

sidered this a peace gesture. The final and irrevocable move of Hitler came on March 7, 1936, when he denounced the Locarno pact and reoccupied the Rhineland. In this connection it is interesting to note what Hitler said and the reply thereto in the British house. On March 7, at the Kroll opera house in Berlin, which was used as the meeting place of the reichstag following the now proven nazi burning of the original structure, Hitler said this:

In addition I have made up my mind to enforce German sovereignty and to labour for European understanding. It is rather a tragic misfortune that Versailles treaty should have created a situation which the French themselves believed themselves to be specially interested in maintaining. It is regrettable that, after all our efforts to come to terms with France, France should conclude the Russian pact of which we know the beginning but not the end. Whatever could be proposed for lessening the tension between Germany and France I have proposed. I proposed 200,000 men and 300,000 men, but everything was rejected. Only one of my proposals was met. The realistic sense of the British government led to the conclusion of the naval pact, and that is the first real success for the restriction of armaments.

He closed with the following exhortation:

Men, deputies of the German reichstag, at this historic hour at which, in the western provinces of the reich, German troops are now entering their garrisons, we join with them in the solemn oath.

(1) Not to yield before any power and force in the effort to restore the honour of the nation and rather to succumb than to capitulate;

(2) To work for an understanding among the nations of Europe, and especially for an understanding with our western neighbours.

Goering then dissolved the reichstag with these words:

Germany is free. The future lies clearly before us—one nation, one leader, one will.

The proceedings then terminated with the usual sieg heils. This was the sixth meeting of the reichstag since Hitler came to power in 1933.

The reply in the British House of Commons took place on March 9. Mr. Eden in a long statement used these words:

The abrogation of the Locarno treaty and the occupation of the demilitarized zone have profoundly shaken confidence in any engagement into which the government of Germany may in future enter. There can be no one in this house or this country who would wish to condone or excuse such a step. It strikes a severe blow at that principle of international relations. There is, I am thankful to say, no reason to suppose that the present German action implies a threat of hostilities.

I do not wish by quoting such a small portion of Mr. Eden's speech to distort the actual sense of the entire statement. However, if hon. members will read it I think

[Mr. Adamson.]

they will agree that it was conciliatory in tone, and particularly where he describes his conversation with the German ambassador.

On March 19, 1936, the League of Nations met to hear Herr von Ribbentrop explain and endeavour to justify Germany's action over the Locarno treaty. The speech was a long one, and as usual filled with the phobia of fear of Russia, German honour and German desire for peace. Mr. Flandin moved a resolution which was the outcome of a secret session of the league council on March 16, condemning the German action in what seemed to me to be rather conciliatory terms. I will not take up the time of the committee by going into it in detail. In the open session of the league on March 19, 1936—both of these meetings incidentally were held in London—the one significant speech which was recorded in which he stands firmly against the German action was made by Mr. Bruce on behalf of Australia. I will quote the last paragraph, in which he says:

It is now the duty of the council to pronounce.

On behalf of the government of Australia I declare that I propose to vote in favour of the resolution. The duties of the council are not completed by such a pronouncement and the notification of the decision of the council to the signatories of the Locarno treaty. A further duty is imposed on the council, because the treaty of Locarno was made part of the general system of maintenance of security of world peace, which is the basis of the covenant of the league. The issue which confronts us to-day is fundamental to the whole system which it has been the endeavour of the league to create since the end of the world war. That system is based on the scrupulous observance of treaties and on the fact that no power can free itself from obligations by unilateral action. It is now for the powers primarily concerned to take action with a view to resolving the situation which now confronts us.

I will not go on discussing the appeasement policy as practised by the League of Nations and by the governments of the United Kingdom and France. Hindsight is always easier than foresight, and I am bringing up this history not in order to condemn any one individual or any government but because I feel it is of great importance for us to-day to examine this period in detail and with an unbiased mind.

One strong statement coming out of the welter of appeasement was from Australia. Had there been at any time an empire council sitting in London, is it not possible that other strong statements might have come from other members of the British commonwealth, and is it not possible that such statements might have in their aggregate altered the course of the United Kingdom government and possibly of the league and the whole world? I do not say that this would have