

but I came to realize that it was no use lying down like a lamb when the European sheep fold was full of wolves. Thanks to the appalling fiasco of our late foreign policy I am now firmly convinced that our only hope of a European peace is a Britain both strong and prepared.

Equally, I still believe in the principles of democracy, but I am positive that the time has come when such

democratic principles should be mobilized and enforced by a more active and powerful unit than our parliamentary system.

I am not crying for a pocket Cæsar. I am merely enumerating the benefits to be achieved through unimpaired, rapid and direct action by a man of age, experience, integrity and goodwill. Have we such a man? That is a question which the future will decide.

## II. OLIGARCHY

By THE RIGHT HONORABLE L. S. AMERY, M.P.

From the *Sunday Times*, London Conservative Sunday Paper

**T**WENTY years ago the world was declared to have been made safe for democracy. Today, democracy is everywhere on the defensive. We have seen it scrapped, in one country after another, for some form of autocratic or totalitarian government.

Of the great nations that live exposed to the stress and urgency of international economic and political pressures only two, France and ourselves, still cling to their democratic parliamentary constitutions. The question that is being asked, with increasing insistence, by many serious and patriotic citizens in both countries is: how long can we afford to do so?

Day by day the man in the street is confronted with some new evidence of the power, the consistent forethought and the swift execution of the autocratic States, and contrasts it with the irresolution, hesitation and obvious afterthought of democratic policy. Nor is it only in the field of military preparation and foreign policy that the autocracies seem to assert their superiority.

In the field of economic and social organization, of providing employment, of dealing with problems of health and of family life, of the provision of recreation for the working masses, the boldness and success of their measures have made a deep impression even on those who most heartily detest the means by which their results are obtained and the purposes which their policy subserves. If we are to hold our own with them, in peace or war, must we, in the end, be driven to follow their example? I would unhesitatingly answer: No!

Democracy and parliamentary government have not failed. They have sources of innate vitality and elasticity that, *given time*, should enable them to win through both in peace and in war. If they fail, it is not because they are, in principle, unsuited to the conditions of the modern world, but because of defects in their machinery which need correction and bringing up-to-date. What those defects are in French parliamentarism I need not discuss here. The problem is one whose

urgency must soon compel France to find her own solution. What concerns us are the defects in our own constitutional structure.

There is room, no doubt, for some improvement in our representative and parliamentary system and in the procedure of the House of Commons. But the real weakness is not there. The House of Commons is, on the whole, an efficient body for its main purpose of supporting and criticizing the administrative and legislative work of the Government and of maintaining contact between the Government and public opinion. All it needs is to feel that it is being effectively led in the execution of a definite, coherent policy.

## II

The weakness lies in the central instrument of Government—the Cabinet. It is not a weakness due to lack of individual ability on the part of Ministers. Least of all is it due to lack of administrative capacity or grasp of policy on the part of the Prime Minister himself. The effect of his personality, not merely on foreign policy, but on the whole machine of government, has been most marked since he took charge.

For all that, it is my profound conviction, based on a good many years of practical experience, that the nineteenth-century Cabinet system is no longer capable, even in Mr. Chamberlain's hands, of coping with the immensely complex and urgent problems of today. In days when the pressure of departmental and parliamentary work on Ministers was only a fraction of what it is now, and when national and international issues were infinitely simpler and the whole course of events

more leisurely, it was possible for Ministers, meeting round the Cabinet table, to find time both to adjust departmental differences and to arrive at such a measure of common policy as the situation might demand. Those days are gone.

I do not believe that it is possible in the stress and complexity of the present-day situation, and in competition with men of the ability and boldness of the leaders of the Continental autocracies, to carry on the affairs of a great nation by weekly meetings between a score and more of overworked departmental chiefs. At such meetings the main preoccupation of most of those present is to secure Cabinet sanction for their own departmental proposals, and to get through an agenda in which the competition of departments for a place is varied by the incursion of some urgent telegram from abroad, or of sudden questions in the House of Commons raising issues of policy for which answers must be improvised.

The fact is that the original function of the Cabinet as a small body of like-minded men meeting to discuss general policy has become more and more lost with the growth of Cabinets and the enormous increase in departmental work.

The ordinary Cabinet of today is really a standing conference of departmental chiefs, where departmental policies come up to be submitted to a cursory criticism, as a result of which they may be accepted, adjusted to the competing policies of other departments, or merely blocked. The general tendency, where there are differences, as there usually are, is to postpone, to whittle down, to let the negative prevail over the positive.

The whole system is one which affords no opportunity for the coherent planning of policy as a whole or for its bold and determined execution. To say that this is the task of the Prime Minister, aided by such of his colleagues as he may call to his innermost councils, is to overlook the extent to which both Prime Minister and colleagues are snowed under by current routine duties.

It is a commonplace of scientific organization, long since recognized in all the fighting services, that the planning of policy for the future can only be effectively carried out if those responsible for it are free from the day-by-day tasks of administration. The failure to recognize this principle—the general staff principle—is the real weakness of our present Cabinet system, and makes it incapable of dealing effectively with any serious situation where clear thinking on difficult and complex issues, definite decisions (not formulæ of agreement), and swift, resolute and consistent action are required.

It was Mr. Lloyd George's great achievement in the War that he faced this inherent weakness of the departmental Cabinet system, and boldly set up a War Cabinet of half a dozen Ministers without departments, leaving the departmental Ministers outside the Cabinet as such, and only called in when their own particular subjects were under discussion.

### III

As one who has sat for some six years in ordinary Cabinets, but who was also privileged to attend, as one of its secretaries, most of the meetings of the War Cabinet in 1917 and 1918,

I can say without hesitation that there is no comparison between the two systems in efficiency, grasp of the problems to be dealt with, or driving power, and that Mr. Lloyd George's innovation played a substantial part in winning the war.

The strength of the system of a small Cabinet of non-departmental Policy Ministers lies, first and foremost, in the fact that they have the time to meet, daily if need be, and really discuss general policy and discuss it ahead of events. But it also lies in the fact that the Prime Minister's burden is lightened by the assistance of a small handful of colleagues, who not only help in framing policy, but in transmitting it to the whole machinery of government.

In the sphere of war nobody would dream of expecting a commander to handle directly more than at most half a dozen subordinates. Who ever heard of a colonel commanding twenty companies, or of a division of twenty brigades? Why should it be otherwise in the sphere of politics? Why should we expect a Prime Minister to succeed under conditions which would be regarded as inevitably spelling failure for a Commander-in-Chief?

I shall be told that such a system was only possible in war, and that in peace the departmental Ministers who now sit in Cabinet would not put up with their supersession by a handful of Policy Ministers. Is our present urgency really so remote from war conditions as all that?

We are spending on a war scale in a tremendous effort to equip the nation for dangers that we may have to face at any moment. Our emergency measures cover, as they did during the war, almost every aspect of our na-

tional life. They concern not only the recruiting of men and the making of munitions, but every conceivable aspect of industry, of food-production and storage, of transport, of the utilization of the services of every man and woman. And if we are calling upon working men to waive trade union restrictions in the interests of national production, is it too much to ask Ministers to waive some of their customary privileges?

But we have plenty of urgent prob-

lems of peace, as well as problems of war, confronting us. I believe there is no measure that Mr. Chamberlain, with his courage and power of decision, could undertake that would more facilitate his own almost superhuman task, and make the nation feel that its problems were being faced in a really bold and big spirit, than the application, in some form or other, of that principle of Cabinet reform which Mr. Lloyd George introduced with such marked success in the War.

### III. WILL TO COÖPERATE

By SIR NORMAN ANGELL

From *Reynolds News*, London Coöperative Weekly

*You know the argument:—  
Because the League is no longer universal, because four of the Great Powers of the world are outside it, three of them opposing it, it is no longer powerful enough to resist aggression; Sanctions are bound to be ineffective; Any attempt to work it would mean splitting Europe into two armed camps, pitting one armed alliance against another—the Haves against the Have Nots.*

SO BE it. Let us suppose it is all true. It is not true, but assume it is. What policy do those who use this argument, particularly the supporters of Mr. Chamberlain, propose as an alternative? What policy are they following?

The League, they say, would produce two armed camps, two armed ideologies. Do they then propose to have one armed camp in Europe, that of the States outside the League? They do not, for Mr. Chamberlain's Government and Party and support-

ers clamantly demand ever more and more arms in order to oppose some other armed camp. Which camp?

When the Government demands such feverish war preparations, arming on a scale never before known in peace time; when it demands the immediate organization of elaborate Air Raid Precautions on the ground that any day we might have to face the bombing of London, by whom, do they assume, the bombs will be dropped? By the French? The Dutch? The Danes? The Swedes? The Swiss?

Mr. Chamberlain and his supporters, the whole country, the whole world knows that those bombs against which we are taking such elaborate and immensely expensive precautions will be German bombs; German or none. Unless, indeed, we envisage the sinister possibility that Mr. Chamberlain's supporters anticipate having to join the totalitarian States in the suppression of a French 'Bolshevist' Government, as they have, in fact,