ Keynes Papers, PT/1/1, Keynes to Bradbury, 22 May 1919

The committee met again on 17 May. The Keynes-Davis report was not complete, but a part of it was read aloud. For the smaller states, it recommended assisting private traders through insurance schemes, to relieve them of the large credit risks in those parts. The Americans preferred this to putting up funds. It also suggested currency reorganisation. It criticised the reparations settlement, as far as German recovery was concerned. The French objected.

In addition, it mentioned U.S. treasury objections to further loans. Davis took the view that adequate credit facilities were already available - up to \$1000 million - though the War Finance Corporation, for the necessary purchases from American exporters, if combined with private credit and initiative. Cecil had pointed out over a month before that the conditions surrounding the money Davis had alluded to were such that it would not meet the case, and the committee did not accept Davis's view.¹

Meanwhile, there had been vigorous argument among the delegations about blockade policy. First, over German trade recovery - the French resisted the importation of raw materials into Germany to restart her industry; this was partly on political grounds, partly because France was very short of raw materials herself; at the same time, Loucheur agreed that Germany should receive enough food. Cecil remarked:

¹Lothian Papers GD 40/17/70, pp.13-15: Cecil to Lloyd George, enclosing report of committee, 31 May 1919.

'It seems to be quite impossible to induce the French to see that either you must feed Germany or starve her, and that it is merely purposeless to hold out a crust of bread or a pound of raw material with one hand and take it away with the other'

In the end, the Germans were authorised to import all approved raw materials urgently needed, in specified quantities from neighbouring neutrals, if waiting and paid for before 7 May 1919¹; and after a struggle with the French about waiving allied right of pre-emption on German exports, Cecil succeeded in getting their agreement to the waiving of this restriction over one third of the balance of Germany's exportable surplus of any of the commodities on the pre-emption list.²

His attempts to relax the censorship, as authorised by Lloyd George, still continued to be frustrated by Churchill, Curzon and others in the War Cabinet; he complained again to Lloyd George:

'For a clever man I know noone who is so almost invariably wrong as George Curzon, unless it be Winston! This time I am afraid they have done real harm. There is no single thing that so much prevents the recovery of Europe as the censorship. It strangles private enterprise by keeping buyer and seller apart'³

Secondly, the American economic delegates showed great displeasure at the decision of the Four to inform the neutrals of Allied plans to re-impose the blockade if the Germans refused to sign the Treaty. They

¹Cecil Diary, 8 May 1919; and: F.R.P.C. 1919, x. 249, 253-254: S.E.C. 17th meeting, 12 May 1919

²Cecil Diary, 12, 13 May 1919; and: F.R.P.C. 1919, x. 262-263; S.E.C. 18th meeting, 13 May 1919; and: McCormick Diary, 12 May 1919

³Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/46: Cecil to Lloyd George, 15 May 1919

said, on 12 May, that they had not been told of this plan, and argued that it would hinder German financial recovery. They preferred the plan of military occupation in such an eventuality. Cecil remarked that this would certainly be financially impossible apart from the political difficulties. The S.E.C. agreed to an American suggestion: that the Allies should reassure Germany that even if the blockade were re-imposed, she would get the food she had paid for, or have her money returned to her. Hoover was also worried that the U.S. Food Administration would lose money if the blockade was re-imposed before Germany had paid them for all the food they had sent her. Cecil thought that this showed 'a want of mental proportion'; in the unfortunate circumstances of having to re-impose the blockade, the Allied and Associated governments would have to bear the losses incurred, as part of war expenses.¹

The Council of Four discussed this on 14 May, but made no decision on the matter, then or during the next few days, except that if re-imposition was the policy chosen, then they would go ahead with asking for neutral co-operation. Cecil in fact had qualms about re-imposition, despite his stand against the Americans; he said so in a letter to Lloyd George, using this as an argument for modification of the Treaty; once again he credited the British public with the ability to spot injustice:

'... all recent reports from Germany, particularly one that reached me yesterday, and which I am having printed and circulated, speak of the terrible effects of the blockade, particularly on the children. I am afraid it may be true that practically the whole of the poorer children of Germany

¹ F.R.P.C. 1919, x. 248-249; S.E.C. 17th meeting, 12 May 1919; and: Cecil Diary, 12 May 1919; and: McCormick Diary, 9 May

of two or three years of age will be more or less permanently injured by the want of proper nourishment that they have had. It seems also true that tuberculosis has at least trebled.

These facts are more or less known now in England... They are indeed terrible, and I doubt if English public opinion will support the re-imposition of the blockade unless it is very clear that our quarrel with the Germans is thoroughly just. If for instance they decline to sign without some alleviation of the financial and reparations terms then I should feel myself considerable hesitation in starving their children to force them to accept terms which, as you know, I am by no means sure about myself¹

The German delegates were now sending their comments on the treaty to the Allies in the form of notes and memoranda; Cecil was asked to join a committee on 16 May to discuss the German reply to the League Covenant - a memorandum of Germany's own League proposals, and a plea for her immediate membership;² Cecil thought the proposals inferior to those in the Covenant. He believed personally that Germany should be in the League as soon as possible; but the Allied note, though based on the discussions of Cecil and his colleagues, did not give this view and told Germany she could not be a member for the moment.³

Cecil left Paris on 20 May. Just before leaving he listened sympathetically to Smuts's criticisms of the Treaty. Smuts feared that it would cause a breach with America, undoing a policy Cecil and he had

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/45; Cecil to Lloyd George, 14 May 1919

²D.H. Miller, Drafting, i. 539

³Ibid., i. 539-540

worked for steadily throughout the war. Cecil suggested that they should press for the revision of the Saar and reparations terms and modification of the Danzig, Corridor, and Silesia terms, together with a clause empowering the League Council to review the other conditions of the Treaty after five years, by majority vote;¹ it was his original treaty revision plan of Autumn 1916 - which now seemed amply justified by the circumstances - with even greater supranational legislative power for the powers in Conference.

In England, Cecil was mainly concerned with League promotion. He talked with Col. Fisher of the L.N.U. and agreed to be principal speaker at a big meeting at the Albert Hall on 13 June. He attended a Quaker League meeting on 21 May.² He spoke with the Archbishops of York and Canterbury; the latter was about to address a joint meeting of the Established Kirk General Assembly, and a like body of the Free Churches in Scotland, about the League - an unprecedented occasion.³ Both bishops were worried about the Treaty, and Cecil encouraged them to write to the Prime Minister.⁴ He met others who were critical. He did not neglect the problem of the Welsh church, which was as important to him as ever, and saw the Bishop of St. Asaph and St. David's on the subject on 22 May.⁵

¹Cecil Diary, 20 May 1919

²Ibid., 21 May 1919

³Cecil Diary, 22 May 1919

⁴Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/48, Cecil to Lloyd George, 30 May 1919

⁵Cecil Diary, 22 May 1919

He had hoped to come to England earlier to attend a meeting on the subject, but the economic work had prevented him; he had sent word to say so, and had added that the disasters of the war and the European economic troubles had made the impoverishment of the Church yet more indefensible.¹ He continued to urge the Prime Minister to change his policy on the question during the closing days of the Conference.²

After his return to Paris, he heard the end of the Keynes-Davis report at the small committee on European reconstruction. Davis had remarked at the end of the report that France, Britain and Italy would find it almost impossible despite resources, private credits and a well organised currency system to pay for their raw materials, and overcome adverse trade balances, to the extent of being able to pay interest on their war debts. Reparations would not meet this problem in the near future, and there might be a failure in confidence which would retard the recovery of private enterprise.

Davis told the committee that the President was therefore prepared to recommend that the War Trade Corporation should be authorised to advance money on its own risk for the resumption of European trade. He said also that Wilson was prepared to recommend to the Treasury to urge Congress that interest on interallied loans should be suspended for the next

¹The Times, 16 May, p.17, col. 5.

²Cecil Diary, 7 June 1919

three years.¹

Davis pledged the committee to secrecy about this. He stressed that they should not reckon on this coming to anything. Keynes himself was sceptical; he had never believed that the Americans really intended to do anything - the report was simply to enable them to evacuate Paris without too much discredit.²

Cecil later told House of his plan for a general revision clause in the Treaty;³ House welcomed this, and said that Wilson should suggest this; nothing came of this plan; House's influence over Wilson was at an end. On 27 May Cecil wrote out his views on the Treaty for the Prime Minister. He said that there would be no chance of permanent peace if the Upper Silesia, Saar and Danzig and Polish Corridor clauses were not altered. Further, the economic and financial clauses made German recovery almost impossible and she could not possibly find £1000 million in two years. Thirdly, the Treaty conflicted with the Armistice terms, the Fourteen Points, the Prime Minister's trades unions speech of January 1918, and with the Allied note to Wilson of 10 January 1917. None of these had spoken of taking over the Saar; and the restoration of Poland had been envisaged on a more modest scale. The Treaty mocked the ideas of 'fighting for peace' and 'a war to end war'; it was an unsound basis on

¹Cecil Diary, 24 May 1919

²Keynes Papers, PT/1/1, Keynes to Bradbury 22 May 1919

³Cecil Diary, 25 May 1919

which to erect the League. Furthermore, it endangered the possibility of greater friendship with America. American belief in justice and generosity towards a defeated enemy would lead to a popular revulsion in the U.S.A. against the Allies for having sabotaged the peace; and this would make them all the more eager to disentangle themselves from the League and from Europe. Cecil's American colleagues had even suggested that there would be a swing towards pro-German feeling. Britain's conduct before the war, exemplified by Sir Edward Grey's policy, was what gained her American assistance; since the peace, Britain had lost moral prestige and all impartial opinion which had been on her side during the war was now against her. Moral leadership of the world was likely to pass to the United States.¹

The Germans' reply to the reparations proposals arrived on 29 April. They offered to pay £5,000 million, of which £1,000 million would be paid by May 1926. The first expense they would undertake would be the work of restoring Belgium and France. Part of the balance would be paid in coal and other materials, in rolling stock, labour and tonnage. Cecil went down to the Quai d'Orsay for a meeting of the New States Committee. He told Clemenceau there that opinion in Britain was now asking for changes in the Treaty terms. Clemenceau said he was prepared for changes where justice demanded them; but this did not alter the reparations settlement,

¹ CHE 75/212-222: memo by Cecil for Lloyd George, 27 May 1919

in his view.¹

The following day, the British Empire delegation met to consider the German reply. Lloyd George was now convinced that an undefined liability was demoralising, and would discourage the Germans from working for fear that their capacity to pay would be rated too high. The problem was that if restoration was to be paid for first, Britain and the Empire would probably get nothing in the end. He wanted the Germans to promise a sum of money in addition to the costs of restoring Belgium and France - then he would consider their plan. Cecil said the main contribution of Germany towards restoration would be labour, and that would not be much out of £5,000 million. But most delegates were unimpressed by arguments for reducing the size of the payments, and were interested only in the Empire getting as large a cut as possible. Even Smuts, despite talk of peace 'within the four corners of the Fourteen Points', was anxious not to diminish the Empire share. Cecil suggested distributing the available money among the Allies, and letting each do with it what they wished. At this Hughes expressed impatience at the raising of a question he considered to be settled. Lloyd George suggested asking for a figure that was somewhere between the £5,000 million, and the £11,000 million that Cunliffe and Sumner had recently said the Allies would be justified in demanding. Barnes and Milner urged keeping the figure down.

Cecil was more encouraged by Lloyd George's remarks about other

¹Cecil Diary, 29 May 1919

aspects of the Treaty; Lloyd George spoke rather on the lines of Cecil's memorandum of 27 May: he felt that an actual injustice had taken place over Silesia and Posnania, where the Germans had a historic and ethnic case; a plebiscite should be used to test this view. He also questioned the occupation of the Rhineland for fifteen years - it might well cost £100 million a year and this would be taken out of the reparations sums that the Allies hoped to get.¹

The following night Cecil dined with the Prime Minister; Austen Chamberlain, Churchill, Montagu, Barnes, Balfour, Hankey and Kerr were among those present. They all agreed that the German note must be seriously considered, and that amendments should be made in the Treaty. Churchill, Cecil and Barnes went furthest - they advocated keeping Upper Silesia in Germany, dropping the idea of a Polish Corridor, shortening the occupation of the Saar, mollifying the occupation of the Rhineland, admitting Germany into the League very soon, and drastically revising the reparations settlement. They suggested a fixed sum of about £5000 million and no payments for the first year or so. Cecil wished to eliminate from the Treaty all small oppressive provisions which could be relegated to another Treaty conference and there dealt with at leisure. 'Austen's bureaucratic soul was much shocked', reported Cecil. Lloyd George was not really willing yet for any amendment except about Germany's Eastern frontier - in particular about Silesia. Cecil told his wife: 'The P.M. of course

¹F.O. 374/22 pp. 220-225: 32nd meeting of B.E.D., 30 May 1919; and Cecil Diary, 30 May 1919

prefers an irregular situation - morally, intellectually and administratively'.¹

Meanwhile, the Germans had made, on 29 May, as part of their criticism of the whole treaty, their final observations on the League. They asked to be admitted at once and on equal terms; all reference to war damage (alluded to in connection with freedom of transit) should be cut out of the Covenant; the principle of equality in trade and communications should be stated in economic regulations, to eliminate danger of the economic boycott they feared. They quoted the speeches of Allied statesmen, Cecil among them, who had earlier favoured German membership from the beginning. The Germans said that the Covenant had created another Holy Alliance; the great powers through their position on the Council were to control the rest of the world, at the expense of independence and equality of rights.

They wanted League supervision for disarmament, for which they were ready, provided that this was part of a general agreement for disarmament and the abolition of conscription. On their part, they would be willing, as the Treaty terms demanded, to reduce their troop numbers to 100,000, and to have a demilitarised zone in the west of Germany. They also asked for special League guarantees for German minorities in the territories to be ceded by Germany. Finally they wanted Germany to be one of the mandatory powers.²

¹Cecil Diary, 31 May 1919; and: CHE 6/40: Cecil to Lady Robert Cecil, 2 June, 1919

²Wilson Papers, Library of Congress, 6D, box 4: observations of the German delegation on the conditions of peace, parts I and II

To answer this, Cecil was put on a committee with Bourgeois, House and Imperiali of Italy. He prepared a paper before this committee met; in this he urged the immediate admission of Germany. His alarm at the disintegration of central Europe, and his strong reaction against French policies, both stemming from his economic work, appeared in his argument:

'The immediate admission of Germany into the League, which is frequently insisted on, will of course, be strongly opposed by the French and Belgians. But the League has passed the stage at which such opposition could do it serious harm. On the other hand, the early admission of Germany will be highly popular among the European neutrals, and will be a severe blow to Bolsheviks everywhere. It will establish the League once and for all as part of the European system and destroy the possibility of a counter-League. It is moreover favoured by the parties interested in the Labour Convention, and by the C.I.G.S.

It is suggested that we should let the Germans know we will support their admission to the League in October. It would seem at least reasonable to tell them what will be considered as "effective guarantee" of their pacifist intentions'

He was excited by the German disarmament proposals; his hopes of world-wide disarmament began now to rise sharply. He felt that the Allies must seize this chance, and bind themselves to large-scale reductions after Germany had begun hers. The Germans must have a transition period, in which to regain stability; the Allies could start perhaps six months after that. Also, the Germans should be told that the Allies intended to limit the arms of the Balkans and the new states - which would give the right impression about the great powers' concern for peace, as well as relieving German apprehensions 'which, in view of the

character of some of Germany's neighbours, are very reasonable'.

The Allies should also declare themselves ready to begin naval disarmament at once. The German High Seas Fleet had been in a British harbour since November, and was to be disposed of by the Allies; so naval reductions were, Cecil said, mainly a matter between the U.S.A. and Britain: 'It is a test of our mutual friendship and confidence which cannot be shirked. The difficulties will be greatly increased if we wait till both countries have embarked on large programmes of construction'. He suggested that plans for reduction might be submitted for approval when the League Council met for the first time - the date currently favoured by him and his colleagues being October.

He said he was in favour of guarantees for German minorities, though not in Alsace-Lorraine. The German claim to be a mandatory would not, he said, be accepted; but a specimen mandate charter might be published soon, to allay fears about annexation. His paper was circulated among the U.S. and British delegation.¹

The committee met on 7 June; Cecil brought with him a draft reply to the Germans prepared by Noel-Baker and based on his own views. This assured the Germans that the Allies had always intended to admit Germany to the League as soon as she possessed 'a stable government which had given clear proofs of its intention to observe international obligations and to take the necessary steps towards disarmament'. There was

¹ Sir James Butler Papers, memo by Cecil, 3 June 1919

no reason now why Germany should not join in a very short time. There was nothing ideological in this argument - the qualification was an entirely practical one which Cecil had always supported. Secondly, the Germans would get economic equality when they joined the League, and the financial, economic and communications sections of the Treaty, which discriminated against them would be subject to revision. Thirdly, the Covenant was aiming at the reduction of arms to as low a level as possible; if Germany carried out her disarmament obligations under the treaty, it would be the signal for the other powers to follow, and by the time the League Assembly met, it was hoped that general disarmament would be under way. Fourthly, German minority wishes would be met as far as religious, cultural and education rights were concerned.¹

The committee adopted this reply, though Bourgeois made a reservation about the admission of Germany to the League. Cecil sent a copy to Lloyd George, drawing his attention to the suggestion about revising the 'pin prick' parts of the Treaty when the Germans joined the League. He thought this would do much to make the Treaty acceptable to Germany; though he added: 'Of course, I still think that unless you can get a real revision of the reparation terms, the treaty will not work - but that is another story'²

Unfortunately, Bourgeois had lacked the sense to see that this reply would be quite unacceptable to the French. Clemenceau objected

¹CHE 71/32: reply to German proposals, 7 June 1919

²Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/51: Cecil to Lloyd George, 7 June 1919

strongly. He blamed Cecil - 'What in the devil has Cecil to do with conscription and economic terms?' He told House that when he had consented to Lloyd George framing the part of the Treaty which abolished compulsory service in Germany, he had not seen at the time that this would be used as part of a general world plan for abolishing conscription - which he regarded as essential for French survival.¹ With these words he showed how badly Lloyd George and Cecil had misjudged French views on militarism. It was a pity that Cecil was not as familiar with French history as he was with the fate of Cromwell's Major-Generals.

As a result, Wilson asked House to rewrite the reply cutting out the offending parts; this did not leave very much; German war guilt was emphasised. Wilson insisted on House showing Cecil the reply before it was returned to him. The President, House reported, said 'Cecil had been so fine during the entire Conference that this courtesy was due to him.'²

Cecil was very upset by the decision; on 9 June, he wrote:

'I went down ... at 10 o'clock and found that all our beautiful plan for admitting Germany very early to the League of Nations and for reconsidering all the pin-prick clauses as soon as she was admitted, had been, I will not say rejected, but gravely disapproved of by the French, and not supported, apparently, by L.L.G. The result is that I am afraid most if not all of it will go. It is very disappointing and makes me more glad than ever that I am going away. Every day convinces me more firmly that, as my father used to say, you do no good by jogging a man's elbow. If you can't manage a thing in the way you think right, it is better to leave someone else to do it altogether, than by making pushes for this and that change reduce the whole scheme to incoherence without curing its injustice'³

¹House Diary, xvi. 8 June 1919

²Ibid.

³Cecil Diary, 9 June 1919

Cecil's part in trying to alter the reparations settlement was by this time over. From general distaste,¹ he did not attend the meetings of the B.E.D. on 1 June,² where it was agreed to present to the other Allies plans that Lloyd George had prepared. These plans were an improvement, but the French were opposed and suspicious towards the suggestions made in them; they felt them all to be at the expense of France and involve little sacrifice from the British; Clemenceau insisted that Lloyd George must withdraw from this new position or it would appear that the Allies were splitting, and this would embolden the Germans.³ Unfortunately Lloyd George's views became so widely known that this strengthened Clemenceau's argument.

Resistance, too, came from Wilson. Now, because of his peculiar mental state, he refused any idea of further changes. He accused the Allied revisionists of creating division, and of being motivated by fear, not justice.⁴ Germany must be punished or others might imitate her example.⁵

His decision ended the matter. It was ironical that Wilson should have assented and adhered to the reparations provisions which were his chief and most just reason for turning down the Keynes plan for reconstruction.

Meanwhile the hopes - such as they were - raised by the small economic committee on European reconstruction had been dashed. Cecil had

¹Ibid., 1 June 1919

²See F.O. 374/22 pp. 225-246: 33rd & 34th meetings of B.E.D., 1 June 1919

³Baruch Diary, 3 June 1919

⁴McCormick Diary, 3 June 1919

⁵Baruch Diary, 2 June 1919

written, but not sent, a letter to Lloyd George enclosing the Keynes-Davis report, which he, like Keynes, thought inadequate. He repeated the undertakings Davis had made about remittance of Allied loan debts and advances from the War Finance Corporation. These alleviations, Cecil said, would make it possible to carry out the recommendations of the report.¹ Cecil had also discussed the remittance of Allied loans with House on 1 June.²

Davis was agitated when Cecil told him what was in his letter to Lloyd George. He told Cecil on 3 June that his own remarks had been quite informal and confidential, and were about matters on which neither the Treasury nor the President could speak definitely. This had been in no sense a commitment and he had therefore written nothing down. He asked Cecil not to send his letter to Lloyd George until after further explanation. Cecil replied that he would never have written to Lloyd George in that sense if he had not felt clear about what had passed:

'I am sure you will agree with me that, though there was no intention to convert your observations into an assurance binding the United States, yet the fact that the President had authorised you to make the statement you did was of such importance that I should not have been doing my duty if I had not conveyed that to my own Prime Minister. You will recollect that you made your statement before we agreed on our report, and I do not hesitate to say that it made me regard the report in a wholly different light from that in which I should have considered it but for your statement'

He sent a copy of this entire correspondence to Lloyd George, on 4

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/49: Cecil to Lloyd George, 4 June 1919, with enclosures: Cecil to Lloyd George 31 May, Cecil to Davis, 31 May, Davis to Cecil, 3 June, Cecil to Davis, 4 June

²Cecil Diary, 1 June 1919

June, and wrote: 'The American attitude in this matter is very depressing and together with other circumstances makes me glad that I shall be going back to England on Tuesday'.¹ Following the American retreat on this point, the 'Big Four' paid no further attention to the work of the small committee on reconstruction. Lloyd George did not communicate with Wilson about it until 26 June, when he made an appeal for American financial aid to Europe. He referred to the Keynes-Davis report as 'a very interesting and valuable survey'. It had, he said, confirmed his view that a drastic overall remedy was needed but that it could not recommend one adequate to deal with the whole situation. He said that he did not intend to discuss it.² Thus ended what was in fact the last effort at a comprehensive economic solution at the Conference.

Cecil's other work on the treaty in his last month at Paris was little more encouraging. The plans for the Allied occupation of the Rhineland were much criticised. They would keep that region in a state of siege, and did not clearly define the relations between the Allied military authorities there, and their civil authorities, such as they were. In fact the military would be supreme, and thus, for various reasons, the region would effectively be in the hands of the French High Command. Cecil and others were asked in lay to revise these clauses.³ The new text mitigated harshness, and defined authority more clearly, but did not put

¹Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/49: Cecil to Lloyd George, 4 June, 1919, and enclosures

²Lloyd George Papers, F/7/2/34: Lloyd George to Wilson, 26 June 1919

³Cecil Diary, 27 May 1919

the military in a subordinate position since rule had to be through them. Owing to American pressure for a supreme civil authority this new plan was rejected, and Cecil was put to work with others again on a draft giving an interallied civil commission authority over the army of occupation. Cecil thought this idea 'curious' and doubted whether it would work, but accepted these terms of reference.¹ Marshall Foch was totally hostile; he wanted supreme military control, and annexation, independence, or at least occupation for thirty years, rather than fifteen.² Cecil saw no reason to help Foch to promote such an aim, and thought it would only be worth considering recognition of such a republic if it were established with the support of the inhabitants.³ Cecil recommended that the new Rhine plan - for which he had little enthusiasm - should be renegotiated after two or three years, and that the inhabitants should have right of appeal, in the case of difference, to the League.

'The object of the French, of course, is to convert the occupation into annexation if they can. We all feel that the great probability is that in their efforts to do that, they will cause a permanent sore in Europe, and I personally have grave doubts whether a civilian Commission, dominated by the French as it would be, would be much protection against such an eventuality'⁴

His revision ideas were rejected by the French; the Italians and

¹Cecil Diary, 3 June 1919

²Ibid., and: F.O. 608/279, 2: Rhineland, p. 182-186, Waterlow to Lord Curzon, 16 June 1919

³Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/50: Cecil minute for Lloyd George, 5 June 1919

⁴Cecil Diary, 5 June 1919

Americans accepted them. But when the convention went before the Council of Four, this suggestion for later renegotiation was dropped.¹

It has been shown earlier that Cecil was ready to challenge the sanctity of state sovereignty. But hostility towards the League in the U.S.A. was increasing on the very grounds of its interference with sovereignty; disenchantment with Europe over the Treaty increased American fear of being dragged along by the European powers. Cecil therefore made a bid, in a newspaper article appearing in the American press on 1 June, to modify American opinion on this issue. He talked of the successful Anglo-American co-operation on the League Commission and the Supreme Economic Council and praised America's glorious record of seeking peace 'sans phrase'. He said he could not deny that if every nation were to make an organised effort for Peace it would indeed involve modifying 'in some degree, however slight, its liberty of action'. He implored America to be ready to make this sacrifice; those who had seen the devastation, massacre and famine caused by the war 'will not doubt that some drastic change in international relations is essential to humanity and civilisation'.²

In this spirit he approached the problem of protecting minorities in Eastern Europe. Treaties establishing the new states were to be drawn up and signed by the Allies and the governments of the new states. In these there were to be joint guarantees of minorities in the new states by the signatories, under the League. Cecil played an important part in

¹F.O. 608/279, 2, pp. 182-186: Waterlow to Lord Curzon, 16 June 1919

²House Papers, press cutting, 1 June, filed with: Cecil to House 23 May 1919

drawing up the terms of these¹; Noel-Baker thought, and Cecil agreed, that appeal should be by the minorities themselves directly to the League. It was, indeed, the most obviously effective way of ensuring that grievances were brought to the League's notice. However, sovereignty was a problem; Baker's plan would effectively give the League power to intervene in internal affairs, and could certainly lead to troublesome irredentism of the kind that David Hunter Miller feared from Cecil's treaty revision clause. The Americans therefore opposed the idea, and Hurst was of the opinion that legally, only League members - i.e. actual states - could be principals in such cases, since the guarantees were agreed on by states. Individuals from a minority, or groups, could not have such powers in law. Cecil and Baker's view was therefore not supported, in the end. Baker, again supported by Cecil, also wanted the Permanent Court - rather than the League Council - to handle breaches of the guarantee. It was always Baker's aim to bring as much business as possible into an international law court, and Cecil's to extend the functions of the international court to increase its prestige and foster the growth of international law. This suggestion too was not adopted, because of the need to ensure that minorities were fairly dealt with from the very beginning; the Permanent Court had not yet been organised, and it would be a few years, therefore, before it could do useful service in this respect.²

¹Acc. to J. Headlam-Morley - Information provided by Prof. A. Headlam-Morley

²F.O. 608/240, f.1607/2/1.10197: draft articles by Cecil, 27 May 1919; Noel-Baker minute, 27 May 1919; and: f.1607/2/1.11888: minute by Cecil, June 1919

The blockade machinery was a mere skeleton by the time of Cecil's departure. Only Hungary and Russia were submitted to full scale restrictions. The conditions offered by Nansen to the Bolsheviks on behalf of the Allied and Associated powers had not been accepted. The Bolsheviks had made some military progress and did not want to lose their uncertain lead over their enemies. Cecil told Hoover in a letter that he thought the Allies could either attempt an all-out campaign against Lenin at the expense of lives and vital resources - or they could go on trying the policy of withholding supplies unless fighting ceased. What they could not do was provide Koltchak and Denikin with arms, while trying to induce Lenin to stop with offers of food; such compromises led only to the prolongation of hostilities, and confirmation of the belief that the Allies were untrustworthy. Cecil made no mention of ideology at all. He had told Hoover, too, that economic pressure was in line with the principles of the League of Nations; they should not try to settle the Russian question by force until other means had been tried, nor pre-judge the rights and wrongs of the issues, but proceed on the principle that peace was in the interests of all concerned. He hoped that the Council of the League would take on the question, and summon Russian delegates to a constitutional conference.¹ Hoover, however, had been unwilling for further negotiations with the Bolsheviks.²

¹Hoover Papers, ARA box 27, Cecil to Hoover, 16 May 1919

²Ibid., Hoover to Nansen, 17 May 1919

The Supreme Economic Council had no more important debate on the subject of the blockade during the last weeks of Cecil's time in Paris. On 13 June the Council of Four decided that preparations should be made to re-enforce the blockade if the Germans did not sign, but that it would require a further decision from the principal Allies and the Associated powers for those preparations to be put into action; nothing in the nature of a threat should be made to the Germans; but it should be made known that the Allies could re-impose if they wished.¹

Despite his distress at the long delay in lifting the blockade, Cecil had gleaned a little hope from the episode; the years of blockade had, he believed, brought home to people the terrors of economic boycott. This fear of blockade and economic sanctions, he believed, would be a powerful safeguard of the League: '... so long as the memory of the Allied Blockade lives in Central Europe, it is not likely that any State will wantonly incur similar sufferings'.²

On his return to England, Cecil spoke at the great Albert Hall meeting organised by the L.N.U. His speech embodied an eloquent and a typical blend of history, religion, moral remonstrance and straight talk. He said nothing in it about the Treaty, except that it must be judged on the principles behind the League; if the League could not be built on it, the Treaty must be changed. The speech was an attack on national selfishness; he castigated poets and historians who had glorified war; he called

¹F.O. 608/72, f.148/1/5. 12608: B.E.D. memo on blockade, 13 June 1919

²Sir James Butler Papers, draft press interview by Cecil, 5 July 1919

for the voluntary lessening of the sovereign power of nations; he declared his wish that Germany should be admitted as soon as possible; he said that the League must be the fundamental principle of British foreign policy. He attacked, too, those who were against it because they doubted its chances of success; facile pessimism was worse than facile optimism; only lunatics or criminals could wish not to try to prevent repetition of the scourge of war; the mass of people were in favour of such an attempt. The League might have to be modified in detail, but the fundamental principle of cooperation was what mattered; there must be an end of annexation by conquest and of aggressive war. The League of Nations was no new idea; it had been desired by Elizabeth I, Henry IV of France, Alexander of Russia; many other sovereigns had dreamed of this day. What the League of Nations Union now sought was 'crusaders for a holy ideal'.

Apart from being told he was a traitor by one of the audience, he was given a good reception.¹ His oration was matched in eloquence by a speech he made in the commons on 21 July, in the debate on the Treaty. It had proved unnecessary to resume the blockade. The Treaty with Germany had been signed at Versailles on 28 June. A plebiscite had been secured for Upper Silesia. The Covenant was soon to be part of international law. Cecil told the House that he was in favour of the general lines of the Treaty. The creation of Poland, the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France,

¹The Times, 14 June 1919, p.16, col.3

and the removal of Germany's colonies had all been aims agreed on during the war. However, he pronounced his misgivings over the Polish corridor, and the occupation of the Rhineland for fifteen years with an international government of a temporary nature. '... I do recall ... that prolonged occupation of territory after a war has generally not been among the most successful expedients which have been adopted by belligerents'. He pointed out, too, that the reparations settlement, though Germany deserved it, was probably unworkable in practice; and he complained that nothing had been done to bring the Kaiser to justice.

His most important statement was on the League. He asked the House to think internationally, as the labour people had done in setting up the International Labour Organisation. He emphasised that the mandate system was being created with the well-being of other peoples in mind, not only in the mandate territories, but in other colonial areas where it was hoped the system would spread. There was no greater blot on some countries than the way they had governed their colonies. As to the prevention of war - the great weapon was public opinion, he told the House. This would act during the delay provided by the machinery of the League - and only in very rare cases would there be war if these provisions of the Covenant were carried out. Public opinion was stronger than the police or the law courts; Germany had lost the war because she lost the support of world opinion. Disarmament, though difficult, could be achieved through it; and it would surely sway League members who supported wrong policies to co-operate with those who thought right; so that the objection that the

unanimity rule would hold up action would not apply. If the world was to be saved, there must be faith in this new organisation; the criticisms of the militarists, of the obstructionist bureaucracies and of the faint-hearted must be ignored.¹

In the welter of detail on the drafting of the Covenant this essential expression of Cecil's opinion on the League had been a little obscured. Yet it was on this that it all rested; and House, Wilson, Zimmern, Harburg, Bryce, however much they differed in major detail from Cecil in their schemes, all derived their arguments from the same source - a view of the ultimate right-mindedness of informed public opinion.

Despite Cecil's earlier warnings, it was a long time before the commission on mandates, under Milner, started work on the draft constitutions for the different categories of mandate. While he was still at the Conference - and after - Cecil wrote repeatedly to House; he wanted Wilson to press the Council of Four to allow publication of draft constitutions; he said that this new international system came second in importance only to the Covenant itself; therefore it was crucial for the world to see and discuss its terms before they were finally settled; the mandates were the concern of all the members of the League - not just the mandatories; and publication would do much to relieve the strain in the Middle East and show that native rights - especially in respect of labour and slavery - were to be safeguarded.² Unfortunately House had no influence; and Wilson was not in the habit of consulting his colonial advisors on the question, much to their chagrin.³ Cecil's appeals therefore achieved little.

¹Hansard, 5th series, 1919, vol. 118, 983-991

²House Papers, Cecil to House, 24 May, 4 June, 7 June, 11 July 1919

³Beer Diary, 31 May 1919

He was still afraid that some of the Allies powers would try to hamper the creation of enlightened constitutions, and to some extent the meetings of Milner's commission, which began in London in late June, bore out his forebodings. Milner presided with skill, but only the 'B' and 'C' constitutions were drafted, and the French made a reservation about recruitment of troops for home defence.¹

The French held up the draft of the 'A' class mandates; the Allied treaty with Turkey was taking a long time to complete, and the French hoped that the Milner commission would be wound up before the Turkish treaty was signed, so that they would be untrammelled by an existing mandate constitution before they were assured possession of Syria and had taken it over. Cecil was apprehensive of worsening relations between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine as a result of such a blow to Arab hopes;² he submitted his own draft constitution, containing the general principles agreed on by the League commission and at the Council of Ten, leaving detail for later.³ As he feared, the mandate commission was too slow. The Palestinians had been objecting strongly for some time, to the influx of Zionist immigrants;⁴ but the French take-over in Syria under these circumstances was to put an end to any hope of inducing the Arabs, through a fair mandate in Syria, to accept the Jewish settlement - if such a hope could have had any substance where such a politically disunited cultural group as the

¹Beer Diary, 28 June et seq.

²Lothian Papers, CD 40/17/75: Cecil to Milner, 8 Aug. 1919

³House Papers, Cecil to Milner, 11 July 1919

⁴See CAD 27/24, p. 191

Arabs was concerned.

As far as the other categories of mandate were concerned, Cecil himself helped to draw up the clause allowing appeal to the Permanent Court by League members on behalf of nationals in a mandate. As in the case of the minorities treaties, he was at first keen that there should be direct appeal by the natives themselves, but he later agreed with Milner that this must be through member states. He secured a clause in the 'B' class charter that there could be customs, administrative, and financial union of a mandate with an adjacent colonial territory belonging to a mandatory. Beer, of the U.S.A., objected that this would destroy the administrative unity of the mandated area, and that it would be impossible to stop a preferential tariff system being applied there if one existed in the mandatory's empire. Cecil's view was that it would extend enlightened administration from the mandate to the colonial possession, thus raising the standard of imperial administration everywhere. House, to Beer's annoyance, did not oppose Cecil and Milner on this, and it was passed.¹

At the end of the Conference, a question had arisen: should there be continued interallied economic co-operation after the peace? The Americans were anxious to see the remaining control organisations wound up; Hoover wanted to end the Supreme Economic Council, though he was anxious for some international economic links. Cecil and Lloyd George wished the joint economic work to continue. Europe was no nearer recovery

¹Beer Diary, 8-13 July 1919

than it had been - except that the harvest time was closer; coal in particular - the vital energy of industry - was going to be in very short supply for many months. Cecil approached Hoover about a total coal control organisation in central Europe.¹ Baruch thought it a good idea, provided it was under one man, and not 'the so-called Allied co-operation'.² Hoover, however, dismissed the idea. Lloyd George and Cecil approached Wilson and Hoover respectively with ideas for a general economic pool; McCormick advised Wilson against this:

'Our Allies want us tied up to them; Italy through fear of her other Allies; France for somewhat same reason and hope to use us and Great Britain to hold us down to her level in trade until she gets on her feet... they must be helped, but not by killing initiative and holding back the production of the enemy countries or any other country'³

This was not altogether fair. It was true that the European Allies did want the U.S.A.'s help. They did not want to lose American organisational expertise in relief work; nor did they want them to forget Europe. As long as Hoover, and others who knew Europe, could be kept involved with it, there would be some hope that they might eventually lend their support to loans by the U.S.A. But beyond this, Clémentel had always sincerely believed that international co-operation was the most efficient way of solving reconstruction problems - he was not motivated entirely by his wartime hopes of boycotting Germany. The Italians shared these views and were to advocate a world economic council often after the war.⁴

¹Cecil Diary, 6 June 1919

²Baruch Diary, 7 June 1919

³McCormick Diary, 9 June 1919

⁴Alfred Zimmermann, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, p. 261

Cecil himself had always believed in the peculiar effectiveness of the interallied control bodies with which he had been so intimately connected in the war. Furthermore, he desired this co-operation with the U.S.A, not just to obtain their financial aid, but also as part of the joint peace policy that he felt to be so crucial.¹ The Americans had made little distinction between the interallied control bodies, and the blockade controls; Cecil - like them - desired rapid return to private enterprise; but he felt that for materials in really short supply, like coal, there must be control; and in any case he thought it a mistake to demolish an international forum of discussion among men experienced in economic affairs.

The Americans did not think him disingenuous - simply misguided; McCormick heard him address a dinner given for the Supreme Economic Council on Cecil's last night at Paris, and wrote:

'Lord Robert's speech was the opening gun for continuing Allied organisation... he is emotional fair and just but at times half cocked and the more I see of him I am not quite² sure always of his judgement but believe him to be sincere'

On his last day at Paris, Cecil argued at the S.E.C. in favour of continuing the S.E.C. after the peace and transferring it to London. After heated debate and opposition by the Americans, the matter was referred to a policy committee.³

Wilson consulted his advisors about this idea - Hoover wanted a

¹ See: Lloyd George Papers F/6/6/47: memo by Cecil for Lloyd George, 27 May 1919

² McCormick Diary, 9 May 1919

³ F.R.P.C. 1919, x. 345-347: S.E.C. 22nd meeting, 10 June 1919; and see Cecil Diary, 7 June 1919

consultative body but on his own terms, one of which was that he should be chairman.¹ The S.E.C. met on 23 June. The British delegates, backed by France, urged that a decision should be made so that the Council of Four could make a policy.² Cecil cabled Lloyd George the next day urging him to press Wilson to support the idea.³ Wilson was persuaded that economic co-operation in some form should go on until the League could consider the economic situation, and supported a resolution to this effect, which was approved by the Four;⁴ the S.E.C. was asked to make recommendations. He also agreed with Hoover that the American delegation must make it clear that present arrangements would be wound up after the peace was signed. Otherwise there might be the impression that an exclusive interallied economic bloc really was being created.⁵

The new resolution was referred to S.E.C.'s policy committee. Cecil wrote a memorandum for the British government suggesting the plan for a new economic council which they should urge on that committee: the U.S.A., the British Empire, France, Italy and Belgium were to be members; also neutrals, minor allies, and ex-enemy powers would attend as assessors when special questions arose for their consideration. There would be meetings at least once a month in London and Paris. All representatives would be ministers. There would be a permanent executive sitting daily, and sub-committees on finance, raw materials, etc., as before, and also

¹Baruch Diary, 13 June 1919

²F.R.P.C. 1919, x. 376: S.E.C., 24th meeting, 23 June 1919

³F.O. 382/2381, f.901.93385: Cecil tel. for Lloyd George, 24 June 1919

⁴R.S. Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, ii. 367

⁵Hoover Papers, ARA box 51-55: memo by Hoover, 27 June 1919

on such matters as currency reform, and on special areas like Germany, Russia and the new States. A committee of the Council should be set up in Washington consisting of representatives of the American departments concerned, and of representatives of any country involved; this would deal with matters that could be more conveniently discussed in Washington.

The terms of reference of the new council were to be:

'To consult together on economic matters and to advise the governments of the nations represented on the Council pending the setting up of a more permanent body under the League'¹

Cecil was not simply after a stop-gap organisation; he wanted to set up what might be a model for a future League body for the same purposes, and had therefore tried to adjust and streamline the S.E.C. accordingly. He sent Hoover a copy of these suggestions.

Hoover accepted that Europe still needed American economic strength for recovery, and also that such assistance must be co-ordinated with other European economic efforts - to save cost, and risk, and to give the stability lacking in central Europe. But, he told Cecil, U.S. opinion was hostile to joining an international economic organisation.

Moreover the U.S. officials who had worked on these questions were about to retire, and would be replaced by men without experience of international necessities. The view was that the Americans had done enough, and the taxpayer had carried the burden of this great effort.

However, Hoover believed the Americans were capable of further great sacrifices if awakened to an emergency. Action was not possible through

¹CAB 24/83, GT 7613: memo by Cecil, July 1919

the ordinary processes of Wall Street and industrial policies. He therefore proposed that the new council should meet in Washington, attended by European ministers of first rank - the choice of this 'high place' would establish the world importance of the meeting and rally American opinion to help. Confidence would come out of policies agreed on in such a setting.¹

Cecil was won round by this argument.² However, by this time the matter was no longer his direct concern. He sent his resignation from the S.E.C. to Lloyd George on 12 July. As suggested in his proposals, the Cabinet had now decided that in the new Council Britain would be represented by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the President of the Board of Trade;³ he therefore felt that he should hand over to them at once. 'At present I can do nothing really, and my presence on the council merely operates to obstruct the work of others'.⁴ Lloyd George pointed out that there was no one available with the same experience.⁵ Cecil, denying the accusation that he was running away from his duty, said responsible ministers must now take over, fully supported by, and in touch with their departments. He was willing only to give advice.⁶

The improved S.E.C. was unacceptable to the American administrative departments, and Wilson did not consider that he had the authority to

¹Hoover Papers, ARA box 27, Hoover to Cecil, 9 July 1919

²Ibid., Cecil to Hoover, 15 July 1919

³CAB 23/11, WC 588, item 4, 4 July 1919

⁴Lloyd George Papers, F/6/6/55, Cecil to Lloyd George, 12 July 1919

⁵Ibid., F/6/6/56: Lloyd George to Cecil, 14 July 1919

⁶Ibid., F/6/6/57: Cecil to Lloyd George, 16 July 1919

establish it without their assent. The old S.E.C. therefore continued to administer relief, financial, raw materials and statistics arrangements. The Americans left it in August; and it lasted for a few more months.¹

The organisation of the League had still to be settled. Some of this had been done at Paris. A secretariat, of the right character, was needed, quickly, to take on League and Treaty work after the Peace was signed - the administration of the Saar arrangements, for example. Cecil and Drummond had searched for capable people who were 'truly international' in outlook. The 'national' point of view would be put by representatives at the Council and Assembly, but the secretariat must not be subject to changes in national policies. Cecil was impressed by the quality of the personnel who came forward for this work; these included Jean Monnet, and Raymond Fosdick - and Salter and others with experience of interallied work. The organisation committee had continued to meet, discussing programmes, deciding dates - provisionally the first League meetings were to be in the Autumn - and debating the nature of representation at the League seat. Monnet took a lead; he wanted - and Cecil supported him - to stress the role of the League as the public discussion centre of the world, and not to let it become a mere extension of narrow national foreign policy operations.²

Discussions on organisation continued in London in the summer, at Sunderland House. House had been anxious that Drummond and Cecil should

¹Temperley, History of the Peace Conference, i. 332-333; and: R.S. Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, ii. 365-367

²See: Cecil Diary, 5 May, 9 May, 14 May, 4 June, 9 June 1919; and: House Diary, 29 May, 9 June; and: F.O. 371/4371, f.2.426: Balfour tel to F.O. (message from Cecil) 25 May 1919

not dominate the proceedings:

'Drummond, I fear is scarcely equal to the undertaking and Cecil, who advises him, sometimes runs amuck. Cecil is a brilliant fellow, but one has the feeling that he may go off at a tangent. I do not dare leave the two of them alone in London for any length of time... '1

The governments of France, Britain and Italy were shortly to ratify the Treaty of Versailles signed with Germany. In America, owing to stronger criticisms of the Treaty it was clear that ratification would take time if it happened at all. One of the first differences of opinion between Cecil and House in London was over the question of whether America could still be invited to the first meeting of the League, if it had not ratified the Treaty by that time. Cecil and Drummond thought that it should be; but both House and Fbsdick thought it would only hamper the President further in his fight for the League.

Another difference of opinion was over the date of the first meeting which Cecil and Drummond now thought should be postponed until the New Year; in their view, not enough agenda would be ready by the autumn, and the League would appear futile in the eyes of the world if it had too little to discuss. Cecil was also aware that the British government was not very much in favour of the kind of League that he - or House - wanted; there was a move to have the Covenant revised - the government wanted something that would help the British Empire more. The views of Kerr, which Cecil had earlier opposed, were gaining ascendancy. An unconvincing performance by the League in the autumn would give weight to Kerr's case.

¹House Diary, 10 June 1919

Furthermore, Cecil knew that there was no chance of Germany being admitted to the first meeting if it were held in the autumn; and if that was the case, he feared that she would not then be admitted for a long time.

House, however, thought that postponement would give more impression of futility - people would wonder whether the League was ever going to be a real functioning organisation. He was backed by Grey of Fallodon, with whom House still had influence. Cecil and House agreed in the end that there should be an autumn meeting, and that an American representative should attend who would ask for German membership by the spring of 1920.¹

None of this came off; the first meeting - of the League General Assembly - did not take place till January 1920. House, for all his efforts, was more a liability than anything else at this stage. Feeling against the League in the U.S.A. was partly the result of growing and obsessive feeling against Wilson, and despite House's row with the President, he was still identified with his policies. Moreover, Wilson would have nothing to do with any advice coming from House. Wilson had a hard time explaining the Covenant, particularly his territorial guarantee article. He tried to bring the country round in a gruelling speech tour which awakened some momentary enthusiasm and resulted in a stroke which crippled him, though it left him as mentally determined as ever. He would not compromise on the guarantee article that the Senators wanted changed; nor did he give up the presidency, but conducted affairs from his bed. Many, including House, were excluded from his presence; House tried to encourage

¹House Diary, xvi. 22/23 Aug. 1919

Wilson to make concessions, by letter and through Lord Grey - who visited Washington in the autumn as special ambassador for the British Government. These efforts were unsuccessful.¹

Wilson and Cecil's wish to tie the Covenant in with the Treaty was now working the other way in the U.S.A. - the League had become identified with an unpopular Treaty.² The Americans were suspicious of the six British Empire votes in the League.³ Many believed it to be a British creation in British interests, and that America would be 'joining Robert Cecil's League and handing over American foreign relations to Sir Eric Drummond'.⁴ British imperialist opportunism was lumped together with British support for a League. Cecil stood for precisely the opposite policy - in respect of China notably - from the one he was alleged in America to support, but this fact escaped critics there.

He himself had never been in favour of the territorial guarantee article, and hoped also to approach the Republican senators about making a compromise; he believed that he could get French backing, since American membership of the League was a more powerful guarantee of its effectiveness than any clause on paper.⁵ However he was discouraged by Wilson's inaccessibility and obstinacy, and the British government were not in

¹See House Diary, xvi. 11 Aug., 16 Aug., 20 Nov., 1919; and: J.W. Davis Papers, Edward M. House Collection, Yale, box 13: Lansing to Davis, 15 Sept. 1919

²J.W. Davis Papers, box 13, Lansing to J.W. Davis, 15 Sept. 1919

³CAB 29/4, P-147, p.460: Grey tel. to F.O. 11 Oct. 1919

⁴J.W. Davis Papers, box 13: Lansing to Davis, 15 Sept. 1919

⁵Lothian Papers, GD 40.17.56, Drummond to Kerr, 18 Dec. 1919

favour of the American resolutions. If America were allowed into the League with reservations, every other nation would ask for them, and the League that Britain had undertaken to join would break down.¹ It seemed likely by the end of 1919 that Wilson and the senators between them might prevent ratification of the Treaty and American membership of the League. It was a bad inauguration for a world peace organisation.

Cecil's hopes for a joint peace policy by the Anglo-Saxon democracies had also received a severe set-back; moreover, though he did not abandon these hopes, and indeed maintained them all the more strongly in the years when direct contact with the U.S.A. through the League was ruled out, the chief champions of the ideal were out of the political field in America; Page was dead; House was ineffective; Wilson was near the end of his career, and was not now accessible to give his support to such a policy. In England, Grey was unwilling as much as unable to be a political force, and Asquithian liberalism had gone into eclipse.

Despite Cecil's remark in parliament that he approved the general lines of the German Treaty, it can be seen that there was much in it to displease him - the take-over of the German Empire and of her Chinese concessions, and her losses to Poland and France. In the Austrian Treaty, he deplored the cession to Italy of the Austrian Tyrol - promised, in wartime, wanted for strategic reasons and justified, though not justifiable, on ethnic grounds. Cecil had always despised Italian empire-building and hoped that this claim, like some of Italy's other claims,

¹Ibid., p. 114, Kerr to Drummond, Dec. 1919

would be whittled away at the Conference. He was appalled by the decision to uphold it, in defiance of the wishes of the population: '... of all the outrageous things that were done at Paris there is nothing worse than the treatment of the Southern Tyrol. Indeed I doubt whether anything more shameless was done at Vienna'.¹

Cecil's conclusions on the Treaty's inadequacies continued to fortify his belief in treaty revision. He had stressed to Fosdick in August 1919, that the Covenant's treaty revision article, nineteen, was far more important than article ten, the 'territorial guarantee' which was causing so much trouble with the U.S. Senate. He wished to publicise article nineteen's importance as a means of counteracting article ten.²

His own efforts at treaty revision began soon after the Peace was signed; he corresponded with Keynes about altering the economic provisions of the Treaty. In Cecil's view, expressed on 31 July, the Council of the League should reconsider the terms when its sessions began; but he encouraged Keynes in his idea of publicly explaining how disastrous the Treaty had been. '... if you had time to write a brilliant article... exposing from a strictly economic point of view the dangers of the Treaty, it might do a good deal of good'.³

In the autumn he became involved in a serious effort to alter the settlement. A private conference of neutral and Allied financial experts (including an American) met in Amsterdam, and discussed the economic

¹F.O. 371/3511, f.123.149238: Cecil to Curzon, 1 Nov. 1919

²Letters of the League of Nations, from the Files of Raymond B. Fosdick (Princeton 1966), p. 22

³Keynes Papers, L/19, Cecil to Keynes, 31 July 1919

situation. The governor of the Bank of the Netherlands 'regarded any attempt to carry out the Treaty in any literal way as spelling disaster for Europe'. He recommended a scheme for a generous loan for recovery, furnished chiefly by the U.S.A. and the neutrals; there was general approval for this, indicating how gravely the neutrals regarded the situation and opening the way for a change by general European consensus.¹ The conference thought the plan might be presented to the League Assembly's economic section when it met in January - and also to the reparations commission, and to Cecil, 'because, if somebody knows the way to follow, he does'.² Cecil approved warmly.³ It was planned to collect signatures of prominent Europeans and Americans on behalf of the scheme.

Unfortunately, the American at the conference, Kent, began to have doubts because of his government's attitudes; in America, isolationism was setting in. Cecil was all for pressing ahead with getting publicity for the plan; then America would be forced to say openly that she wished to leave Europe to misfortune.

'All this regard for American susceptibilities that we have been practising has been apparently thrown away, and we may as well try simpler and more direct tactics'⁴

But before these could be put into action, Kent withdrew from the scheme; also the idea of presenting the plan to the League was

¹ Keynes Papers, F1/1: memo on financial conference, Amsterdam, 13-15 Oct. 1919, by Keynes

² Ibid., minutes of conference on organisation of credit, 2-3 Nov. 1919

³ Ibid., Keynes to Ter Meulen, 8 Nov. 1919

⁴ Ibid., Cecil to Keynes, 20 Nov. 1919

dropped.¹ Cecil thought the best thing was still to collect the signatures of leading economic authorities - for an international manifesto on behalf of the scheme. This might still stir America to action.² Unfortunately Keynes' part in this became an embarrassment: the French treasury was losing heart, England was suspicious, isolationist towards Europe, and still very anti-German; and nearly all Europe was apathetic; Keynes had therefore decided the time had come for the truth-telling he had discussed with Cecil in July;³ he analysed the implications of the economic clauses of the Treaty in his best-selling book, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, which attacked the government policies that had led to them, and contained acute and merciless portraits of the world leaders at the Conference. Not only did this impress many Americans with the perfidy of European politicians, but it also gave offence to Wilson and his supporters - to Baruch, for example, who was in constant attendance at Wilson's bedside at this time.⁴ Cecil told Keynes not to sign the manifesto:

'I am a little afraid of the result on the mind of President Wilson and his entourage. He is a vain man & the picture you draw of him ... is not likely to minister to his vanity. He is said to be "very rancunier". As you point out we must appeal to American generosity & if we had the administration against us, obviously we should fail. I do not say your signature would prevent Wilson doing what he thought right - But it would not ... help him to do so & it might hinder him'⁵

¹Keynes Papers, Fl/1: Vissering to Keynes, 29 Jan. 1920

²Keynes Papers, Fl/1: Cecil to Keynes, 10 Dec. 1919

³Keynes Papers, L/St: Keynes to Smuts, 27 Nov. 1919

⁴Bernard M. Baruch, The Public Years, (English edn. London 1961) pp. 120-121

⁵Keynes Papers, Fl/1: Cecil to Keynes, 31 Dec. 1919

'Wilson may be utterly discredited in the U.S. ... but he is & will remain President. His entourage have always been personal adherents & it is beyond human nature to expect that they will read your brilliant sketch of him with pleasure. Its very moderation makes it the more stinging. Most people would rather be thought villains than dupes... '1

The withdrawal of Keynes' signature did not save the manifesto. The U.S. Treasury said it would only be discussed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce - thus withdrawing it from the central stage.² The French sponsors of the manifesto failed to get important signatures, because the document advocated increasing taxation.³ Reading, though he agreed to sign if Keynes did not, withdrew from fear that he should be thought to be disloyal to the government - though he was no longer a member.⁴ The U.S. Secretary of the Treasury publicly said that the U.S.A. was not prepared for the measures suggested.

Some of Cecil's comments on Keynes' book at this time make a fitting conclusion to this examination of his views on the Treaty:

'Let me take this opportunity of saying how completely I agree with the general line of its argument. Your picture of Clemenceau is masterly The incidental touches too about L.G. are admirable & perhaps more effective than a full portrait. Perhaps you are a little hard on Wilson. He was very badly treated by us who ought to have supported him & helped him with that information and experience which he and his advisers so sadly lacked.

¹ Keynes Papers, F1/1: Cecil to Keynes, 6 Jan. 1920

² Ibid., Brand to Keynes, 14 Jan. 1920

³ Ibid., Brand to Keynes, 15 Jan. 1920

⁴ Ibid., Brand to Keynes, 23 Jan. 1920

'As to your analysis of the effects of the Treaty, it is crushing. Perhaps you a little exaggerate the 'breach of faith' argument - the phrases used at the time of the armistice were so vague that it is difficult to say definitely what they did include. But the substance of the charge - that we promised what looked like a Good Peace & exacted a Carthaginian Peace has only too much truth in it'¹

He added in a letter to Keynes on 6 January;

'The fact is that Clemenceau was the honestest of the three & that gave him strength. The real ill luck was that our representative should have been lacking in qualities quite common with Englishmen which happened to be essential. Nor once we had "clever" diplomacy - with its usual disastrous results'²

¹Ibid., Cecil to Keynes, 31 Dec. 1919

²Ibid., Cecil to Keynes, 6 Jan. 1920

Chapter Twelve

Conclusion

Cecil aimed at achieving a lasting peace through a just peace settlement and through a League of Nations founded on it and upholding it. During the war, his talk of a just settlement was all in terms of German evacuation of occupied territory and the liberation of subject peoples. His League views had no connection with pacifism, and he did not favour a compromise peace with the enemy. At the Peace Conference it was chiefly Allied injustice that he tried to combat. After the defeat of the German militarist regime, he was one of the leaders in the fight for liberal peace terms. He was largely unsuccessful. The Peace was a bad foundation for the League. And the League in due course failed, in its main purpose - to prevent the repetition of a catastrophic world war.

Cecil was largely responsible for the drafting of the Covenant. Can he therefore be blamed at all for the League's failure? There were undoubtedly inadequacies in the constitution of the League. One criticism has been that the unanimity rule prevented quick or effective action by the Council or Assembly. There were, as has been described, exceptions to this rule; the parties to the dispute did not vote; members lost their right to vote if expelled for breaking their covenants; matters of

procedure could be decided by majority. These were allowed in Paris in 1919. But as Cecil himself admitted in 'A Great Experiment' most of the states represented at Paris would have regarded anything more as an unacceptable limitation on their sovereignty.¹ He himself had begun with a view of a League plan based on the Concert of Powers system - in which unanimity would be assumed. But it does transpire from Cecil's remarks at the Conference that he was inclined to increase the power of the League at the expense of national sovereignty; and, later, in A Great Experiment, he also expressed the view that the League might be more effective if decisions by majority vote were allowed - as in the I.L.O.² He cannot therefore be accused of having wanted the unanimity rule because he wished to limit the power of the League.

The League has also been criticised for having 'gaps' in it which appeared to permit aggressive war in certain circumstances. Cecil was responsible for one such 'gap'. His actual intention, which has been described, was to close the gap which ensued if the League Council could only reach a majority decision. After disagreements on the form of the clause, the League commission agreed to accept a clause which laid down that in such circumstances 'the members of the League reserve the right to take such action as they shall consider necessary for the maintenance of right and justice'.³ Cecil hoped that nations would take the initiative

¹Visc. Cecil, A Great Experiment, p. 72

²Ibid., p. 323

³D.H. Miller, Drafting, ii. 731; and: See this thesis, pp. 259-261

about stopping war in such cases, and that Britain in particular would set an example. But it can be seen from the phrasing of the clause that it cut both ways - it was open to members to do nothing, and it read like a frank admission that the League was ineffective in some circumstances.

The League was also criticised for the failure to admit the enemy powers to the League for several years. Cecil had always wanted Germany in, and indeed regarded her exclusion as one of the gravest mistakes that was made at Versailles.¹ Nor can he be accused of promoting the 'territorial guarantee' article, which was one of the chief factors in turning the American senators against the League; indeed he did much to try to meet American constitutional objections, even giving way over his treaty revision provision, which he felt to be of the utmost importance. Thus the American decision not to join the League, which was certainly damaging to the League's chances, came about much more through Wilson's failure to be accommodating than through Cecil's handling of the matter. Moreover his wish to restrict Council membership to the great powers and, at most, two minor ones, was to be fully justified in later years when the Council became overburdened with lesser powers and much of its effectiveness and speed of action was diminished.²

The disarmament article has also been blamed for encouraging the British government to disarm and diminish Britain's effectiveness, to

¹Visc. Cecil, A Great Experiment, p. 107

²Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, i. 459-460

the general detriment of world peace. The intention of the article was certainly never to encourage unilateral disarmament. Cecil had not forgotten Crowe's 1916 arguments when the article was framed. The article was of course ineffective: but British defence policy was not inspired by it.¹

Article 16, on sanctions, has received much criticism. Certainly the faith that Cecil and others put in economic and non-military sanctions was misconceived. Effective sanctions mean military and naval sanctions and sooner rather than later. Cecil overestimated the effectiveness of the wartime blockade which took years to bring Germany to her knees, and only with the assistance of millions of soldiers.

Finally there was the criticism that the League actually increased the danger of war because it encouraged countries to put their heads in the sand; it was an instrument of international self-deception.² Even if this accusation is accepted as true, the framers of the text of the Covenant cannot be blamed for this result. Cecil and Wilson did indulge in wishful thinking about world opinion; but the Covenant was not framed in an atmosphere of fantasy; in this respect it compares favourably with some of the other discussions at Paris.

The real fact was that the postwar world was full of new elements which made the League's task almost impossible; and, insofar as things had not changed, they also hindered it. The same kind of people ran the

¹Visc. Cecil, A Great Experiment, p. 79

²See: Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, p. 495

bureaucracies, governments and armies of most of the Allied nations. The inadequacy of their outlook, which Cecil had so often lamented, could not be altered in a moment. German militarism still existed, dormant, though Germany's new government was favourable to the League and eager to bring Germany in - which it was not allowed to do for some time. America returned to isolationism and never became a member. In Japan aggressive militarism, contemptuous of the League, was gaining ground.

Public opinion, it is true, was against war as it never had been before. But this opinion was far from being unified, imaginative or far-sighted, and it continued to express itself in national rather than international terms, on the whole. As Zimmern has pointed out, there were more sovereign peoples after the war, politically there was more variety, and they were more after their own interests than ever before. During the period of the Concert of Powers it had been possible to speak of a common policy of the great powers even though that was mainly an illusion. After the breakdown of the hopes raised by the Locarno pacts it was impossible to speak in those terms.¹

The German breach of the Belgian Treaty in 1914 did also symbolise the end of the sanctity of treaties. In this respect the Allied war effort, from Cecil's point of view, had been a failure. Treaty observance has rarely, if ever, since the First World War been put before important considerations of national expediency, and 'world opinion' demands

¹Ibid., p. 506

deference to the law only when it suits it to do so. International treaties may never have bound nations in actuality; but their prestige has diminished since 1914. The rule of law in international relations became a harder thing to accept where vital interests were concerned.

The disappearance of the spirit of 1914 - the optimistic belief of the combatants that they were fighting for the cause of right in fighting for their countries - might be thought to have helped the League. Paradoxically, it was just that kind of confidence that was needed by the members of the League to make it work. Hatred of war coupled with lack of confidence made it harder for nations to contemplate imposing military sanctions on 'an aggressor'. Writing to a friend in August 1914, Cecil had praised Britain's sense of justice in international relations, but had regretted that on occasion this led her to act the part of Providence in a meddling manner.¹ After the war, there was little thought of Britain playing such a part on anything but a limited scale. She might still give herself credit for moral superiority, but she had lost the confidence appropriate for a plunge into a war to promote peace.

One other change is to be noted. International affairs grew enormously in complexity after the war. Problems were increasingly technical, and more numerous, and the speed of communication and the interdependence of economic life made them more urgent. Because they were complex, they were harder to handle.² The League was framed with an

¹Addit. MSS. 51161, f.161-165: Cecil to Grigg, 11 Aug. 1919

²Alfred Zimmermann, op.cit. p. 496

awareness of these developments in mind; but it had its work cut out trying to deal with them.

These changes or constant factors meant that the League was unlikely to be successful in achieving lasting peace, even if its constitution had been improved. The 'gaps' in the Covenant were really immaterial to the problem. To make declarations 'outlawing war', as in the Kellogg-Briand pact, was quite meaningless. And Zimmern's plan of keeping a dispute 'in suspense'¹ if it could not be settled, seems to pre-suppose a better state of things than he himself described as existing. To have made League action possible in all circumstances by abolishing the unanimity rule would not have been acceptable; but in any case nations would not have acted in the case of a majority decision unless the chances were very definitely in their favour. The 'International Anarchy' had always existed, but it was more frankly manifest in the interwar period.

The League was not a total failure. It had an excellent record in the suppression of white slavery and drugs traffic and promoted much useful international work on health, communications, and such matters. The mandates worked well in some parts. Cecil had encouraged these aspects of the League's activities from the end of 1918, and he can take some of the credit for these results. Moreover to describe the League as futile would be to misunderstand its nature; such attempts at an international organisation for peace are an inevitable part of the modern

¹Ibid., p. 193

world - as much so as attempts to limit arms or to reconcile capital and labour in industry. The League, and U.N.O. after it, have encouraged successful international co-operation wherever it has been possible to secure it. The League was bound to happen and bound to be inadequate at preserving peace. Cecil can be criticised for over-optimism but for little more than that.

In other respects, his perceptiveness over the peace settlement is impressive. This was more often the result of a good sense of political probabilities than of specialised knowledge - the Chinese and economic settlement at Paris are cases in point. Cecil's credentials as a departmental minister were established by his decisive and resourceful handling of the blockade. His right to be taken seriously as a statesman, even by those who thought nothing of the League, is established by his views at the Peace Conference. Though he was politically eccentric, he was less unrealistic in his judgement than many of his contemporaries or his subsequent associates. As a character, he had the confidence and personal authority to take on major political responsibility; he was not the inferior of any of his Conservative colleagues in talent and forcefulness.

His weakness lay in his lack of interest in power games and party politics. After the war the important issue for him was to rally feeling in England behind the League - particularly those in government circles; in this he failed. He quarrelled with Curzon,¹ and supported

¹Visc. Cecil, A.T.M., p. 178

Asquith publicly against a Conservative candidate, because he felt that the ex-Prime Minister had been treated unjustly in 1916 and at the election in 1918.¹ Such actions, coupled with his resignation over the Welsh Church, established his reputation for oddity and unreliability. The League, which was identified with him, and was in any case under suspicion, lost further ground with his colleagues in consequence. His general view was that it was better to seek an effect by honest statements of conviction rather than achieving it by political manoeuvre: it meant that one was more likely to be trusted. It was the same view that he took about open diplomacy, public opinion and the League. Its drawback in home politics was that it is practically impossible for a politician to act in this fashion and remain in power, particularly if, like Cecil, he is by nature a preacher, and constantly feels called upon to criticise publicly. Cecil's virtues were not lost on his colleagues, or in the Foreign Office - in particular his loyalty to subordinates.² He was not unpopular. But his lack of 'party loyalty' was fatal to his chances of gaining a following. On the other hand he was never at home with the Labour party for which he worked on League affairs in 1929.³ He tried to form his own centre party - of 'right-minded men' - under Grey's leadership; but most of those he approached, including Grey, were unenthusiastic about the idea, and it came to nothing.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 161

²Private information

³Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., pp. 191-194; and: Private Information

⁴See: Keith Robbins, Sir Edward Grey: A Biography of Lord Grey of Fallodon (London 1971), p. 355 et seq.

Cecil's patrician attitude played a part in all this - he despised the bureaucratic and the commercial mind, both of which it was hard to avoid in politics in 1920. His aristocratic outlook should also be noted in connection with his League views: the idea of the inequality of the lesser powers politically, though not in international law, did not worry him when he planned the membership of the League Council; and the notion that all national sovereignties should be subordinated to the League again sprung from a fundamentally paternalistic outlook.

As an Englishman, a lawyer, and a student of constitutional law, he was inclined also to think in terms of the national sovereignties being subjected, like Tudor nobles, to the law. The revision of treaties was part of this thinking; he seems, in the period of this study, not to have been struck by the difficulty of revising a boundary. In the existing state of things, that was unpracticable, unless done, as it was at Paris, by a 'Diktat' imposed by the victors on the vanquished. Moreover, he did not enter imaginatively into foreign national customs, ideas, and traditions - let alone foreign aspirations for freedom. As with many Englishmen, travel had the effect of diminishing his sympathies rather than the reverse. A visit to the Barbados in 1888 prompted the comment: 'It was my first experience of a negro population and they did not attract me. But that was probably the fault of my intolerant youth'.¹

Thirty years later his comments were little more tolerant.

¹Visc. Cecil, A.T.W., p. 47

Though, as he told Beer, he found the French 'irresistible' as individuals, as a nation he considered them detestable.¹ 'Belgians are very tiresome',² he concluded at the end of his stay in Paris. When asked by his niece to identify one of the delegates there he told her that it was 'some ghastly foreigner'.³ Such feelings did not prevent him from working harmoniously with many foreigners; but they do illustrate how insular in outlook this illustrious champion of international organisation could be; the drafting of the Covenant was for him more a matter of gaining acceptance internationally for English legal concepts than of reconciling the ideas of different nations. Part of his greater feeling of closeness for the Americans was due to the Common Law background shared by both nations. It was partly the English quality of the Covenant, indeed, which made him ready to take the views on surrender of sovereignty that he did; he certainly did not wish to surrender sovereignty to the League proposed by the French.

Joseph Devlin has described Cecil as having 'one foot in the Middle Ages and the other in the League of Nations'.⁴ This is not a bad description of his political standpoint, though his League ideas were intimately involved with his 'Middle Ages' mentality, and should not really be separated. He was certainly not typical of the 20th century political mind and this was yet another factor that tended to isolate him. In some

¹Beer Diary, 8 Jan. 1919

²Cecil Diary, 9 June 1919

³Private Information

⁴Sir Colin Coote, A Companion of Honour. The Story of Walter Elliott (London 1965) p. 47

respects he was very much a Victorian. His moral fervour, his belief in the sanctity of treaties, his view that public and private morality could not be separated, and his fastidiousness and sensitivity, despite a robust style of expression - all these were Victorian characteristics. He was unselfconscious, but not earthy; he and his brothers lacked the easy-going, pleasure-loving strain common in the aristocracy.

But his ultimate motive force - his religious beliefs - went back to the Tudor period - if not earlier. To understand his attitude to the Church, one must think rather of Sir Thomas More than of nineteenth and twentieth century religious men. Indeed there is many ways more in common between Cecil's thought and that of his medieval predecessor in the international peacemaking field, Dante, than between Cecil's ideas and those of the U.D.C. for example. The terms of reference were similar. Both men associated decline of standards at home, and internationally, with the passing of power from the disinterested feudal aristocracy to the commercial classes; both repeatedly condemned treachery and word-breaking as the worst poison in public affairs; both believed in the submission of national sovereignties to a supreme law; both aimed at a Christian 'Reign of Peace'. Cecil once said that he regretted that there was no universal church, because that would have made the task of founding the League far easier.¹ There is no record that Cecil read the De Monarchia or the Divina Commedia; and the parallel should not be overstressed; but it does illustrate how little Cecil was 'of his time' as a thinker.

¹F.O. 800/242: Cecil to Spring-Rice, 29 Oct. 1917

These ideas, and others - such as the concept of the Apostolic Succession¹, had real meaning for him - far more, for example, than did the formative revolutions of the modern age - the French and Industrial Revolutions. These had not moulded his thought. Apart from Church issues, and some philanthropic ones connected with them, there were not many developments of the Victorian period which engaged his sympathies or attention. The Concert of Powers for which his father worked, was one of the few recent ideas to which he responded with enthusiasm.

His attitude to his religion was bewildering, amusing, annoying and impressive to his colleagues. It coloured all his views, as the frequent references to 'sacrifice', 'men of good will', 'crusaders', etc. in his utterances will have shown the reader. When Wilson told him he was calling the League convention, the 'Covenant', because he was an 'old Presbyterian'², Cecil warmed - momentarily at least - to the U.S. President. Clemenceau described Cecil as 'un chrétien qui croit et veut vivre sa croyance'³. As previously observed, he did not think, like his father, that Christian morality was to be followed as something revealed, but which apparently conflicted with the nature of the world as it was. Salisbury was against the principle of nationality because it was irrational and dangerous. Robert Cecil considered it also selfish. Rupert Brooke was not spared. After reading *The Soldier*:

¹See: Visc. Cecil, A Great Experiment, p. 17

²Ibid., p. 68

³Georges Clemenceau, Grandeurs et Misères d'une Victoire (Paris 1930) p. 124

'If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England...

'And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
... ¹

Cecil commented: 'Two thousand years of Christianity, and we can't do better than this.²'

Only the Jews, longing for their ancient Bible lands, and the Christian Armenians persecuted by the Turks really captured his sympathies. He was uninterested in the aspirations of the Poles and Czechs.

Like most men of strong moral fibre and religious convictions, Cecil did have feelings of moral superiority which parallel his aristocratic attitudes; this shows in his attitude towards leaving and rejoining the government in 1918/19; he really wished to keep his hands clean, not in order to escape responsibility, but because he was morally disgusted with the government; he may have had good cause; certainly he had a right to feel that way; his scrupulous standards never did make for easy relations with his colleagues - and particularly with Lloyd George, and he was convinced that he could not work with them. But, looking at

¹Ed. David Cecil and Allen Tate, Modern Verse in English 1900-1950 (New York 1958), p. 290

²Private Information

the events of the Peace Conference, it can be seen that he might have obtained relaxations of the blockade far earlier if he had not left matters in Reading's hands in December and January, and if thereafter he had agreed to be a minister. In view of the suffering and the political dangers, it does seem as though his conscience was bought dearly in this instance, and that his judgement was at fault.

However his political career was in many ways a good advertisement for his faith. He was consistently disinterested, honest and courageous. Later in his life, when the League had failed, he showed an extraordinary lack of bitterness. On the whole it was not his 'Middle Ages' side that was to be regretted - his contact with an earlier view of the world - so much as his lack of awareness and sympathy with more recent developments.

His own development was the result of the humanity, intelligence, resourcefulness, impatience, confidence and unworldliness of his nature as it reacted to the disaster of the Great War. His father believed in the federated action of the European nations to preserve peace,¹ but his forebodings about the future were gloomy, and he saw no simple solution. Robert Cecil took on the views on federation, and transmuted them into his ideas for a League. These rested on hopes of the power of public opinion to maintain peace if a suitable organisation could be devised. His sense of history - which also derived partly from his family background - had made him aware of the achievements of the British constitution and law - both at home and in the Empire. He wanted the new international system to embody the principles and practice of English law. He was

¹Alfred Zimmermann, op. cit. pp. 78-79

insular, but never chauvinistic. He was consistent in this approach. The Covenant itself was a compromise between the strong League he envisaged and the wishes of the Americans - and his own government - to prevent any inroads on national sovereignty. Enough has been said to show that the state of the world was such at this time that no scheme for an international peace organisation was likely to work; but the attempt had to be made; it was the natural response to a war of such proportions and horror. With the exception of the 'territorial guarantee' article, which Cecil opposed, the Covenant was sensibly conceived. It should be judged on the successes that it did achieve, though it failed in its principle aim. Moreover, Cecil's efforts to secure a better peace at Paris would have done much to create stability and diminish the likelihood of war in a way that the League proved powerless to do.

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(British) key source. "Useful" etc., indicates useful
but not indispensable source

Beaverbrook Library:

Lloyd George Papers	Very valuable
St. Loe Strachey Papers	Useful
Bonar Law Papers	Very useful

Bodleian Library, Oxford University:

Gilbert Murray Papers	Useful
Milner Papers (New College)	Quite useful
H.H. Asquith Papers	Some useful material

Bowood House:

Papers of the 5th Marquess of Lansdowne	Some useful material on attitude of Cecil family to Lansdowne letter, and items of interest on some questions which can be found elsewhere. Papers have since been closed while lib- rary is being reorgan- ised
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British Museum, Manuscripts Dept.:

Cecil of Chelwood Papers	Very valuable source
A.J. Balfour Papers	Quite useful
C.P. Scott Papers	Very little on Cecil

Christ Church Library, Oxford:

Papers of 3rd Marquis of Salisbury	Very few letters from Lord Robert Cecil
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Hatfield House:

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these are the personal,
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Record Office material
has been an invaluable
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items on the Peace
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social comment - in
the pre-1914 period -
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Frederick Dixon Papers

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Cecil, though many
of Dixon's letters to
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Tasker H. Bliss Papers

Some interesting
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William H. Taft Papers

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of the permanent
international court,
subsequent to period
covered by thesisSterling Memorial Library, Yale University:

Edward L. House Collection:

Edward M. House Papers	Very valuable
Gordon Auchincloss Papers	Not used much
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The author has been unable to learn anything concerning the whereabouts of the papers of Sir Cecil Hurst and of Sir Alfred Zimmern. Future studies of the origins of the League would undoubtedly benefit from these sources.

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