



22

3rd May, 1966.

Dear Don Manuel,

The Research Department here tell me that Sir Archibald Sinclair made speeches about the Spanish Civil War on the following dates: 8th November 1937, 21st December 1937, 16th March 1938, and 23rd June 1938. I imagine that the one you want is either 8th November or 21st December 1937, and I enclose photostats of both. If this is not what you require, please let me know, and send me any further details you have.

I expect to be in Paris between 9th and 14th May and to be staying at the Prince de Galles Hotel, and I hope to see you.

Yours ever,

Francis Noel-Baker, M.P.

Sr. Don Manuel de Irrijo,
Gouvernement d'Euzkadi,
Delegation de Paris,
50 Rue Singer.

Mr. Crossley: In any case, his letters of credence instructed him to keep in contact with the rebels. But there are three precedents that I particularly wish to mention. The first is the Trent case, in 1861, when two agents of the Southern States of America, coming over to this country, were forcibly seized from a British ship by a United States cruiser, a case on which our Foreign Secretary at the time, Lord Russell, wrote a dispatch giving certain opinions. Incidentally, no recognition, either *de jure* or *de facto*, had been given at that time by this country to the administration of the Southern States of America.

Mr. Alexander: They had been afforded belligerent rights.

Mr. Crossley: Yes. Lord Russell maintained that neutral States might receive from unrecognised Governments special agents enjoying no representative character and no diplomatic honours, but otherwise entitled to the immunity of Ministers. He went on to add, in his own words:

"The reception of these gentlemen upon this footing could not have been adjudged according to the law of nations as a hostile or unfriendly act towards the United States."

I believe those words have a considerable bearing upon the present case.

Mr. Alexander: Is not the whole point the fact that the British Government at the time had the right to defend their ships, which were carrying those men, because they had granted to the rebels belligerent rights, and that it was an unfriendly act by the United States Government to take off British ships representatives of people to whom the British Government had given belligerent rights?

Mr. Crossley: I do not think that is the whole point. There is a considerable point in the fact that our Foreign Secretary at the time laid it down that it could not be regarded as an unfriendly act for this country to receive the agents of an administration which had not been granted either *de jure* or *de facto* recognition. The next case to which I wish to refer may interest the Opposition even more. In 1920, M. Krassin came to this country as the agent of the Soviet Government, which at that time had not been recognised by our country either as the *de jure* or *de facto* Government of

Russia. M. Krassin came to this country and was accorded special diplomatic immunities, and even certain immunities from the jurisdiction of the English courts, for certain specific negotiations. There may be a slight difference, but again I believe that the case of M. Krassin, in 1920, has a considerable bearing upon the case that we are now discussing. The third case that I wish to quote is one which is not by any means a complete precedent, but it sheds considerable light on the matter. It was the appointment by this country of Sir Robert Hodgson as an agent to Soviet Russia in 1921, when we did not recognise the Soviet Union as the *de jure* Government.

Mr. Gallacher: It has no bearing on the present situation.

Mr. Alexander: Will the hon. Gentleman expound how he makes the analogy? I cannot see an analogy between the Russian position and the Spanish position. There was no non-intervention in the case of Russia. This country had intervened very considerably in Russia.

Sir Archibald Sinclair: Surely, in so far as that specific analogy is correct, it is most damaging to the Government's case, because the Russian Government then being firmly in the saddle, the exchange of agents was made with the object of preparing the way for recognition of the Soviet Government.

Mr. Crossley: It did not lead entirely to that result. If the right hon. Gentleman will read the history of that matter, he will come to 1923, when our Foreign Secretary, angry at the way our agent was being treated by the Russian Government, gave what was tantamount to an ultimatum to that Government that if they did not redress certain grievances within 10 days, our agent would be withdrawn and all diplomatic relations with the Russian Government severed.

Sir A. Sinclair: Then they were diplomatic relations.

Mr. Crossley: They were commercial relations, and so on. Actually Lord Curzon threatened the Russian Government that the British Government would terminate the Trade Treaty of 1921, as the right hon. Gentleman may remember. I think I have answered the point he made. I think the first two precedents which I have quoted almost exactly

[The Prime Minister.]

How are we to protect the interests of the world if we are not the policeman of the world?

Mr. Attlee: It was precisely the object of the establishment of the League that the preservation of peace was a common interest of the world, and my point is that the right hon. Gentleman's Government has departed from that because it has always considered only the narrow Imperialist interest and not the world interest. He would be in a far better position to-day if it had realised that long ago.

The Prime Minister: That seems to me to be only a repetition of the view that it is the duty of this country to protect interests all over the world, quite apart—

An Hon. Member: "What about others?"

The Prime Minister: Yes, in company with others. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] Will the hon. Members who say "Hear, hear," tell us how we are to get others alongside us? Are they completely blind and deaf to what has taken place? Have they forgotten the efforts we have made to get other countries alongside us? This seems to me to show once again that the Opposition are living in an unreal world. They are trying to put upon a mutilated League duties which it is not able to perform as it is constituted at present, and they are trying to throw upon this Government the onus of what is not the fault of this Government, but is the inevitable accompaniment of the present constitution of the League. We are not unmindful—we never have been in this country—of the abstract principles of justice, liberty and freedom, for which we stand in this country and the British Empire. But, although hon. Gentlemen opposite talk about our acting in concert with others, it takes two, at least, to bring about a concert, and we cannot act alone and stand up for these principles in all parts of the world. The right hon. Gentleman does, in fact, ask us to do that, because if the League fails hon. and right hon. Gentlemen opposite always say, "It is entirely the fault of His Majesty's Government." I should give the House no hope if I thought that that was all we had to depend on. When the right hon. Gentleman wants to know

whether we are drifting or steering towards a port, I say, "We are not drifting; we have a definite objective in front of us." That objective is a general settlement of the grievances of the world without war. We believe that the right way to go about that is not to issue threats, but to try to establish those personal contacts to which I have already alluded, and that only by friendly, frank discussion between the nations can we hope to arrive at a situation when once more we shall be able to remove anxiety from our minds.

5.3 p.m.

Sir Archibald Sinclair: I do not share the regret which the Prime Minister expressed at the beginning of his speech that the Opposition asked for the subject of foreign affairs to be discussed to-day. The right hon. Gentleman said that it was difficult for hon. Members to speak without doing harm, but if that is true I think we must all agree, including the Prime Minister himself, that it was an achievement which the Leader of the Opposition managed to perform. I do not believe that anyone could say that the speech he delivered—although I am far from agreeing with all that he said—will do harm; in fact, it struck me that a phrase at the beginning of the Prime Minister's speech might do a great deal more harm when he turned to the benches opposite and accused hon. Members of wanting war.

The Prime Minister: I did not accuse them of wanting war, but I said that the policy which was advocated by the Opposition was, in my judgment, likely to lead to war.

Sir A. Sinclair: My own impression was that the words were not quite so guarded; but I agree that it is very difficult for me to recollect exactly what words he used, and possibly the Prime Minister's recollection may not be exact. It is a pity that the Prime Minister should use words which may give foreign countries the impression—and words have been used—if not by the Prime Minister to-day, by other Ministers at other times—which have been deliberately intended to give to the country and the world the impression that the Labour party in this country, representing, as it does, a great block of opinion in this country, is a war-mongering party. I do not believe that is true, and I do not think it should be

said. I agree that there are difficulties in having such a Debate as this, and a great many of the difficulties are thrown upon the unfortunate Minister who has to reply. I do not believe, quite frankly, that the things that the Opposition say on these occasions do very much harm, but what more often do harm are the things that Ministers are provoked into saying in reply.

If we were not to have this Debate, what would be the alternative? Would there be complete silence; would nobody say anything at all; would there not be speeches in the country; would there not be inspired interviews and articles in the newspapers, and would not the impressions that those articles would make on public opinion in this country and other countries be at least as detrimental to the public interest and to the smooth running of international affairs as a Debate in this House? For my own part I believe that the proper place to discuss these issues is the House of Commons. Obviously, this country is not content to run the dangers inherent in the present international situation without having these discussions and obtaining information and, if I may say so, with respect to a party to which I do not belong, the Opposition have done a public service in asking for this Debate to-day.

I agree that the speeches of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition show that there is a large measure of agreement on a number of important issues in this House: the importance of this growth of foreign propaganda; that Colonies are not to be used for mere counters; support for the policy of entering into conversations with Germany, such as those which have been undertaken by Lord Halifax with Hitler; condemnation on all sides of Japanese aggression in China—on all of these there has been expressed a unity of opinion which I cannot help thinking must be a help, and not a hindrance, to the Government. If we have differences of opinion, let us express them frankly, and I believe the frank expression of those differences on other issues will only tend to emphasise the support we give to the Government on those issues on which we are in agreement with them.

If, indeed, we look to the past; if, indeed, we consider how we have been brought into the present situation, then we shall have to express grave condem-

nation of the Government's policy. The right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister referred at one point in his speech to the difficulties of the past. He said, "What would the Opposition have done?" Later on, towards the end, he taunted the Opposition with wishing to be the policeman of the world, and when the Opposition replied, "With others," he said, "Where are we to get the others? Where are we to find the people who will help us now?" Is not that the condemnation of the Government's policy? It is true, it has left us almost without a friend, with the exception of that firm and loyal and true friend, France. It is true, our position is gravely weakened as compared with five or six years ago, and when the Prime Minister referred to the League of Nations as a nucleus out of which a better order might be built, he showed where the weakness has been created.

In 1935, we had 50 nations around us who were prepared to exchange guarantees with us for protection against any retaliation by the aggressor in the Mediterranean. Four of them gave us reciprocal guarantees. The United States Government was moving towards regulating exports of oil in order to bring pressure on Italy. That was the support we had in those days, but the Government, in the Hoare-Laval negotiations, threw it away. They stabbed the League in the back. It is from that moment that the difficulties of this country have increased and the world situation has deteriorated. For my part, I believe that if the Government will only give in January a firm lead to the League, they will be able to rally those nations which are falling away from the League and are no longer giving it that firm support that they gave it in the Abyssinian crisis only three or four years ago.

Then the right hon. Gentleman referred to Spain. He said that non-intervention has been successful because the war has not spread outside Spain. But non-intervention has failed, because, as hon. Gentlemen pointed out, it has not prevented intervention. I supported the non-intervention plan, but I said that there ought to be a time limit, and if it were not working at the end of that period, the normal practice should be resumed, and the Spanish Government allowed to buy arms from all over the world. Negotiations are dragging on, and is there a single Member in this House who will

[Sir A. Sinclair.] take it upon himself to prophesy that negotiations will finish before the war? Not one. The Government should take a firmer line over the negotiations in Spain.

I do not want to detain the House very long, and I want to refer mainly to-day to the serious situation in the Far East. I want—to use a vulgar expression—to come down to brass tacks and consider, not only principles, but, as the Prime Minister said, methods. I do not want to be unduly controversial. It is a very serious situation, and we realise the heavy responsibility which rests upon the Government; and the last thing we want to do is to say anything that will make the task of the Foreign Secretary more difficult. I will only say one controversial thing at the beginning of my remarks, and that is, that if the Prime Minister taunts the Opposition with pursuing policies which may lead to war, we reply that we are gravely apprehensive that this policy of drift may well bring us to the brink of war. If discretion is the better part of valour, it seems to us that we have reached a point in the steady deterioration in world affairs when a little valour might be a useful ingredient in the flabby discretion of the Government's foreign policy.

If we look at the situation in the Far East, it seems to me that there are four main lines of policy from which we have to choose. One would be to clear out of China altogether. That is the policy which in the present situation the pacifists must advocate; but I will spend no time on it, because no responsible British Government could ever adopt it. The second would be to reach an understanding with Japan in harmony with their present policy towards China, but not only would that policy be contrary to our obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations and to our Nine-Power Treaty obligations, and injurious to British interests and prestige, but it would also make impossible that close understanding with the United States of America on which all parties in this House have set their hearts. For that and other reasons, it would be unacceptable to public opinion in this country and in the Dominions. It seems, therefore, unnecessary to discuss it further.

There remain two further choices—one, what I understand to be His Majesty's

Government's policy, of neutrality in the struggle between China and Japan while endeavouring to secure respect for British interests in China; and the other policy, which I advocated in our last Debate on this subject, of the fulfilment of our obligations to the Chinese under the Nine-Power Treaty. In advocating that policy I recognised frankly then, and I still do, that such a policy would involve economic pressure on Japan. If I may say so with respect to the Leader of the Opposition, this is the point where I thought his speech was least convincing, because if we are to undertake a policy of economic pressure upon Japan, we must realise the probability that, if that pressure is to be effective, it will provoke retaliation unless we are prepared with such a force as will make the prospects of the success of that retaliation hopeless.

Therefore, it would be fatal, and I would almost say criminal, to embark upon such a policy without having adequate forces at our command. Force would be used only in the last resort, but if we embark upon it we must not allow ourselves again, as in the Abyssinian dispute, to be deterred from making our policy effective by a threat of war from the aggressor. It would, therefore, be necessary to have on the spot adequate means of resisting armed retaliation. Moreover, I recognised in that Debate, and I still do, that if the Nine Powers, or the majority of them, were to act together in upholding the Nine-Power Treaty, the United States of America would have to take the lead, but I added that His Majesty's Government ought to declare that we are willing to play our part in this effort to uphold the sanctity of treaties and the authority of the law of nations against aggression.

Let me frankly concede that the Government did so, but, unfortunately, without result, and the Brussels Conference was a miserable fiasco, discouraging to all except those who take a diabolical delight in the breakdown of every effort to uphold law and reason against force in the world. I ask His Majesty's Government to make another and a bolder effort before they turn their back upon this policy. Let them make it clear to the United States not only that they will stand by them in every effort which they may make to defend the sanctity of the Nine-Power Treaty, but let them give the United States Government an undertaking

and tell them exactly what contribution His Majesty's Government are prepared to make to the common effort if the United States Government take the lead.

Such is the policy which I advocate—a stand based on international law and justice, but meanwhile the outrages on the Yangtse River and the loss of British lives and property, as well as other deplorable incidents, such as the Japanese victory march through the International Zone at Shanghai and interference with the Chinese Customs—all these incidents have raised a different question from that of defending the independence and integrity of China under the Nine-Power Treaty and the Covenant of the League. They have raised the question of protecting British lives, property and legitimate national interests in China. It is a different question from that of upholding the Nine-Power Treaty, and it needs different but not less decisive treatment, if the damage to British interests and prestige—not only in China—and the even greater dangers inherent in a vacillating policy are to be avoided.

When the Government sneer at the Opposition for being prepared to stand up for abstract conceptions of justice and freedom but not being prepared to defend British interests, I ask, What are the Government going to do to defend British interests in the situation which is now developing in the Far East? I would ask the House to consider the size and importance of our interests in China. It is no mere question of the profits of a few capitalist adventurers. It touches the livelihood of scores of thousands of our fellow-countrymen. Our total trade with China for the first nine months of this year amounted to £12,000,000, excluding Hong Kong and Manchuria, and the leased territories of China. Our investments in China amount altogether to something like £240,000,000. Our invisible exports in the shape of interest on loans, earnings of shipping—40 per cent. of the trade of China is carried in British ships—insurance, banking, and profits of private firms with immense investments in real estate are enormous. Then there is the trade of the ports of Shanghai and Hong Kong. They rank fifth and sixth among the ports of the world. There is not a port in Europe except Rotterdam, not one in Britain except London, not one on the continent of the United States of America except

New York, and not one in Asia, except Kobe, which has a trade equal to the trade of Hong Kong and Shanghai. All these sources yield important sums to the British Exchequer, and give employment to British workpeople. The loss of our interests in China would spell increased burdens for taxpayers, increased unemployment and lower standards of living for our people.

Let us make no doubt about it. The respect that the militarists of Japan will show for British interests will be in direct ratio to our capacity and resolve to defend them. If the resolve of His Majesty's Government is to be measured by the few ships that we now have in Chinese waters, our position will be progressively undermined by Japanese encroachment, with consequences which will extend far and wide throughout Asia and the Empire. No doubt, if the Japanese win in their struggle with China and if we still have no greater means of defence on the spot than we have now, they will keep an open door in China for British merchants, but across it will be written the word "exit." The officers and men of the British Army and Navy have done wonders in recent weeks in maintaining the traditions of their services and the prestige of their country, but their resources are meagre, and vague threats are no substitute for calm and deliberate action. The Leader of the Opposition, in his speech at the opening of the Debate, referred to a speech which was made by the First Lord of the Admiralty at Pimlico, and in the course of it the First Lord said that

"any country which underrates the strength of the British Navy will be making a mistake which may prove fatal to their happiness."

It reminded me of King Lear:

"I will do such things—
What they are yet I know not; but they
shall be
the terrors of the earth."

No doubt the halls of Pimlico quaked at the fall of this thunderbolt. Still it was a remark which, if it were necessary to make it at all, was quite a fitting one to come from the First Lord. The First Lord was also reported as referring to the incidents on the Yangtse, and here I want to be quite fair to him, because I understand that he has been misreported. But this report has been in the newspapers, and I know that it has

[Sir A. Sinclair.] misled other people beside myself, and I therefore do not wish to attribute to the First Lord responsibility for what was reported, because I understand that he disclaims it. It has appeared in the newspapers as though a Minister of the Government had said that the Japanese have expressed their deep regret in unqualified terms, and as if he thought that we should accept their full apology. I am very glad to know that the First Lord did not say that, because if that were the policy of the Government, I can imagine none more likely to encourage Japanese militarists to underestimate the strength of the British Navy, with results no less fatal to the happiness of our own people than to theirs. If we want to impress Japanese militarists with the strength of the British Navy we must find a better means than by bombast. It is not the strength of Ulysses' bow that foreign nations doubt, but the capacity of right hon. Gentlemen to bend it.

In reply to a question yesterday, the Secretary of State said that the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards any threat to Hong Kong had been made plain. Yes, in words but not in that language which alone the militarists of other nations understand. Not the use of force—I am not advocating that at the moment, but I suggest the movement of ships to a position from which, if British interests were directly attacked, they would be available for defence. Such a movement would be in no way inconsistent with the policy of neutrality of His Majesty's Government in the struggle between China and Japan. It would commit His Majesty's Government to no intervention, military or economic, in that struggle. It would be undertaken only on the basis of the closest co-operation between ourselves and the Government of France, both in European and in Far Eastern waters. Fortunately, the firm and loyal friendship between ourselves and France makes it feasible. Granted such co-operation, French and British interests, both in Europe and in the Far East, could be effectively protected, and would, therefore, be respected. Without it militarists and dictators will go on kicking the democracies from pillar to post until at last they go too far, and we shall suddenly find ourselves on the brink of the catastrophe of war.

In such a policy involving no departure from our neutrality in the struggle between China and Japan, and limited to the protection of British interests in the Far East, we should have no right to call for the co-operation of the United States of America. Those of us who, above all things, want to see Britain working with the United States of America in defence of law and freedom against force and aggression, must never make the mistake of asking the United States of America to come and help us in defending purely British interests. If the Government have to confine their policy within those limits, they must rely on their own strength. Nevertheless so long as close consultation is proceeding, and the Secretary of State has assured us that such consultation is proceeding, between our Government and the United States, there could be no misunderstanding in the United States of our motives; and it might well be that, once our determination to act on our own responsibility became apparent, the United States might on its own responsibility decide to act on parallel lines for the protection of its own interests. They might be encouraged to go further and take that lead which alone could put American and British action on the higher ground of principle, the sanctity of treaties and the maintenance of the authority of law in the relations between nations.

I am sure that there is no policy more ardently desired by this House as a whole than close understanding, friendship and co-operation between ourselves and the great American Republic. Public opinion outside this House and in the Press is equally united. Yet those who will the end, must will the means. It is sad to see the apostles of isolation pressing their suit upon the American people, for nothing is more certain than that America will never co-operate in a policy for the protection of British Imperial interests. American public opinion is still averse from American co-operation with the League of Nations, because they regard it as a European institution through which they might be drawn into European quarrels, but they honour its ideals and respect those who defend them. The loyalty of Britain or any other European nation to the League wins their sympathy and treachery to the League incurs their disgust.

Nor can supporters of General Franco help those who are endeavouring to win American friendship, for nothing is clearer than the hatred of American opinion for Fascism in all its forms, and their devotion to democracy. The only lines upon which our two nations can work together are, on the one hand, a resolute defence of the sanctity of treaties and the substitution of the rule of law for the anarchy of power politics, and, on the other hand, the pursuit of peace through trade and economic disarmament. Let me quote one passage from a speech of Mr. Cordell Hull; it is indeed the burden of a whole series of his speeches.

"An adequate revival of international trade will be the most powerful single force for easing political tension and averting the dangers of war."

So strongly do I believe this that I welcome the reference which the Prime Minister made, necessarily somewhat short and vague, to the work of Mr. Van Zeeland. If we want peace in Europe let us start by restoring the prosperity of the peoples of Europe by reducing the barriers to trade between the Danubian countries, and give full scope to the economic interests of Germany and Italy without insisting on our rights under the most-favoured-nation Clause. If we want economic co-operation with the United States of America do not let the Federation of British Industries wreck it, or the Ottawa Agreements block it. If we want the open door in China let us reopen the door in the British Colonial Empire. Let us break the shackles of Ottawa and Protection and march forward freely with the United States towards the goal of peace.

5.35 p.m.

Mr. Lansbury: I should have preferred not to take part in the Debate, which is concerned more particularly with Spain and China, but I want to deal with one aspect of the international question. There are two personal things I want to say if the House will allow me. I have been gently asked once or twice by friendly hon. Members how it is that I have gone about the world in the fashion I have, and who has paid the piper? I was invited to go to America to lecture on peace, to help the peace campaign, in company with the hon. Member for West Bermondsey (Dr. Salter). As I had personal relationships with certain American statesmen before the War and since, I asked

the late Mr. Bingham if he would make it possible for me to have an interview with President Roosevelt. I should like to join in expressing my own deep regret at the passing of Mr. Bingham. Not only was he a firm friend of Britain but he was also a very fine representative of the United States and I think we have all suffered a great loss by his death.

After seeing President Roosevelt I thought I would like to see M. Blum in Paris, and Mr. Van Zeeland in Belgium. I needed no introduction to M. Blum, but my friend, Mr. Vandeveld made it possible for me to meet Mr. Van Zeeland. After that I went to the Scandinavian countries, and in response to a challenge made very properly by the right hon. Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) I went to see Herr Hitler. The right hon. Member suggested I should go there and preach my peace doctrines. I am glad to say that I did so.

Mr. Churchill: I am glad you have come back.

Mr. Lansbury: I have been in much tighter places in my own country. Later on I also saw Signor Mussolini, and, finally, I went to the South-East of Europe. As to the money. First of all the Government have had nothing whatever to do with paying my expenses or looking after me except those arrangements which the Government make for any other member of this House when he goes abroad. The Foreign Secretary was kind enough to let it be known to the Ministers and Ambassadors that I was going, and they have been, as they always are, most helpful and courteous in every way. But the money comes out of the pockets of good Quakers, good Methodists, good Tories, good Liberals, good Labourites and good Socialist people generally. Neither I nor my colleague wants any fee or has been paid any fee. I get my salary here whether I am in attendance or not, and with a little money otherwise I do not need money in that way. I think now I can leave the personal part alone. I should not have raised it but for the fact that it has been raised with me privately.

I am not one of those travellers who go for 24 hours into a country and then come back and pose as an authority on the affairs of that country and its relationships with other countries. The point I want to emphasise is, that I have