LORD VANSITTART AND THE GERMAN PROBLEM—

THE WAR YEARS 1939-1945

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the activities and attitudes of Sir Robert (later Lord) Vansittart between January 1938, when he ceased being Permanent Undersecretary of State at the Foreign Office, and the end of the Second World War. The research has been based primarily on his own contemporaneous writings and speeches, as well as those of his supporters and opponents. To assess his part in the mobilization and direction of public opinion in Britain and Germany, extensive use has been made of the Monitoring Reports of the B.B.C. and the Ministry of Information's overseas bulletin, Talking Points.

The first twenty-two months of the war were particularly frustrating for Vansittart. He continued to function in the anomalous post of "Chief Diplomatic Advisor to the Prime Minister," but his advice was rarely sought or heeded. After becoming Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, whose own prescient disclosures about Nazi Germany were greatly assisted by advice and information sent him by Vansittart, made no more use of his collaborator than Neville Chamberlain had done. Vansittart's only solace came in December 1940, when, at the request of the Minister of Information, he delivered the sharply-worded "Black Record" broadcasts.
over the B.B.C. The controversies thus set in motion led to his retirement from the Civil Service in July 1941.

During the next four years, Vansittart more than made up for the frustration and inactivity he had experienced. As a member of the House of Lords, as a speaker at numerous public gatherings in England, as a prolific author and as the president of two popular movements, he achieved a considerable fame in several countries and attracted thousands of persons, many from the working classes, to his views. Simultaneously he became the focus of an exceptionally bitter controversy. His opponents, mainly British and European leftists and London-based German exiles who disliked his strictures on the "German national character," tried to discredit his views with personal attacks, and had some success. Thus the expressions "Vansittart" and "Vansittart-ism" were frequently equated with "reactionism," "vindictiveness," "racism," and "unbalance".

Possibly the fairest test of this equation is furnished by Vansittart's peace program for Germany. The results of this study indicate that while the intensity and tone of his arguments sometimes invited honest criticism, the extremer accusations against him were unwarranted. Indeed, a considerable portion of the criticism voiced during the war was grounded in ideology and took little account of the moderate, constructive peace he actually advocated.
VANSITTART AND THE ANTI-GERMAN TRADITION

CHAPTER I

As Permanent Undersecretary of State at the British Foreign Office from 1930 to 1938, Sir Robert Vansittart gave consistent, vigorously-worded warnings against both the rising menace of Nazi Germany and the appeasement policy with which Baldwin and Chamberlain ministries sought to meet it. So unwelcome was his advice to the Government he served, however, that he was forced to spend the last years of peace as a celebrated casualty of the policy he opposed, condemned to watch helplessly while Hitler moved from triumph to triumph. His is a story which merits close attention. His own version, the autobiographical Mist Procession, is incomplete, cut short at the year 1936 by his death (1957). A fuller account, based on his private papers and official memoranda, and covering all his years at the Foreign Office, has recently been published by Ian Colvin (Vansittart in Office, London, 1965). Yet neither of these should exhaust the historian's interest in a man who continued active after the close of his official career. To contemporaries, indeed, Vansittart was often better known on account of his activities during World War II than for his incisive, though less publicized, pre-war critiques of Nazi behavior and ambition.
This thesis is addressed to that part of the story which
has not been carefully told, to an examination of
Vansittart out of office, to the record of a knowledgeable
and eloquent civil servant who had, in virtue of the coming
of the war, a singular opportunity to explain and expound
his own rejected views of the proper course of British
policy in Europe.

Because this project was undertaken prior to the
appearance of Colvin's book, much of the material,
especially the section dealing with Vansittart's years as
Chief Diplomatic Advisor, is largely duplicative. This can
be justified in two ways. First, both the sources con­sulted and the major conclusions differ at some points
from those of Mr. Colvin. Second, the reactions of pro­fessional historians and reviewers to his work have been
somewhat less than enthusiastic: the full story of
"Vansittart in Office" still needs to be told.

The present study must necessarily traverse some of
the areas which Colvin either neglected or failed to investi­gate comprehensively. Perhaps the most crucial of these con­cerns Vansittart's career prior to his elevation to the post
of Permanent Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, and
specifically, the development of his famed anti-Germanism: "Why
should Vansittart, who by birth and education belonged very
much to the upper echelon of the English society, have been
among the first to realize that the threat from Germany was far more dangerous to British security than the challenge from the Soviet Union?"¹

Although already set upon a career in the British Diplomatic Service, Robert Vansittart was possessed of little knowledge, no experience and few pronounced views with respect to foreign affairs when he graduated from Eton in 1900. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he had never fully accepted the thesis that France was Great Britain's natural enemy. In fact, a schoolboy's holiday spent in Paris a few years earlier left him convinced that France was to be admired, cautiously enjoyed, even pitied, but—and the Fashoda Crisis (1898) seemed to prove rather than challenge this viewpoint—she was not to be feared.

At the same time, Vansittart appears to have been little affected by the growing rivalry and hostility between England and Germany. Thus, shortly after his graduation, he travelled to Germany hoping to develop his language skills to the point where he could meet the Foreign Service entrance requirements. Unfortunately, he chose for his initial visit a year which was marked by the first significant British military victories of the Boer War. Not surprisingly, he found the Germans "alive with malice . . . .

¹The Times Literary Supplement (March 25, 1965), p. 228.
against Britain." After several unpleasant experiences, which included his being shouted after by the excessively Anglophobic daughter of his landlord and, on another occasion, being challenged to a duel after winning a point in a tennis match with a German captain, an accomplished swordsman, he quickly abandoned Germany for France. There his penchants for literature and the theatre were better received. This was the start of a lifelong _affaire de la coeur_ for Vansittart, and just as his initial anxieties over Germany had turned him towards France, so his close Gallican ties reinforced and gave sustenance to those anxieties.

If there was an ideal place in which to nurture a suspicion of Germany, it was the British Foreign Office of the early 1900's. Among the younger luminaries when Vansittart joined the diplomatic corps in 1902 was Sir Eyre Crowe, whom Vansittart later described as "the greatest public servant ever produced by this country," and who was "even then the moving spirit of antipathy to German designs." Crowe's famous _Secret Memorandum on the Present_
State of British Relations with France and Germany
(January 1, 1907) has become the classic statement of anti-Germanism. It rivalled in temper, if not in language and style, many of the premonitory memoranda of Vansittart a generation later.

The following passage, if read in the context of Nazi Germany of the 1930's instead of the Germany of the Kaiser in 1907, reveals a startling similarity both in the problems which Crowe and Vansittart believed they faced and in the advice they tendered. In it, Crowe likened German foreign policy to

that of a blackmailer whose extortions are wrung from his victims by the threat of some vague and dreadful consequence in case of a refusal. To give way to the blackmailer's menace enriches him, but it has long been proved by uniform experience that, although this may secure for the victim temporary peace, it is certain to lead to renewed molestation and higher demands after ever-shortening periods of amicable forebearance. The blackmailer's trade is generally ruined by the first resolute stand made against his exactions and the determination rather to face all risks of a possible disagreeable situation than to continue in the path of endless concessions. But failing such determination, it is more probable that the relations between the two parties will grow steadily worse.5

The "Crowe Memorandum" was merely the clearest expression of a long tradition in the British Foreign, a tradition

which required its adherents to keep a watchful eye upon, especially, Germany, but upon "any country threatening the independence of others," and to erect against any such usurper, almost as a "law of nature," the balance of power. Other important principles which came to be associated with the "Eyre Crowe tradition" included the inadvisability of entering into any offensive or defensive alliances with Germany, the necessity for maintaining a safe level of armaments, and the abandonment of the hitherto unsuccessful and much-abused policy of "gratuitous concessions" when dealing with Germany.

In understanding the basis for Vansittart's anti-Germanism, it is essential to grasp his almost total conversion to the principles of the "Eyre Crowe tradition," of which he was probably the most perfect exponent. All of his early training and experience was carried out under its aegis.

The first World War was another important factor in the development of Vansittart's attitude towards Germany. The outbreak of the war must undoubtedly have seemed to have borne out his and Crowe's misgivings. During the course of the war, however, a more personal element was introduced. The loss of many of his closest friends and relatives, especially his younger brother Arnold—"of all the figures of the panorama, he still
shines forth to me in his short life—a selfless giant, unspotted of the world, uncritical of less perfect beings"—made a deep and lasting impression upon him, the more so since he had never entertained the slightest doubt that Germany was primarily responsible for the war.

It was no longer a question of mistrust. Vansittart had now acquired a strong sense of moral aversion towards Germany, a feeling which was only heightened by his frustrating experiences as Head of the Prisoners of War Department in the last years of the war. He became incensed at the reports of German atrocities which flooded his desk, and he advised that the British Government announce publicly its intention to maintain "a list of authors of German abuses in Prisoner of War Camps." He had been submitting such depositions himself for almost two years. Although this suggestion was rejected, he held out higher hopes for the upcoming Paris Peace Conference, to which he was assigned as an advisor under Sir Eyre Crowe.

At Paris, Vansittart pressed upon his colleagues the desirability, although it is certain that by this date he viewed it as something more than merely desirable, of punishing German war criminals. Things looked hopeful at first. "I felt my hands on the collars of those German

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6Mist Procession, p. 64.

7Ibid., p. 98.
camp commanders and the brutes who had sunk our hospital ships. "There was nothing that all these swine had not done, and at last we had caught up with them. I got a second wind of loathing and admit it."

When the question of war criminal trials was finally resolved, however, Germany was only required to try a dozen test cases. Vansittart was keenly disappointed with the results.

During the Second World War, the punishment of war criminals would become one of the fundamental precepts in his program for solving the German problem, and not infrequently he would buttress his arguments with references to the "unsuccessful" World War I solution.

The Treaty of Versailles held other disappointments for Vansittart, but generally he was satisfied with the results. While the Germans had "got off lightly seeing the magnitude of their offence and the entirety of their defeat," there was hope in many of the terms, particularly those forbidding the maintenance and future development of German military forces and armaments, those requesting restitution to her victims, and the "War Guilt" clause.

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8Ibid., p. 186.

9Ibid., p. 250.

10Ibid., p. 220.
The First World War and the Paris Peace Conference had been decisive. Although the direct influence of Sir Eyre Crewe was to extend for another five years—he had finally succeeded to the post of Permanent Undersecretary (1920)—it is safe to assume that the basic attitudes and techniques which Vansittart was to adopt towards Germany from 1930-1938 were already firmly established by 1920. In essence, this meant that on the basis of his diplomatic experience and training he was firmly wedded to the tenets of the Eyre Crewe tradition. But in Vansittart’s case, it meant as well a strong personal antipathy towards Germany and things German.

Knowing which factor was predominant in molding his attitude may not be as important as recognizing that both were essential if it was to persist. It is doubtful for example that Vansittart would have been as alert as he was to the designs of Nazi Germany if he had not had both the impetus of sentiment and the resources of experience. Nor is it likely that he would have continued to entertain, for very long at least, any hopes of influencing others if he were unable to produce solid evidence to support his views, regardless of their origin or the strength of his own convictions. This was to be in fact the basic pattern of Vansittart’s attitude throughout the inter-war period. His emotionally-based distrust of Germany made him more
alert for any possible signs, potential or actual, of
German aggression, and the more evidence he collected point-
ing in that direction, the more firm became his convictions
and the more anxious his vigil. He acquired concurrently
a feeling of frustration, the disheartening result of a
long series of rejected memoranda and advice, and as the
menacing activities of Hitlerite Germany increased to the
point of seemingly proving the correctness of his premoni-
tions, so too his sense of frustration intensified until
by September, 1939, when the war that he had dreaded for
so long finally became a reality, his attitude had become
exceedingly bitter.

Vansittart's elevation in 1930 to the office of
Permanent Undersecretary, the most powerful position in the
entire British Foreign Service organization, presented him
with unique opportunities for surveying and keeping abreast
of the trends and moods of Germany. In addition to his
immediate staff at the Foreign Office, the Permanent
Undersecretary has under his control or at his disposal
a relatively large and well-trained diplomatic corps, as
well as the British Intelligence Service. He is normally
consulted on every important international issue, and has
an influential voice in deciding the major ambassadorial
appointments. As a civil servant, he is technically immune
to the responsibilities and criticisms necessarily associated
with political parties and Government Ministers. It is his prime function to provide and maintain the continuity of British Foreign Policy and to advise the Cabinet, especially the Foreign Secretary, on all foreign policy matters. He is therefore, in very large measure (depending on the skill and interest of the Foreign Minister), the real formulator of British foreign policy.

Hugh Dalton termed the appointment of Vansittart as "somewhat dramatic ... involving the passing over of a large number of older members of the Foreign Service who had pretty good claims."11 Yet, in many ways, Vansittart was ideally suited for the job. A man of exceptional ability and high intelligence, an experienced diplomat with a very extensive knowledge of foreign affairs, he had already gained a considerable reputation as a master of detail and as an accomplished linguist. John Connell, in his analysis of British foreign policy from 1919-1951, estimated that

... of the many talented men who served in positions of authority and responsibility in the Foreign Office during the period under review, Van was probably the ablest, the most original in mind, the most farsighted, the most daring in spirit. His judgement in analysis, both of men's character and of the pattern of events, was swift, penetrative and accurate ...12

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Even if overstated, this evaluation leads into a very crucial question—and it is a question which Ian Colvin largely ignores—with regard to Vansittart's performance as Permanent Undersecretary. As early as 1938 one German journalist had argued that "in spite of all Sir Robert's command of the technique of diplomacy, and in spite of his doubted intelligence, the Vansittart era shows itself in retrospect to be a chain of failures, some of them absolutely disastrous, . . . a collection of missed opportunities . . . ."13 There is considerable justification for such a judgment, although to this particular author the "missed opportunities" involved primarily the failure of Britain to reach a rapprochement with Germany. How was it possible that Vansittart, as occupant of the most powerful position in the British Foreign Service, with his acknowledged great talents and wide experience, holding the firm and essentially accurate views about Nazi foreign policy intentions that he did, should have made so little impression on his contemporaries?

A full answer to this question is obviously beyond the scope or intentions of this discussion. The prime responsibility for the failure of British foreign policy in the inter-war period does not belong to the officials at

the Foreign Office or to the members of the Diplomatic Corps, and especially not to men such as Vansittart, Sir Horace Rumbold and Sir Eric Phipps\textsuperscript{14} who were early aware of the danger and who sounded the trumpet long and loud. Much more culpable were those who slept on not hearing the alert or those who, if they heard it, failed to act in time.

It is possible, however, to come to some general conclusions concerning the reasons for Vansittart's ineffectiveness. The biographies and memoirs of many of his closest associates are particularly helpful in this regard. One of the most valuable of these is the brief but artistic appraisal of Sir Robert given by Valentine Lawford, who was attached to the Central Department of the Foreign Office during the mid-1930's. Lawford has suggested that although Vansittart's training and experience pre-eminently qualified him for the position of Permanent Undersecretary,

\textit{... the very qualities that made him so exceptional among Foreign Office officials, worked to his disadvantage. In a mind so complex and yet so categorical, more average minds automatically suspected a parti pris; and like a jury listening to a remarkably gifted barrister, couldn't rid themselves of an uneasy feeling that if so much...}

\textsuperscript{14}Sir Horace Rumbold, as British Ambassador to Berlin, issued stern and straightforward warnings about the attitudes and goals of the Nazi Party. Upon his death (1933) the post went to Phipps, Vansittart's brother-in-law. Phipps' anti-German sentiments eventually resulted in his removal (April, 1937) to the British Embassy at Paris.
talent were required to demolish it there was probably a pretty strong case on the other side. 15

This was unfortunately true. Vansittart was so irrevocably convinced that he was correct about Germany and he felt so deeply the urgency of the situation, that he had a tendency to "lay it on thick." He expressed himself with such repetitive fervor that all except those who agreed with him were liable to discount his views as too extreme. As a result he sometimes injured the very causes he wanted to promote. 16

It is not difficult to understand why Vansittart's persistence and outspokenness might not endear him to many of the Ministers under whom he served, especially those like Neville Chamberlain and Anthony Eden who had developed firm opinions of their own concerning British foreign policy. In Facing the Dictators, Eden wrote that he never knew a head of a department who could compare with Sir Robert as a relentless, not to say ruthless, worker for the views he held strongly himself. The truth is that Vansittart was seldom an official giving cool and disinterested advice based on study and experience. He was himself a sincere almost fanatical crusader and much more a Secretary of State in mentality than a permanent official. 17


17Ibid.
This account squares with that given in late 1937 by an American journalist, Webb-Pierce, who remarked after having interviewed Vansittart and Laborer Party chief, Clement Attlee, on the same afternoon: "They seem to have switched their roles, for Attlee was as reserved as a diplomat while Sir Robert spoke like the Leader of the Opposition."^18

But Vansittart's aggressive manner also tended to alienate those who had no firmly held views on foreign affairs and were suspicious of those who did. Stanley Baldwin stands out in this respect. "Vansittart hates the Germans," he complained to his confidant, Welsh publisher and appeaser, Tom Jones in May, 1934. And when Jones moralized that "diplomats should have nothing to do with hatred of anybody. It is both silly and dangerous," Baldwin complimented him: "I've always said you were a Christian."^19

There were other personal reasons for Vansittart's ineffectiveness. He was, as Eden has indicated, more of an executor of foreign policy than an advisor, more a Secretary of State than a permanent official. Indeed he was so certain about the Nazi danger and so "impatient

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if the action which he believed to be obviously necessary did not immediately and resolutely follow upon the assessment of a situation which he had made or the advice which he offered that he often acted on his own initiative without even consulting the Cabinet. For example, he occasionally leaked information about German rearmament and propaganda to certain news organs sympathetic to his views. He took Winston Churchill regularly into his confidence and kept him fully fortified with facts and figures about Germany, again without permission from his normal superiors. In 1934 he and Churchill even started private discussions with Soviet Ambassador to London, Ivan M. Maisky, in the hope of concluding eventually an agreement to block German expansion in Europe—this at a time when the majority of his governmental colleagues, excepting his staff at the Foreign Office, were paralyzed by fears of Bolshevism.

Even Vansittart's literary gifts detracted from the effectiveness of his warnings. Valentine Lawford

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20 Connell, p. 103.

21 One of the best and least passionate discussions of this problem is found in the first three chapters of *The Appeasers* (Boston, 1963) by Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott. For a broader analysis of "Anti-Red" sentiment among British policy makers, as well as for an evaluation of most of the important published data on the subject, see Donald N. Lammers, *Explaining Munich: The Search for Motive in British Policy* (Hoover Institution Studies: 16; 1966).
recounts how the style of Sir Robert's minutes had the "extraordinary ability to please, and tease, the youthful senses as well as the youthful mind," and he described as the "nearest thing I ever knew to vicarious physical satisfaction in my experience of officialdom" the feeling he would get whenever he believed "the Permanent Under-secretary had knocked the Cabinet for a loop." Yet, well might he wonder in retrospect whether

... the style that so tickled the taste of juniors in the Foreign Office must sometimes have seemed terribly indigestible to the older stomachs across the way. Apart from all else, the metaphors, surely were too brilliant, the _jeux de mots_ too completely successful ... to have any serious bearing on politics as opposed to paper-games or at best belles-lettres.

There are very few examples of what Eden later called Vansittart's "tortured language" available. One such minute is to be found, however, in _The Mist Procession_. Written in the latter part of 1931, this was the first of a series of annual memoranda which Sir Robert labeled the "Old Adam" series.

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22 _Bound for Diplomacy_, p. 270.
23 _Ibid._
24 _Ibid._, p. 271.
26 _Facing the Dictators_, p. 270.
After the war Old Adam fell sick and lived somewhere in the country. Many hoped, some even said, that he was dead. The report was greatly exaggerated. He is out and about again, medically reprieved, introducing the young to the overdraft, still capable of sowing a bumper crop of tares among the wheat. It is an act of intellectual good faith to recognize him... His disturbing feature is not that he exists, but that he exists in such demonstrable force and quantity... Mixed up with the traffic are ancient trains of thought, full of glaring examples of him that, ignoring danger signals, would be bound toward former destinations.27

Such an appraisal of Germany, coming at the time that it did and couched in such undiplomatic language was indeed unlikely to excite the imagination of the few British Ministers who took the time to read it. If this was typical of Vansittart's warnings, then his ineffectiveness becomes more understandable. From a perusal of the published British Foreign Office documents, however, it seems likely that this was not typical, that Sir Robert's memoranda were usually much more specific and that his *jeux de mots*, while less staid and unimaginative than most Whitehall prose, was both lucid and pertinent. There could have been no misunderstanding which country the Permanent Undersecretary believed constituted the main threat to European and world peace, nor did he fail to identify the "danger signals," the "former destinations" and the "ancient trains of thought."

27Mist Procession, p. 405
In August, 1933 for example, Vansittart issued a Memorandum on the Present and Future Position in Europe which, despite its length, is representative of many such reports given by him during the years he was Permanent Undersecretary and hence merits careful analysis. In it, Sir Robert combined his shrewdness in diplomatic maneuverings with his unrivaled knowledge of German foreign policy intentions, and the result is a document which perhaps better than any British document published to date reveals the remarkable accuracy of his predictions and the practicality of his advice. The memorandum was prompted by rumors that Hitler would shortly attempt to incorporate Austria into the German Reich, but Vansittart took the opportunity to offer a general analysis of Nazi Germany.

From the outset of the new regime in Germany, I have felt, with all deference to those who with more sweet reasonableness were disposed for at least a little while to wait and see, that there was no doubt whatsoever about the ultimate intentions of the Nazis. . . . Never was writing larger on the wall. True Germany is not yet ready to strike Poland (her armaments do not suffice at present), but to Hitler the great attraction about Austria is the hope that he may achieve a resounding success without having to strike a blow.28

After describing the various methods by which Hitler might attempt to fulfill "his firm intention to destroying

Austria independence and creating a de facto Anschluss," Sir Robert proceeded to outline his own proposals for preventing such a move. The latter included giving economic assistance to Austria and persuading Italy and France to do the same, exerting strong economic pressure upon Germany, and most importantly, attempting to achieve an Italo-French rapprochement preparatory to a larger pact with Great Britain. Essentially, Vansittart was advocating the erection of the "balance of power" against Hitler and, since neither Germany nor Great Britain was prepared at this early date to resort to military measures to achieve their ends, the imposition of economic restrictions which, if successfully applied, would free Austria from her economic dependence upon Germany and might even result in the downfall of the Nazi regime.

There is already in Germany a wider war spirit, and a more complete lack of effective opposition than in 1914. Ought we not to wish strongly enough to see Hitlerism fail, to be prepared at least to risk the consequences, which could hardly be more dangerous to European peace? . . . The collapse of Hitlerism should leave Germany too weak and disordered for external aggression. That is the essential point . . . .

The seriousness of the challenge can only be realized if it is seen not as an isolated case, in which this country has no direct interest, but as the first of a series of challenges, each one of which will carry with it a nearer threat to this country.29

29 Ibid.
As Vansittart remarked about Eyre Crowe's warnings before World War I, "he could hardly have said more. How was it possible to blink the evidence?"\textsuperscript{30} How indeed! It was not enough then, and it makes even less sense today, to dismiss Sir Robert's warnings on the grounds that they were founded upon personal bias. This criticism, while it is certainly not inaccurate, is incomplete since it fails to acknowledge that there was also a very practical basis for much of his attitude. Thus it is not unusual to find in many of his Foreign Office memoranda including the one cited above, statements concerning "the true German nature" and "the German heart," phrases which were to recur over and over again in his World War II writings. In fact, during his term as Permanent Undersecretary, Vansittart rarely bothered to deny the personal element, "lest people should suspect that mere prejudice lay at the root of his convictions . . ."\textsuperscript{31} although he readily admitted that it should not form the basis for foreign policy decisions. On the other hand, as he argued in \textit{The Mist Procession}, "one cannot prevent experience from confirming conclusions already reached. Why ask for strength to reverse them?"\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Mist Procession}, p. 64. \\
\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Lawford}, p. 273. \\
\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Op. Cit.}, p. 147.
Even if Vansittart's perceptiveness could be attributed solely to sentiment, however, this should not detract from the fact that his warnings were fully justified.

Even allowing for the prerogative of history to pass surprising judgements on men and events, and the possibility that she has not yet said her last word on the conduct of relations between Britain, France and Germany in the 1930's, it is hard to believe that she will ever actually deny that the time came when the British Government did have to take—lamentably, belatedly, only just not too late—the very precaution that he had advocated for years in vain.33

The truth is that most of the British ministers who had access to, and yet chose to ignore, the advice of the Permanent Undersecretary did so primarily not because they thought him biased and too outspoken, or because they disliked his literary dressings, although all of these factors were undoubtedly sources of conflict, but because they did not want to listen to such views. "The very cogency of his arguments therefore only rendered his advice less welcome."34

Thus, while Sir Robert's methods and his manners hardly enhanced his effectiveness and may indeed have alienated not a few individuals who might otherwise have

33Lawford, p. 271.
34Ibid., p. 272.
come around sooner to a more realistic appraisal of Nazi Germany, they were not in the main responsible for the failure of the British Government to adopt the proper foreign policy line. The "appeasers" had a policy of their own, a policy which did not at once call for large-scale British rearmament, or for an acknowledgement of the ambitions of Germany—except by the granting of "gratuitous concessions." The policy of appeasement especially did not require the presence of a strong-willed, individualistic Permanent Undersecretary and on January 1, 1938, it was announced in the British press that Sir Robert Vansittart had been named to the newly-created post of "Chief Diplomatic Advisor."

There has been a great deal of misunderstanding concerning the removal of Vansittart as Permanent Undersecretary. The irony in the story of how the "Great Appeaser," Neville Chamberlain, "kicked upstairs" the most formidable opponent of Nazi Germany, Sir Robert Vansittart, has had such appeal that a very important sideline—the relationship between Vansittart and Anthony Eden—had been largely ignored. This is true despite the fact that Eden in his memoirs, Facing the Dictators, has admitted that he was himself instrumental in replacing Sir Robert. "Mr. Chamberlain ... was insistent, but this of itself would not have been enough
if I had not felt that there were other advantages."\textsuperscript{35}

The full significance of this admission has been insufficiently realized and since the "promotion" of Vansittart to the post of Chief Diplomatic advisor was highly instrumental in developing his later attitude towards the German problem, the subject will be pursued here.

For Chamberlain, as indeed for Baldwin and most of the prominent appeasers, Vansittart represented a major obstacle to reaching an accord with Germany. This attitude was complemented not only by the anxious and unwelcome warnings of Sir Robert, but also by those German diplomats who believed with von Ribbentrop that "an Anglo-German understanding with Vansittart in office was out of the question."\textsuperscript{36} Among those most anxious to effect the removal of Vansittart were Sir Warren Fisher, head of the Treasury and ostensible head of the British Civil Service, and Sir Horace Wilson, Chief Industrial Advisor, both members of the famous "Cliveden Set," where "dislike of Vansittart's outspokenness was common ground."\textsuperscript{37}

For Eden, the motives were much more complex and are not nearly so obvious. He has always maintained that the

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{p. cit.}, p. 591.


\textsuperscript{37}Gilbert and Gott, p. 45.
move was no more than a departmental matter. Vansittart had already been at the post longer than any man since before World War I, and "he was beginning to be ineffective, no longer getting along with the other heads of departments."  

This evaluation, while not inaccurate, is incomplete. Vansittart certainly was not ready to accommodate himself to the desires of Sir Warren Fisher and Sir Horace Wilson. Consequently, they meant to have him out, and their activities in that direction, greatly increased in late 1937, were carefully, but definitely, brought to the attention of Eden, if not at Cliveden where they were habituées and he "was always welcome," then at the Foreign Office or in the Cabinet.

The influence of Wilson and Fisher undoubtedly was an important factor in Chamberlain's decision to oust Vansittart, and Eden can only have been referring to them, as well as to the Prime Minister, when he states that agreed to the change in order to "strengthen my position with Whitehall."  

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38 Colvin, p. 149.

39 Mist Procession, p. 484.

40 For evidence of the anti-Vansittart scheming and behind-the-scenes maneuvering of Fischer and Wilson, see Facing the Dictators (p. 504) and Vansittart in Office (p. 147-48).

41 Facing the Dictators, pp. 590-91. Also Colvin, p. 149.
There was far more to Eden's decision than the fact that Vansittart and his views were not palatable to the likes of Fisher and Wilson, however. He and Sir Robert were themselves seriously divided in principle over the correct line of foreign policy which should be pursued with regard to Fascist Italy. Eden has always been acutely sensitive to the oft-made accusation that he was anti-Italian. In his autobiography, he has gone to great lengths to defend himself against the charge. It is no surprise, therefore, that he has omitted any mention of this divergence of views in connection with the removal of Vansittart as Permanent Undersecretary. Nevertheless, it was undoubtedly an important factor, perhaps the primary one, as far as the Foreign Secretary was concerned.

The division between the two men was a direct outgrowth of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute of 1935. Mussolini's determination that Italy must have her "place in the sun" presented British foreign policy makers with perhaps their most complex and crucial problem of the inter-war years. The latter were split into two opposing schools of thought. The Stresa Group, behind which Vansittart was the main driving force, was convinced that Hitler had the "psychological obsession of a renegade".42

42BD, 2, V (No. 371).
over Austria, and saw as the best means of thwarting the Fuehrer, the erection of an Italo-Franco-British "balance of power." Consequently, their approach to the Abyssinian war was predicated upon the maintenance of the Stresa front (April, 1935). Vansittart had a most willing, if somewhat submissive, ally in Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, and together they attempted to devise some sort of a compromise solution which would both leave Mussolini within the British camp and retain as much as possible of Abyssinian territory for the Negus.

The other and smaller group, the "Leaguers," were led by Eden in his capacity as Minister of League of Nations Affairs. In June, 1935, Eden had himself been the "reluctant" sponsor of an unsuccessful compromise scheme. He was never again so sanguine about negotiating with the Italian dictator. As a result, he wound up advocating at Geneva the policy most feared by the Stresa Group--the application of sanctions against Italy.

The conflict came to a head in December when the most extensive of the compromise solutions, the Hoare-Lavel Pact, a proposal not at all unlike the Zeila Plan sponsored by Eden in June, was rejected by first the British press and then by the British electorate. Sir Samuel Hoare was forced to resign as Foreign Secretary and Baldwin named Anthony Eden to succeed him.
For Sir Robert Vansittart and the foreign policy line which he had pursued, the results could not have been more disastrous. "Abyssinia was sacrificed, Italy alienated and Germany encouraged." On a more personal level, Sir Robert's ability to shape future British foreign policy was to be sharply curtailed. He was never able to dominate Eden as he had Sir Samuel Hoare and Sir John Simon. The differences between the two men in June, 1935, had been "amicable, but defined." After the inglorious rejection of the Hoare-Laval Pact, they became slightly less amicable, although not hostile. Unfortunately for Vansittart, a redefinition never took place.

It would be impossible to understand Eden's attitude towards the Italian problem without recognizing the high sense of morality which he generally attached to foreign policy questions. This explains, in part, his devotion to the League of Nations as well as his reluctance to enter into any "deal" which he believed would reward the aggressor and punish the victim. Thus, the Hoare-Laval pact represented for him an inexcusable intrusion upon the highest principles of international justice, and his opinion of Sir Robert Vansittart, the real formulator of that plan, changed accordingly. It was no longer

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merely a question of foreign policy differences. According to one of Eden's biographers, Lewis Broad, "Vansittart was considered to have compromised himself over Hoare-Laval,"^44—a comment subsequently noted by Sir Robert^45 and recently "avoided" by Eden ("I never met Mr. Broad.").^46

In *The Mist Procession*, Vansittart lamented the fact that Mussolini had forced him to choose between Austria and Abyssinia:

I was already resigned to choosing Austria . . . because it was the first point of Hitler's expansion which, once permitted, would be boundless. . . . I hated him [Mussolini] for driving a wedge between me and Eden, since I necessarily appeared less whole-hearted than he for justice. To me, that was injustice. I had full sympathy for the League but, even when I lost most at racing, I never backed a horse when I knew from form, jockey, and trainer that it could not win. I felt too for an over-titled ruler struggling to improve an unruly country seared by barbarous tribes. That was not the question. The real crux was that the Leaguers were anti-Italian while I was anti-German.^47

There is a great deal of truth in that last charge. Eden's high sense of morality had made him most unreceptive towards Italy. During his tenure as Foreign Secretary,

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^45*Mist Procession*, p. 522.

^46*Colvin*, p. 92.

he came to regard Mussolini as the "mammon of unrighteousness" who had the "mentality of a gangster," and he insisted that he had no intention of entering into a "bidding contest" with Germany over Italy. Vansittart, on the other hand, continued to believe in the possibility and desirability of a rapprochement. Thus, a wedge was indeed driven between Vansittart and Eden, although the Permanent Undersecretary failed to realize at the time how deeply it went.

"There could have been no immediate harmony of views between Vansittart and the new Foreign Secretary, Mr. Eden, in January, 1936, at any rate, on British policy towards Italy," wrote Ian Colvin. Actually, there was very little change of such a reconciliation ever taking place. There is even a possibility that Eden had already decided to replace Sir Robert. The appointment of Sir Alexander Cadogan, Vansittart's eventual successor, to the post of Deputy Undersecretary early in 1936, may have been the first step. Regardless, before the year was out the Foreign Secretary had definitely decided on the necessity for a change which "would strengthen his position with Whitehall."

48 Facing the Dictators, p. 481.
49 Ibid., p. 508.
50 Vansittart in Office, p. 92.
From the foregoing, it can perhaps be inferred that it was the existence, and persistence, of a very basic division over the general lines and methods of British foreign policy between himself and Vansittart which in the main prompted Eden's removal of Sir Robert. It was certainly more than a "departmental matter."

In the preface to one of Vansittart's war-time books, the American journalist Edward R. Murrow, suggested that "Britain might have been more in his debt had he resigned from the Civil Service and given the country and the world his warnings and counsels before the war began." Sir Robert did give serious consideration to this possibility, especially after the Hoare-Laval episode, when certain sections of the British press suggested that, as the "man behind it all," he be required to resign along with Sir Samuel Hoare--an almost unprecedented request since traditionally, British Civil Servants were allowed to accept neither blame nor credit for the acts of ministers. It is easy enough to understand and even sympathize with Vansittart's reluctance to resign, however. On this question he took the proper attitude for a civil servant. It was an attitude which he had expressed long ago in his book of poetry, The Singing Caravan, and which

he does not fail to cite when discussing the possibility of resignation in *The Mist Procession*:

> Whether hope can ever fit the future matters not a whit. My duty is to tug my oar as long as I am chained to it.52

There is of course the greater question of whether perhaps his moral obligation towards his country ought not to have taken precedence over his sworn allegiance to the code of the British Civil Service, a dilemma which occurred to Sir Robert at that time.

> During the . . . two years before my dismissal I sometimes thought that I might have walked out and stumped the country, exposing its nakedness. But all three parties were against me, and I should have orated to empty halls. And what a bomb into the official Secret Act! . . . Besides, resignation would be taken as an admission of guilt, which I never felt. Why then give that satisfaction to anyone? Better to stick it out and thwart the Germans!53

This was not an altogether unreasonable attitude, especially when one considers how futile were the efforts of Winston Churchill both then and later. It also reveals the sense of dedication with which Vansittart had always attacked the German problem. But it hardly serves to explain his determination to remain at the Foreign Office— not when there was the possibility of re-assignment.

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As early as 1932, there had been rumors that Vansittart would become the next Ambassador to the United States, rumors predicated no doubt upon his activities as head of the "American Department" in the Foreign Office from 1924-1927, and upon the normally short duration of occupancy in the office of Permanent Undersecretary. The faint rumors became positive suggestions, however, after the collapse of the Hoare-Laval plan. Eden, who had by the end of 1936 definitely set his mind against the retention of Vansittart in the powerful post of Permanent Undersecretary asked Baldwin, whose Private Secretary Vansittart had been, to persuade Sir Robert to accept the Embassy in Paris.

Vansittart refused, Eden recounts, "partly on account of his health and partly for the thoughtful reason that he believed he would be able to help me more at home in the coming months if he remained at the Foreign Office." This is an interesting, albeit unsatisfactory explanation, first, because it is the only mention of considerations of health ever having affected Vansittart's performance, as Permanent Undersecretary, contained in any of the published accounts dealing with this period. There is no suggestion of this factor, for example, in either The Mist Procession

—Facing the Dictators, p. 591.
or in Colvin's recent biography. The expressed desire to "help Eden at home," can probably be accepted as a more genuine reason since Sir Robert did feel that he had a certain rapport with Eden, especially over the Nazi danger.

Efforts to oust Vansittart continued throughout most of the year 1937, and were "mostly charming. One was a suggestion that I should change places with Eric Perth; it originated with Eric. Others were more simple. I declined the Embassies, feeling that the tussle must be decided in London." Eden is especially critical of Vansittart on this matter. "A man should go where he is sent ... He could have had an exceptional influence in Paris." He had always said that a diplomat should accept a new post but he did not do so himself. This seems a valid criticism. Yet, Vansittart must have realized as fully as Eden that he "could have had an exceptional influence in Paris." As a known Francophile, there is no underestimating what a man of his persuasive talents might have accomplished in pursuance of his own foreign policy objectives. The fact that he chose instead

55 Mist Procession, p. 549.

56 Colvin, p. 170. In Lessons of My Life, (p. xiii), Vansittart recounts: "I knew quite well what to expect from the continuation of my criticisms; indeed I was frequently warned that I might forfeit my position if I persisted in my 'anti-German' line as the basis of rearmament."

57 Colvin, p. 149.
to remain at the Foreign Office cannot be explained away as mere obstinancy. He had to have some conviction that he would be effective and useful if he remained.

What possible basis could he have had for believing this? Ian Colvin claims that Vansittart "knew in December, 1937, the hollowness of his new position." If this is true it throws a curious light upon the purported reasons of Sir Robert for refusing both resignation and reassignment. Unfortunately, Colvin's evidence is inconclusive. Nevertheless, Vansittart knew without question, at least as early as Autumn, 1937, that he would be replaced and he still chose to remain on. Could it be that Vansittart still believed, as he had said earlier in response to Baldwin's suggestion that he accept the Embassy in Paris, that he would be of more use to Eden if he remained at home? According to Eden's recent conversation with Ian Colvin, Vansittart "was becoming ineffective," and according to the evidence presented earlier in this monograph, there existed between them a very basic conflict of views. The only possible inference to be drawn from this is that Vansittart was not fully aware of just how deep the wedge between himself and Eden had gone. This can be explained in two ways.

58 Ibid., p. 174.
The first is that Vansittart did not feel strongly himself about the matter. This was undoubtedly true. For him, the Italian question was only a subsidiary, albeit an important subsidiary, to the German Question and hence it could never assume the proportions which it did for Eden. The Nazi threat and the state of British rearmament were of necessity his primary concerns as they had been since 1933, and while he still desired an agreement with Mussolini in order to "gain time," his insistence upon it had dwindled. This was especially true after the Duce's interference in Spain.

The other explanation is that Eden never revealed to Sir Robert the full extent of their differences and the importance which this held for Eden. There is not the slightest suggestion in any published account dealing with the subject of British diplomacy in the inter-war period, and this includes the autobiographies and biographies of the two men, that Eden ever broached the subject with Vansittart. Furthermore even if he did discuss it with Sir Robert, and this is not altogether unlikely, it is certain that he never went beyond discussing the rather shallow reasons which he has given subsequently, namely, that "Vansittart was becoming ineffective, no longer getting along with the other heads of departments."
Perhaps it would have made no difference, Vansittart seems to have been almost obstinate about his decision to "stick it out and thwart the Germans." Yet if anything could have shaken him loose, it would have been a full realization of just how far apart he and Eden were. This fact should be borne in mind when criticizing Vansittart for not accepting an embassy appointment. It does not excuse his refusal since as a public servant he "ought to have gone where he was sent," but it does explain perhaps why he felt that his "duty" was to remain at the Foreign Office.

In point of fact, Vansittart made a difficult situation much more difficult by refusing an embassy post. Faced with such a resolution, and determined to remove Sir Robert from actual direction of the Foreign Office, Chamberlain and Eden had little choice, short of open dismissal—and this was really no choice at all since Vansittart "knew too much"59—than to create a position for him. The real shame involved in the replacement of Sir Robert Vansittart as Permanent Undersecretary, therefore, did not consist in the change itself, although the motives of both the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary is desiring the change certainly merit criticism.

59Ibid., p. 171.
It consisted rather in the failure to make use of the
great talents and experience of a career diplomat who had
reached the pinnacle of his profession, and this failure
belongs primarily to Eden's successor, Lord Halifax, who
ought to have known better, and to his chief, Neville
Chamberlain, who was positive that he did.
CHAPTER II

On February 7, 1938, Neville Chamberlain announced the creation of a "Committee to co-ordinate propaganda" with Sir Robert Vansittart as Chairman. The announcement was given little more than passing mention in British newspapers, and indeed, since neither the Prime Minister nor any other Government official ever again made public reference to the "Committee," the matter was rather quickly, and conveniently, forgotten. The change did not go completely unnoticed, however. In Germany it was widely publicized that a British "Committee for Anti-Nazi Propaganda" had been formed, and during the next few months, whenever they detected a wave of anti-German or anti-Nazi sentiment in England, German diplomats complained that it was the work of "Vansittart's Committee." This was not the case, as they well knew, but it seemed a convenient way of arousing the emotions of the German people and putting the British government on the defensive.

Chamberlain's announcement was put to a different use in the United States, where a small but vocal segment

1See Page 48.
of the population had been anxiously keeping a vigil for signs of British "war propaganda." One of those most attuned was Porter Sargent, a wealthy publisher and educator, who often confused his anglophobia with what he believed to be a divine mission to prevent the United States from becoming involved in another "European" war. Sargent had long been an anti-interventionist and an anglophobe, but his sense of mission did not develop until after the appearance in the United States of a book entitled Propaganda in-the Next War, by Captain Sidney Rogerson. The author, a British military attache, outlined generally the propaganda devices which might be used by Great Britain in event of another war and placed particular stress upon the necessity of enlisting American aid. Rogerson's book prompted Sargent to write a letter to U. S. Senator Gerald P. Nye (R-North Dakota), requesting a Congressional investigation of British propaganda inroads and techniques. On April 25, 1939, Senator Nye responded with a speech in the Senate in which he cautioned against British propaganda, and he had both the speech and a chapter from Rogerson's book inserted in the Congressional Record. Sargent immediately dispatched 10,000 copies of

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2 Captain Sidney Rogerson, Propaganda in the Next War (London, 1938).

3 Congressional Record, Volume 84, Part V (76th Congress, 1st Session), 4641-5770.
Nye's speech, along with an explanatory "Bulletin," to prominent U. S. Educators and businessmen.

In June 1939, Sargent concocted and began publicizing what can at best be described as a "wild hypothesis." With a flair typical of the journalist, he seized upon the fact that Sir Robert Vansittart was not being mentioned prominently in the British press and presented him to the American public as the mysterious, evil genius behind all British propaganda efforts in the United States. For the next two years Sargent continued this "exposure" of British war propaganda, issuing over 100 mimeographed "Bulletins," all with the general theme—"Let's Save America First, Let God Save the King." During the same two-year period he published two books, What Makes Lives? (Boston, 1940) and Getting U. S. Into War (Boston, 1941), copies of which he had distributed to leading members of the Roosevelt Administration, to every Congressman, and to many prominent business and educational figures.

Sargent's thesis, especially in the form in which he presented it, would not normally be subject to serious historical appraisal, but because he selected Vansittart as his chief villain, it has a unique value for this study. Besides answering the intriguing question of why he chose Vansittart, an examination of the thesis could also provide some insight into the precise nature of Sir Robert's
activities during the years he occupied the false post of "Chief Diplomatic Adviser."

After Nye's speech, Sargent began serious research on the topic of British propaganda. By "putting together the little bits of news from the back pages of newspapers, newsletters, and clandestine sources," he was able to observe: "There is evidence of design, that a great artist has been at work, his wonders to perform, creating a picture which the American people and their administration have accepted," and he determined to discover and reveal the identity of that artist. He found his answer in one of the "clandestine sources." Sargent had managed to secure a copy of Karl Abshagen's *Konig, Lords and Gentlemen*, which had been translated into English but was never published in the United States. He read with anticipatory fascination Abshagen's biased description of the complexities of English society and government, and of the organizations, families and individuals which the German journalist singled out as those he felt wielded actual power in Great Britain. Among the latter, Abshagen included Sir Robert Vansittart, whom he described as "one of the most powerful men in the British Empire," "highly intelligent, finely cultured," and

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4 Getting U S into War, p. 41.

the "brains of the Empire," but also as "mysterious," "cynical," and "sinister looking." This journalistic hyperbole was indeed interesting to Porter Sargent, yet one passage stood out above the rest and formed the basis for all his subsequent theories about Vansittart:

Many people imagined that Sir Robert Vansittart had been "shelved" when he was promoted from his post at the head of the Foreign Office to that of Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the Cabinet; but he continues to exercise considerable influence in the Foreign Office, and also in a yet wider sphere, as the real head of the British foreign propaganda service, which lately has been immensely expanded.

Positive that he had "found his man," Sargent began delving into the career and the activities of Sir Robert in the hope of finding evidence which would irrefutably tie the English diplomat to British propaganda efforts. From this research, and with the aid of an extremely active imagination, he evolved an elaborate theory which he repetitiously included in his "Bulletins." Sargent began by observing that concurrent with Vansittart's appointment as head of the new British propaganda agency and his subsequent disappearance from the press, there had been a "great change in the emotional attitude of the American people." This subtle change, he claimed, was due

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6Abshagen, pp. 168-203.
7Ibid., p. 197.
8Getting U S into War, p. 46.
primarily to the activities of Vansittart's Committee. "To insiders, this organization was referred to as the 'Bureau for anti-Nazi Propaganda in Neutral Countries.' Actually its chief function was to make Americans hate Hitler and all his works as Vansittart did so sincerely."9 Among the techniques used in the "Vansitt Art," Sargent included the sudden flooding of the United States with "British lecturers, speakers and writers." For example, during the years 1938-1939, he noted that Duff Cooper and Lord Lothian had made sixteen trips between them.10 Other methods included the controlling of American news media, the infiltration of American universities and the effective use of the motion picture industry. Sargent was very general in his analysis, however, and he failed to tie Vansittart in with any of these propaganda efforts.

What few attempts Sargent did make to prove his claims were largely superficial. Relying primarily upon H. D. Lasswell's study of British propaganda before and during World War I,11 he reasoned that because the funds for such propaganda were taken mostly from the general vote of supply for the Foreign Office, the recent

9Ibid., pp. 41-2.


(1939-1940) increases in the Foreign Office allotment could only mean that His Majesty's Government was giving Vansittart heavy financial support in his new position. This does not appear to have been the cases. Vansittart admittedly still had some influence in the Foreign Office, but this had lessened considerably and it is doubtful whether any substantial sums were released for his use—certainly not enough to make effective any task of the gigantic proportions set down by Mr. Sargent. Furthermore, the increases in the Foreign Office allotment were only natural in the light of the pre-war and wartime atmosphere of Europe, and Sargent failed to prove conclusively that the increases were specifically used by a "Bureau for anti-Nazi Propaganda."

Despite all his research, including even the information contained in Abshagen's book, Sargent displayed little actual knowledge of Vansittart. For example, he asserted that prior to March 1939, "Vansittart's job was to build in England good will for Germany and have Hitler looked upon as the 'White Knight' who would carry the crusade against bolshevist Russia," an obvious mis-statement. Had he a firmer grasp of the facts, he would have known Vansittart's reputation as an implacable and outspoken enemy of Germany and its "frothy Fuhrer."

\[12\textit{What Makes Lives?}, p. 155.\]
Sargent was no less inexact in dealing with other aspects of his thesis. In What Makes Lives?, he accused the noted British historian Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, then acting as "British liaison officer" at the University of Virginia, of having as his real task the dissemination in the United States of pro-British propaganda. Sir John has subsequently admitted to dealings with Vansittart when the latter was still Permanent Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, but he denied emphatically the role cast for him by Mr. Sargent.

Obviously, Sargent's theory cannot stand on its merits. Repetition, distortion and exaggeration are its dominant characteristics, and nowhere does it offer substantial proof for its claims. The choice of Vansittart seems to have been dictated primarily by the circumstances of his promotion and the interpretation given that event by writers such as Abshagen and Robert Dell. Unfortunately, his inability to supply positive proof does not in itself invalidate his claims, and so the task of proving or disproving his emotional assertions is left to the historian. Putting aside for the moment the many inaccuracies found in his writings, some of which have been discussed, there are

13 Ibid., p. 159.
14 Interview with the author, February 26, 1964.
at least two approaches which may be taken and which may help to provide a plausible explanation of Vansittart's true role during the years under discussion. Neither approach is foolproof.

The first has to do with the attitude taken towards Vansittart's promotion by the government of the Third Reich. If the German government, especially the Foreign Office, agreed with Sargent's evaluation of Vansittart, then it becomes easier to understand, if not to accept, some of the American publisher's hypotheses, even in the light of his own inability to supply positive proof. If, on the other hand, German diplomats took a different position, this would tend to discredit to an extent Sargent's theories. The Foreign Office in particular, being so intimately involved in the realities of the European scene, would of necessity have had to (or at least tried to) come up with an impression which closely approximated the actual situation.

The initial German reactions to Chamberlain's announcement that Vansittart was to become his Chief Diplomatic Adviser were varied. Joachim von Ribbentrop, then Ambassador to Great Britain, voiced his immediate concern over the appointment of "our most important and toughest foe to a position where he can play a leading role in the diplomatic game against Germany."15 Other

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15 D.D., D. 1, 168.
members of the German Embassy in London ascertained rather quickly that, in fact, Vansittart's promotion only represented an attempt to cast him adrift, primarily because he was too much of a Francophile and would interfere with the new Prime Minister's earnest desires for peaceful relations with all European nations.16

This latter position was the one which was unofficially adopted by the leaders of the German government. Officially, German diplomatists and Government figures were in the habit of exhibiting a mock fear of the influence of the "Chief Diplomatic Adviser." Göring, in particular, expressed his concern over the influence which Vansittart and his supporters might have over Prime Minister Chamberlain. Sir Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador in Berlin, often countered by expressing apprehension over the role of von Ribbentrop, who was regarded by many Englishmen as "enemy number one of the British Empire,"17 to which Göring would reply that "the difference was that Hitler was supreme master in Germany in a manner which Mr. Chamberlain could never be in England."18 Even Hitler is known to have used


17B D. iii, 6, 736.

18Ibid., For further evidence of Göring's expressed "apprehension" about the role of Vansittart in the direction of British foreign policy, see B D. iii, 6, 745; 759.
Vansittart as a lever in dealing with the British diplomats. In March 1938, he complained about the anti-German propaganda of Sir Robert's "Committee" to Henderson, who "on his word of honor," promptly reassured the German dictator that the "Committee" was in general not an instrument of propaganda against any country.19

There is little doubt, then, that the German Foreign Office had any illusions concerning either Vansittart's power as Chief Diplomatic Adviser or his propaganda activities. It can even be argued, and with far more reasonableness than Sargent displayed in the case of Vansittart, that by his attacks on Great Britain, the American publisher was actually aiding the cause of Nazi Germany, although it may not be assumed from the available evidence that he was consciously party to a plot along those lines. For example, it may only have been a coincidence that the book which more than any other formed the basis for his theories was written by a German news correspondent. The fact that he mysteriously came into possession of the book so quickly after its translation into English, may again be a mere coincidence, as may the fact that the name which he chose for Vansittart's "Committee"—"The Bureau On Anti-Nazi Propaganda in Neutral

19Documents and Materials Relating to the Eve of the Second World War, 1, 60.
Countries"—was very much like that used by Nazi propagandists. Furthermore, as an anglophobe, Sargent quite naturally stressed the German viewpoint rather than the British.

On the other hand, German diplomatists were aware of Sargent's activities and can only have looked upon them with approval. The only concrete record of direct German encouragement of such activities is found in the German Foreign Office documents and has to do with the distribution of Senator Nye's speech:

This fundamental speech . . . was printed in the Congressional Record of April 25, 1939, and distributed to 100,000 persons by the channel known to you. After lengthy negotiation it has been possible to obtain assent to the distribution of the speech by the same channel to another 100,000 specially selected persons.20

There is no indication that "the channel known to you" referred to Porter Sargent, or that the "100,000 persons" were in actuality the 10,000 recipients of the first Sargent "Bulletin." It would be inaccurate to conclude, therefore, that Sargent knowingly participated in a Nazi propaganda scheme against Great Britain, but his activities certainly met with German approval.

20G.D. D. x, 243.
A second approach towards proving or disapproving Sargent's theories involves investigating the activities with which Vansittart is positively known to have been associated while he was Chief Diplomatic Adviser. In general these activities were not by their nature in the realm of propaganda, and almost none of these seems to have concerned Britain's relations with the United States. He renewed rather vigorously, for example, his literary activities, and during the next three and one half years, he wrote numerous plays, two volumes of poetry and contributed heavily to the plots of several British film productions—none of which could be called "propaganda" in the sense intimated by Porter Sargent. In fact, the only activity of Vansittart's which could properly have been termed "propaganda" was never mentioned by Sargent. That was the delivery in December 1940, of a series of controversial radio broadcasts, which were later published as a pamphlet entitled The Black Record (See page 74).

Vansittart was much less productive as a diplomatist than as an author. The duties of Chief Diplomatic Adviser, purposefully left ambiguous in Mr. Chamberlain's statements, were actually almost non-existent. The management of the Foreign Office passed completely out of his hands. He was allowed to keep his old traditional room, but his private secretary was taken from him. He would occasionally receive
memoranda, but only after they had received the approval of the Foreign Secretary, and had been seen by everyone else at the Foreign Office. He was rarely consulted, except on those few occasions when only his unique talents and experience would suffice, and even then his "advice" was usually ignored. Yet, Sir Robert's convictions concerning the German menace were so strong that even in this "new kind of Siberia," he managed to make himself useful to his country and even to the Chamberlain Government. Using contacts and friendships collected during almost forty years experience as a diplomatist, he was often able to derive information from sources otherwise unavailable to the Government. Furthermore, as a figure both "inside" and "outside" the British Government, he was often consulted by individuals and groups which for some reason or other preferred unofficial discussions to direct negotiations.

For example, because Vansittart no longer occupied his old position at the Foreign Office, he was more accessible to members of the German Opposition. The Chamberlain Government, fearful of upsetting the applecart of appeasement, had indicated an unwillingness officially to recognize and consult with representatives of the Opposition. Both the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax were more than willing, however, to allow Vansittart to confer with such representatives, provided, of course,
that he impressed upon them that he was acting in a personal, and not an official, capacity. In addition to the obvious advantage of keeping Vansittart occupied, and thus, to some extent, "out of the way," this arrangement also allowed the Government to receive valuable information without committing itself to the "dangerous" viewpoints of the informants.

Although the German Opposition was not, at this time, an organized movement, there were discernible two main categories into which most German dissidents fell. The larger group, consisting mostly of businessmen and army leaders, was led by Karl Goerdeler, former mayor of Leipzig, and included such prominent figures as the former Chief of the Army General Staff, Ludwig Beck, former ambassador to Italy, Ulrich von Hassell and former German Chancellor, Josef Wirth. The sole unifying characteristic of this group and, indeed of all opposition groups, was the desire to depose Hitler before he invoked defeat and ruin upon Germany. Beyond this, motives varied almost as much as individuals.

A smaller opposition group, composed of younger and older diplomats, was determined to maintain the traditions of the German Foreign Office which they felt were being threatened by the dilettantism of Ribbentrop. The most notable figure connected with this group was Secretary
of State—Foreign Ministry, Ernst von Weizaecker, who although was not actively a member of the Opposition, was sympathetic with its aims and was often unnecessarily cooperative. At the center of the whole conspiracy, however, was Karl Goerdeler—organizing, recruiting and on occasion, conferring directly with English and French leaders.

In March, 1938, shortly after Hitler's triumphant march into Vienna, Goerdeler visited Vansittart in London. The main topic of discussion was the Sudeten question, a new cloud on the political horizon. Unfortunately Goerdeler spoke more like a strong German nationalist than a member of an opposition group. When, for example, Vansittart allowed that Britain was prepared to see the Sudeten Germans obtain a degree of autonomy, Goerdeler replied that "the area was German, it had a common frontier with Germany and it must be incorporated in the Reich."21 The former mayor of Leipzig also laid claim to the Danzig corridor and suggested that Germany's eastern frontiers be revised.

Such suggestions did not fare well with Sir Robert who "forbore to inquire about Austria and a colonial empire; he [Goerdeler] was too frank."22 He formed from the

22Mist Procession, p. 512.
German's visit an impression of "those opposition people" which was to weaken considerably their effectiveness in Great Britain. Although he continued to receive them, and used as often as possible the information which they brought him, Vansittart always regarded with suspicion the motives of the German opposition leaders.

In May, 1938, Vansittart received another important visitor, Konrad Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten Germans and the promulgator, on April 24, of the Karlsbad Decree. Because public reaction to the Decree in England and France had been strongly critical, Hitler decided to send Henlein to London where he was to create the impression that he, Henlein, was a genuine moderate who had been driven desperate by frustration and oppression, but who was still willing to negotiate. Henlein, proceeding directly to the "camp of the enemy," contacted Vansittart, with whom he had had earlier dealings, and requested an interview.

The British Government, in deference to the presence in London of the Czech Ambassador, Jan Masaryk, could not receive Henlein officially. It was decided, therefore, that Vansittart should be allowed to receive the "little Fuhrer" provided he make it clear to Henlein that the visit was to be "a purely private one as between friends and had no official character."23 This provision was quite

23B D, iii, 1, 630.
acceptable to the Sudeten leader whose primary purpose was to placate errant British public opinion rather than to disturb the dormant Chamberlain Government.

Henlein arrived in London on May 13 for a one-day visit, most of which he spent trying to allay the fears of such outspoken opponents of the policy of appeasement as Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Sir Archibald Sinclair and, of course, Sir Robert Vansittart. His discussion with Vansittart lasted four hours and was, from the standpoint of personal diplomacy, the most successful of his visit. Sir Robert took him to task for his Karlsbad Program and warned against implementing some of its provisions. Specifically, he noted the implausibility of erecting a Nazi state within the borders of a democratic state, and he advised Henlein to drop the question of reparations which "had an ugly ring." He also repeated what he had told Goerdeler earlier, namely, that while Great Britain was prepared to see the Sudeten territory attain a degree of autonomy, she could and would not stand for its incorporation into the Reich.

Henlein, with Hitler's instructions always uppermost in his mind, was careful, however, not to depart too radically from his announced position of moderation. He discounted

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24 Details of Henlein's talks with Vansittart are given in B D, iii, 1, 298-9; 630-3.

25 B D, iii, 1, 298.
the Karlsbad speech, which he said had been forced upon him by "extremists," and he seemed generally in agreement with Vansittart's suggestion of "autonomy without incorporation." However, he urged prompt action by Czechoslovakia before he became unable to control the radical groups and he promised to keep Vansittart apprised of any significant changes in the situation.26

Vansittart was favorably impressed. Following Henlein's departure for Berlin, he made a report of the conversation to Lord Halifax in which he stated that while the Sudeten Leader was "no longer ostensibly the moderate Henlein that he had known and appreciated in previous years," he was nevertheless "far more reasonable and amenable than I had dared to hope."27 The general tone of the report was optimistic. He believed that Henlein's visit opened up "distinct possibilities," and that if Czechoslovakia acted promptly, "we may really have turned a crucial corner in European history."28 Halifax, after comparing this with the reports of the others whom Henlein had visited, was inclined to agree, and he urged Masaryk to increase Czech efforts for a settlement.

26Henlein apparently kept this promise. See B D, ili, 1, 418.

27Ibid., 630.

28Ibid., 632.
Meanwhile Henlein, his duplicity complete, reported to Hitler on the success of his mission. He had managed to fool most of those whom he had visited, including Vansittart and Churchill, by his "moderate" statements. During the course of his stay in London, he had also granted interviews to the editors of the "Astor-controlled" news organs, The Times (Geoffrey Dawson) and The Observer (J. L. Gavin), both of whom were already sympathetic with his "plight." From them he garnered for Der Fuhrer the unfortunate and correct impression that most Englishmen were indifferent to the fate of Czechoslovakia. This was the most important result of Henlein's journey to London. Hitler, no longer apprehensive about British public opinion, was not prepared to reap more of the fruits of appeasement, by force if necessary.

Later that same month, May 1938, there appeared in various Czech newspapers reports that Germany was about to invade Bohemia, reports which in turn provoked threats of diplomatic action by the Western Powers and Russia and which made Hitler so "made with rage" that on May 30th, he communicated to the German High Command his "unalterable decision" to crush Czechoslovakia by military action. In the following months, frantic efforts by the Chamberlain, Daladier and Benes Governments not only failed to placate the German
Chancellor but increased his wrath and determination, and by the middle of August, the situation had become acute.

Among those most concerned was Karl Goerdeler. In concert with "moderates" in the German General Staff, he arranged to send a German landowner, Ewald von Kleist, to London. Once again the Chamberlain Government was unwilling to allow an emissary of the Opposition to be received in official quarters, and once again Vansittart was chosen. Von Kleist arrived in London on August 18, and he followed an itinerary much the same as Henlein's—although, of course, for very different reasons.

In his discussion with Vansittart, Von Kleist claimed that Hitler was determined to march against the Czech state and that while his generals knew the date of the attack and were "all without exception" against it, they would be helpless to prevent it without encouragement and help from outside Germany. When Vansittart denied knowledge of the date, Von Kleist answered that "after the 29th September it will be too late." He advocated a reaffirmation by Britain and France that they were not bluffing and suggested that a leading English statesman address an appeal to dissatisfied elements within Germany

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29Ibid., 683-86.
30Ibid., 684.
emphasizing the horrors of war and the catastrophe to which it might lead.

Lest the British diplomatic adviser question his motives (which would not be too unnatural after Goerdeler's visit), von Kleist told Sir Robert that he was "a Conservative, a Prussian and a Christian" who had come out of Germany "with a rope around his neck to stake his last chance of life on preventing the Nazi adventure."31

Vansittart was convinced that von Kleist earnestly desired the overthrow of Hitler, and in his account of their conversation, which he had distributed to Chamberlain and to other members of the British Cabinet he urged the Government to declare open support of Czechoslovakia. The Prime Minister, as usual, took another view: "He [von Kleist] reminds me of the Jacobites at the Court of France in King William's time and I think we must discount a good deal of what he says. Nevertheless, I confess to some feeling of uneasiness and I don't feel sure that we ought not to do something."32 Mr. Chamberlain did not feel that he ought to accept the advice of his "diplomatic adviser," however, and the idea of "open support" was rejected. As a substitute policy, Sir Nevile Henderson was

31Ibid., 685.
32Ibid., 686.
summoned to London where, on August 29, he was instructed to convey, upon his return to Berlin, a serious warning to Hitler, and to prepare, secretly, for a "personal contact" between the German Chancellor and the Prime Minister. The warning was never delivered by Henderson, but the meeting between the two leaders did take place and had as its consequence the infamous Munich Agreement of September 29/30, 1938. "Von Kleist's visit was not without its results, but not quite the results he desired."

The pattern of Vansittart's career as Chief Diplomatic Adviser was firmly established by September 1938. His counsel had been often proffered, but only seldom accepted. The Chamberlain Government had found it convenient to utilize, unofficially, his valuable contacts and sources of information, but it had steadfastly refused to allow him to regain any of his old authority and influence. As a result, most of his activities continued to be of a private rather than an official nature.

He continued, for example, to meet with representatives of the German Opposition. In early September, a retired army officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Bohm-Tettelbach, journeyed to London, where he repeated to Sir Robert and to the head of the Press Department of the Foreign Office much of what

von Kleist had said. He was a poor choice; Vansittart, as a rule, did not have a very high opinion of German military figures, past or present, and Bohm-Tettelbach did little to change that opinion.34

The German Foreign Office group also sent emissaries for the first time, urging that a firm stand be taken by Great Britain and France over Czechoslovakia.35 Sir Robert communicated these requests to Lord Halifax and to the Prime Minister, along with his personal recommendations of "open support," but his advice was unwelcome. For counsel on foreign affairs, Chamberlain usually turned to his Chief Industrial Advisor, Sir Horace Wilson.

Talks aimed at determining exactly how France and Great Britain would act in the event Hitler forced their hand over Czechoslovakia were held in London on September 18. After the French Government made it clear that it would not be a party to military action, Vansittart predicted that England and France would be at war with Germany within a year.36 Meanwhile Chamberlain had decided that "personal contact" with the Dictator was the only hope, and on

34Ibid., pp. 416-18.
September 15, he and Sir Horace flew to Berchtesgarten. "It was a matter of some remark," stated Wheeler-Bennett, "that the Prime Minister should be accompanied by the Chief Industrial and not the Chief Diplomatic Advisor . . . on a journey which involved so delicate an act of diplomacy as the vivisection of another country, but Sir Robert Vansittart had been among the opponents of the Chamberlain policy of appeasement."37

Even before Munich, the necessity for erecting a strong deterrent force which would be capable of braking the Nazi assault against the peace of Europe had become increasingly evident to at least some Englishmen, and it became equally obvious that, in order to be effective, such a force had to include the Soviet Union. At Geneva on September 23, 1938, the subject of an Anglo-Russian-French agreement had been informally broached to the Soviet Foreign Minister, Litvinov, and the Soviet Ambassador to London, Maisky, by two members of the British League of Nations delegation, Lord de la Warr and Mr. R. A. Butler.38 The Soviets' reply, which gave the impression that Russia would, in concert with France and Great Britain, be willing to interfere in defence of the Czech state, was the basis for a

37 Munich, Prologue to Tragedy, p. 188.
38 Ibid., p. 150.
strange communique which eminated "unofficially" from the British Foreign Office a few days later. This statement, issued just prior to Chamberlain's flight to Munich, asserted that in the event of an attack upon Czechoslovakia, "France will be bound to come to her assistance and Great Britain and Russia will certainly stand by France."39 It was a bold but futile attempt to force France into action; unfortunately, the hopes which it aroused in its formulators were rather quickly scuttled by the French Foreign Minister, Georges Bonnet, in Paris, who said that the communique "was manifestly the work of Sir Robert Vansittart, who was no longer of any importance in the conduct of British foreign policy."40

Bonnet was in a good position to know just how little Vansittart's influence pervaded into British foreign policy, having also been present at the abortive Anglo-French talks, but his accusation regarding the communique was unfounded—prior to its issuance, Vansittart had never seen it although he was undoubtedly sympathetic. The incident is worthy of attention here only because it points up a situation which was to plague Sir Robert, unfairly,


40*Wheeler Bennett, Munich, Prologue to Tragedy*, P. 150. Both Wheeler Bennett and Nogueres (op. cit.) reject the notion that Vansittart had anything to do with the communique.
throughout the war years. It became a habit of his enemies, and even of those who did not know him, to attach his name to policies and causes which they wished to discredit. Prior to the outbreak of the war, the most vociferous abusers were the disarmament and the appeasement advocates at Whitehall and Cliveden, although German negotiators, including Der Fuhrer himself, did not fail to observe that by projecting the name "Vansittart" into conversations with the English they were able to cause considerable embarrassment. Even after September 1939, when events had more than vindicated Sir Robert's premonitions, this pernicious habit did not abate; indeed, his name was often further "dis-graced" by the addition of "-ism" or "-itis."

The possibilities for a rapprochement with the Soviet Union diminished markedly after Munich. In England, Mr. Chamberlain claimed to have achieved "peace in our time" and many of his countrymen lulled themselves into accepting what they wanted to be true but which they half-knew to be false. The most complete statement of the Russian position came almost six months later in a "righteous" speech by Joseph Stalin in which he trenchantly reprimanded England and France for their failure to act positively. On that same day, March 10, 1939, Nazi troops

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41 *Documents and Materials relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, 1, 60-1.
had marched into the remainder of Czechoslovakia and it was only four days later that Hitler announced the incorporation of the Czech state into the Reich.

The German jaunt from Munich to Prague tended to sober the consciences of even the appeasers in Great Britain and an alliance with Russia suddenly became a rather desirable foreign policy objective. On March 15th, while the disillusioned Prime Minister was reluctantly "considering what attitude to adopt towards a Government which has shown itself incapable of honouring an agreement not six months old," his Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, was issuing instructions to Sir Robert Vansittart to make contact with the Soviet Embassy.

During the Anglo-Soviet negotiation period which followed, Vansittart's activities more closely approximated those which might be expected of someone bearing the auspicious title of Chief Diplomatic Adviser than they did at any other time during his service in that post. Lord Halifax, capitalizing on the friendship engendered between Maisky and Vansittart when the latter was Permanent Under-Secretary, used his chief adviser rather extensively for the next three months but with only fair success—this

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despite the very earnest desires and efforts of both Maisky and Vansittart to conclude an agreement. After conferring with Sir Robert, Maisky often found himself in the unenviable position of having been convinced of the reasonableness of the English viewpoint. On such occasions he would usually agree to relay Vansittart's suggestions to Moscow, although he "did not think they would interest his Government." Vansittart would also on occasion see the logic of the Soviet position and repeat it to Halifax.

Finally, in June, a British scheme appeared to have Soviet approval and arrangements were made to complete the final wording of the treaty in Moscow. Vansittart, because of his close involvement with the negotiations, and more especially because of his acknowledged skill in drawing up such agreements, was a logical choice to go to the Soviet capital. This became even more the case when Lord Halifax, unwisely, announced his own refusal to attend. Unfortunately, the hands of Sir Horace Wilson intruded once again into diplomatic affairs. The meddling Wilson, whose influence over the Prime Minister had remained peculiarly intact, convinced Chamberlain to send instead Sir Eric Phipps, Vansittart's brother-in-law and then Ambassador to France, and Sir William Seeds, British Ambassador to Moscow, neither

\[43\text{B.D. iii, 5, 564.}\]
of whom was acceptable to the prestige-conscious Soviet leaders. The final choice was Sir William Strang, a capable, but relatively obscure, Foreign Office official, and likewise unacceptable.

In England there was much deserved criticism over the Government's failure to send Vansittart.\textsuperscript{44} This is not to imply that had he been sent, a successful agreement would have been concluded, although his presence undoubtedly would have improved the prospects; indeed there is much indication that neither government really desired an alliance at that time. This was certainly the position of Chamberlain, who wanted to prevent a Nazi-Soviet understanding but was not at all anxious to form a pact with the "Bolshevists."

In view of the subsequent agreement between Hitler and Stalin, it appears that this may also have been the position of the Russian dictator, although until all the relevant documents are made available, any historical judgement is subject to revision. It is interesting to note, nevertheless, that the only British document of the period which makes any reference to cooperation with Russia was the "unofficial" Foreign Office statement issued just prior to Munich.

The British failure to conclude a treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union was an especially keen disappointment for Vansittart. His discussions with Maisky were among the few, if only partial successes, of British diplomacy immediately prior to the outbreak of the war, and they remained for him the high-points of an otherwise fruitless career as Chief Diplomatic Adviser.45

With his removal from the active negotiations between Great Britain and Russia in June 1939, Sir Robert Vansittart was to experience the most barren period of his entire diplomatic career. From his large room at the Foreign Office he watched helplessly as Europe proceeded on its steady journey to world war, and he might truly have felt what he had written almost twenty years before:

My prophesies of coming ills
Fell on Deaf ears and weakly wills.46

All the frustrations of his career—rejected memoranda, ignored warnings and advice, isolation and personal abuse—weighed heavily upon him during this period of his greatest impotence and oblivion.

45After World War II ("A Morally Indefensible Agreement," The Listener, November 4, 1948, pp. 675-77), Vansittart wrote: "On only one point have I changed my mind since 1938. I was an advocate of Anglo-Russian cooperation to prevent war. In the light of all subsequent Soviet conduct I have long keen convinced that we should have been double-crossed, as indeed we were in 1939.

Occasionally, he would receive visits from members of the German Opposition, warning him of the impending Nazi-Soviet pact, or urging him to pledge British support for an internal revolt against Hitler. Unfortunately these requests were usually accompanied by demands for territorial concessions in event of success, and Vansittart attached little value to them. In the fall of 1939, after the outbreak of the war, Karl Goerdeler communicated to him three separate peace proposals, but,

... he hankered for the frontiers of 1914... He even believed in German Generals and tried hard to persuade me that with a little encouragement some praetorian guard would cut up the frothy Fuhrer. I never attached importance to his hallucinations, finding no Resistance Movement worth mention in either German Foreign Office or German Army.

Except for these few exchanges with "Opposition people," Vansittart's sole diplomatic assignments consisted of meeting with foreign ambassadors and then writing up precis of their conversations for use by the Cabinet. Lord Halifax, it seems, disliked meeting ambassadors—many saw him less than three times a year—and he usually assigned this rather menial task to Sir Robert and to such other Foreign Office stalwarts as Sir Edward Cadogan and

47 Apologists for the German Opposition are quite critical of Vansittart on this point. See Ritter, p. 140.

48 Mist Procession, p. 512.
Sir Orme Sargent. So meaningless had the post of Chief Diplomatic Adviser become by 1940, that one member of Parliament had to ask Clement Attlee, Deputy Prime Minister, whether or not the post still existed, and if so, who then held it. Meanwhile, the European War began to take a dangerous turn.

The march of the German Army into Paris in June 1940, had resulted in the removal of the French Government of Premier Paul Reynaud first to Tours and on June 18th, to Bordeaux. Reynaud's Cabinet was hopelessly divided over the question of whether or not France should continue to fight against the overwhelming strength of the German troops. One faction, led by Marshall Petain and General Weygand and urged on by the opportunist Laval, insisted that immediate negotiations be conducted with the enemy. Reynaud desperately tried to rally his colleagues and hold the government together and firmly on the side of the Allies. The situation was extremely dangerous and nowhere was this realized more fully than in England. Winston Churchill, (now Prime Minister), was in constant contact with the French leaders, and worked incessantly towards finding some solution which would keep France in the war.51

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49Bilainkin, Diary of a Diplomatic Correspondent (London, 1942), pp. 177, 195.

50369, H C Deb., 5s, 1259.

51Churchill's own account of these proceedings is contained in Their Finest Hour (Cambridge, Mass., 1949).
Meanwhile in London, a group of men led by the French General Charles DeGaulle, concocted a bold scheme to bolster Reynaud's position with his Cabinet. On June 14th, they presented to Churchill the outline of a declaration for a Franco-British Union, which would confer equal rights of citizenship on the people of both countries. Churchill was, at first, not enthusiastic over the plan, but he was quickly won over, and on the morning of June 16th, Lord Halifax requested Vansittart to draft a dramatic, but suitable statement. That same afternoon, the completed "Declaration of Union" was relayed to the anxious Reynaud. "Rarely," wrote Churchill later, "has so generous a proposal encountered such a hostile reception."\(^{52}\) Petain, complaining that the proposed "Union" was more like "fusion with a corpse," carried the day, and Reynaud resigned. On the following day, the newly-formed Petain government announced that France was suing for peace.

The fall of France was a cruel blow both militarily and spiritually to the Allied cause. With France gone, England was alone in the west and braced herself for the upcoming "battle of Britain." The loss of an ally and a friend was keenly felt in England and by none more genuinely than by Sir Robert Vansittart. Long an admirer

\(^{52}\)Ibid., p. 212.
of France and things French, he expressed his great sorrow and disappointment in a poem which appeared in the June 29th, issue of The Times and whose title embraced the years of the Entente Cordiale:

1904-1940

Was I not faithful to you from the first?
When have I ever failed you since my youth?
I loved without illusion, knew the worst,
But felt the best was nearer to the truth.

You were indulgent, too, and open-eyed
To the shortcomings I was frank to own.
So we were mingled, destined side by side
To face a world we could not face alone.

Did you keep faith with me? When all was well,
Yes, but I clave to you when all was not.
And, when temptation touched your citadel,
Your weakness won again, and you forgot.

Forgot yourself, and freedom and your friends,
Even interest; and now our vaunted glow
Becomes a blush, as the long story ends
In sorry separation at Bordeaux.

You hate me now; you will not hate me less
If I go on unshaken by your fall,
If for your sake, devoid of bitterness,
I face the world without you after all.

The fall of France was indeed a harsh blow to Vansittart and occasioned a sharp intensity in the feelings of impotence which had been upon him so long. His warnings against Germany had been ignored; rejected memoranda seemed to have been the only results of his labors and his advice.

53The Times, June 29, 1940.
Now he wanted to "speak out"--to do something--about the German menace and his conscience strained against the Civil Service tradition which required silence of its members. Ironically, the Germans themselves provided "their greatest foe" with an opportunity to release his venom against them.

In May 1940, a parliamentary group had urged the new Minister of Information, Alfred Duff Cooper, to call forth a national figure, an expert, who would "make our public, other nations and the German people understand what we are fighting against, what we are fighting for and our ability to defend our cause effectively to the end." Cooper, an old friend of Vansittart's, and a fellow Francophile, did not immediately turn to Sir Robert. The indiscriminate enemy bombings of British cities in the fall of 1940, however, brought about an abrupt change in the emotional attitude of the English populace towards Germany and prepared the way for Sir Robert's long-awaited opportunity.

In a series of six broadcasts, over the BBC, Vansittart unleashed a scathing attack against the German nation as a whole. The Germans, he said, were the "Butcher-Birds" of civilization, predatory creatures who had feasted upon their unsuspecting neighbors whenever they got the

54361, H.C. Deb., 5s, 437-599.
chance. "By hook and by crook—especially crook"—the butcher-bird had achieved five wars in the last seventy-five years; each time the stakes and the butcher bird's bill had risen. The world would only be safe in the future, he told his fellow Englishmen, if it recognized that it was the German nation—its character, its mentality and its habits—which was culpable, and not merely the accidental and ephemeral outcrop of Nazism. "This bird of prey is no sudden apparition. It is a species, Hitler is no accident. He is the natural and continuous product of a breed which from the dawn of history has been predatory and bellicose."55

He first noticed this fact, Vansittart said, in 1907 while crossing the Black Sea in a German ship:

It was spring and the rigging was full of bright-coloured birds. I noticed one among them in particular, strongly marked, heavier beaked. And every now and then it would spring upon one of the smaller, unsuspecting birds, and kill it. It was a shrike or butcher-bird; and it was steadily destroying all its fellows. Now I am a bird lover and I couldn't stand this. I only had a revolver handy, and it took me the whole day to get that butcher-bird. And while I was doing it, a thought flew across my mind and never left it. That butcher-bird on that German ship behaved exactly like Germany behaves. I was twenty-six at the time, and life looked pretty good—or should have looked, for there were four hundred million happinesses of a sort in Europe. But already I could feel the shadow on them, for I had spent long enough in Germany to know that she would

55 Black Record, p. 39.
bring on her fourth war as soon as she thought the going good.56

He admitted that there might be some "bright, ineffectual angels" in Germany, but that the majority of the Herrenvolk were wedded to the German traditions of militarism and mechanical obedience. Even young German maidens were no exception; "Today the official 'League of German Maidens' is singing:

We've given up the Christian line,
For Christ was just a Jewish swine.
As for his Mother—what a shame—
Cohn was the lady's real name."57

In order to win the German war in which they were now embroiled, Vansittart claimed that it was necessary for the Allies to realize that it was the whole German nation which had to be first defeated, and then reeducated, a process which he believed would take at least a generation.

In January 1941, "due to popular demand," Sir Robert's provocative broadcasts were published as a pamphlet—*The Black Record*. Within one year this remarkable little pamphlet had undergone numerous printings—four, within the first two months—and had sold over 500,000 copies, and by 1944 when it made its first appearance in the United States, it had sold almost one million copies.

56 Ibid., p. 19.
57 Ibid., p. 40.
Reaction to the broadcasts was instantaneous, and disputants included some of the most important figures in Great Britain. They were attacked on two levels. The more important, and consequently the more hotly debated, concerned the subject matter itself. By attacking the Germans en masse, Vansittart touched off an exceptionally active controversy which lasted throughout the war period and increased in tempo. Vansittart spent by far the major portion of the remaining war years embroiled in this conflict, and for this reason, this very important turning point in his career will be treated in the following chapter. Only let it be noted here that The Black Record defined the basic issues of the "German Question."

To some observers, including many members of Parliament, the pamphlet also raised the question of whether the position taken therein represented only the personal viewpoint of Vansittart, or whether, since an official statement of war aims had not yet been announced, they also constituted a pronouncement of Government policy. This question was put to a reluctant Winston Churchill on December 18, 1940, during a House of Commons debate. The Prime Minister's evasive reply was that 'while many interesting points of view were put forward in England, this did not necessitate the Government's being committed to them, and he added that the principle of free discussion
had the approval of not only the Government but of Parliament. 8

With the publication of the "Black Record" broadcasts and the subsequent controversy it aroused, Churchill could no longer maintain this equivocal attitude, and on January 28, 1941, again in the House of Commons, he stated that the pamphlet did "not express any opinion except that of the very able public servant who was responsible for it." 9 This position was reiterated by the Government's representative in the House of Lords, Lord Cranborne, then Secretary of State for the Dominions, who said that Vansittart was clearly stating only his own views. 60

Despite the Government's disavowal, it seemed altogether possible that Vansittart's broadcasts had not only its approval but its design. On February 12, 1941, this possibility was taken up in the House of Lords by Lord Ponsonby, a particularly vocal critic of The Black Record, who charged that Vansittart's line of argument had been prepared for him by Duff Cooper. 61 Cooper's disdain for the Nazi regime was well known, and his public

58The Times, December 8, 1940.
59The Times, January 29, 1941.
60The Times, February 19, 1941.
61Ibid.
statements since assuming the post of Minister of Information had been in very much the same vein as those contained in *The Black Record*. For example, six months prior to the Vansittart broadcasts, he had insisted that the crimes of the Nazis were "the crimes of a whole nation," and cautioned that it would be "wishful thinking and dangerous thinking to believe that we could drive a wedge between the German government and the German people." Since it had been at Cooper's request that Vansittart made the broadcasts, Lord Ponsonby's suspicions were understandable.

Adding further credence to theories about government complicity in the "Black Record" broadcasts was the fact that Vansittart was himself a representative of the Government. His imposing title of Chief Diplomatic Advisor tended to give the impression that his views represented an official position. This in turn raised the question of why Vansittart, a Civil Servant, should have been allowed to voice his opinions. The issue was initiated in the House of Commons by none other than Vansittart's old nemesis, Viscountess Astor. On January 21, 1941, the Viscountess asked Churchill whether in view of the publication of *The Black Record* he would state the conditions under which "serving Civil servants were free to publish their political views." After the Prime Minister had

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explained that Civil servants were free to publish such views after obtaining the consent of the head of their department, the mistress of Cliveden continued, "Is it the new policy of the Government that Civil servants should make political broadcasts?" Vansittart, had he been present, would have enjoyed what followed:

Mr. Ellis Smith (Stoke, Lab.)—Has not Sir Robert Vansittart proved himself more British than other people. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. H. Strauss (Norwich, U.)—On the subject of Germany, have not the views of Sir Robert Vansittart been proved to be generally right while the views of the noble lady have been almost invariably wrong? (Laughter and cheers.)

The Speaker—That is a matter of opinion.

Viscountess Astor—Which is entirely wrong. (Laughter.)

The dispute continued, mostly in British newspapers and journals. The Times, in a lead editorial entitled "Civil Servant or Publicist?", called the broadcasts and their publication "an obvious breach in the whole tradition of the British Civil Service," and expressed concern that Sir Robert might have initiated a trend. The issue waxed hotter still when Lord Cranborne revealed in the House of Lords that the publication of The Black Record

63 The Times, January 29, 1941.
64 The Times, February 20, 1941.
had been approved by both Lord Halifax and the Prime Minister. 65

Oddly enough, it was Vansittart, and not the Government, who received the brunt of the criticism. Many demanded his removal from the Civil Service. Among these was Lord Ponsonby, who insisted that "the Government should sternly prevent the purveyors of balderdash from approaching the microphone, and that such persons should no longer be retained in high offices where wisdom, foresight and caution were necessary." 66 The Times even suggested that if Vansittart was going to broadcast on Foreign policy then "a post ad hoc should be created at the Ministry of Information." 67

The precise nature of the Government's involvement with the "Black Record" broadcasts is unclear. While it is true that the broadcasts were made at the request of Duff Cooper and that prior to publication they received the approval of Halifax and Churchill, the ideas expressed and the mode of expressing them were clearly those of Sir Robert Vansittart, a fact which is borne out by his later writings. On the other hand, the propagation of such ideas had definite advantages for the British Government. The

65 The Times, February 19, 1941.
66 Ibid.
67 The Times, February 21, 1941.
fall of France had occasioned in England a feeling of desperation, a feeling which was heightened a few months later due to the enemy bombing raids on her cities. One way to combat such tendencies was to make popular ideas which channeled the emotions and energies of the British people towards hatred of the enemy and hence, towards a more unified war effort. Obviously the Government could not promote openly such ideas. Vansittart's broadcasts had the dual advantage of arousing British emotions while at the same time allowing the Government to remain officially uncommitted to ideas which might conjure up charges of irrationality against their spokesmen.

Despite these advantages, it would be inaccurate to conclude that the British Government merely exploited its diplomatic adviser. The Black Record contained Vansittart's firm convictions, and he was as pleased with the opportunity to disseminate them as the Government was to have him do so. Had either the Government or the leading members of the Cabinet been dissatisfied with Sir Robert's declarations, he would, as one author succinctly put it, have conveniently contracted a "diplomatic illness," thus preventing the completion of the series.68

This mutual satisfaction diminished as the furore over the broadcasts increased. Vansittart, having had a taste of public exposure, wanted more and felt bound by his nominal Civil Service position. The Government, for its part was at least mildly embarrassed by the attempts to link Vansittart's views and its official policy. The situation became almost intolerable, especially for Sir Robert, and in May, 1941, a Government spokesman announced that "Sir Robert Vansittart having reached the retirement age of sixty, and having expressed his desire to retire, has been reluctantly permitted to do so. He will continue to advise H.M.G. when requested."69

Age had almost nothing to do with Vansittart's retirement from public service. The two primary motivations were his dissatisfaction with his bogus post, and his increasing anxiety over the "German question." As Chief Diplomatic Adviser, his advice had been seldom sought and almost never heeded. This was as true under Churchill as it had been under Chamberlain. On those few occasions when his services were required, he performed ably and with remarkable enthusiasm. Unfortunately, such occasions were too few, and Vansittart, an exceptionally active man, sought release.

The relationship between Vansittart and Churchill deserves special attention. During the "thirties" both had been staunch foes of the ignominious policy of appeasement and its strangely chosen corollary, disarmament; both had issued unheeded warnings about Nazi Germany. Indeed, since Churchill owed a great deal of his heralded prescience regarding the Nazis to Sir Robert, many felt when he became Prime Minister that he would name Vansittart his Foreign Secretary. This situation could not have materialized. Sir Robert had alienated too many people and Churchill, as the head of a war-time Coalition Government, would have been unwise and probably unsuccessful had he tried. Nevertheless, as Prime Minister he had the opportunity to use Vansittart in at least some capacity had he so desired. Instead he chose to keep him as diplomatic adviser and used him no more than had Chamberlain.

Sir John Wheeler-Bennett expressed the opinion that Churchill really had no choice—there was simply no place to put Vansittart. To an extent this was true. Most

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70 George Bilainkin, *Second Diary of a War Correspondent* (London, 1946), pp. 121-22, cites a story (confirmed by Ian Colvin in a letter to the author) about a visit Churchill made to Denham Place in which he told Lady Vansittart: "If you are right and I go to Downing Street, there walks my Foreign Secretary."

71 Interview with the author, op. cit.
of the key Government posts were filled, and when one became "available," as it did for example in December, 1940, when Lord Lothian died, Churchill usually had a capable replacement in mind—Anthony Eden stands out in this respect. Furthermore, Vansittart was believed to have "committed himself" to a policy which could not realistically have been the official Government policy. The Black Record only solidified for many the impression that Vansittart was "impulsive" and "unbalanced." Churchill himself is reported to have privately "grumbled" about the Black Record book: "there are plenty of good Germans, too." Nevertheless, it seems particularly unflattering to the British governmental system that during a time of emergency it was unable to make effective use of a man who, after forty years experience as a diplomatist, was probably more familiar with the workings of the Foreign Office than any man in England.

72Ian Colvin, letter to the author, op. cit.
VANSITTART AND THE WILL TO VICTORY

CHAPTER III

Despite the controversy brewing over The Black Record, not to mention the end of a long and eventful career as a civil servant, the retirement of Sir Robert Vansittart (July 1941) caused little stir in Great Britain. The majority of the news publications merely repeated, with or no editorial comment, the official retirement notice. The few exceptions, like the Manchester Guardian, revealed an almost total misunderstanding of Vansittart's attitudes and achievements. In its May 21 issue, a Guardian editorial summarized Vansittart's pre-war career with:

The approach of the Second World War was foreseen by none more clearly, or with deeper anguish, than by those Germans who had a sense of the old tradition of the common European heritage and a knowledge of international affairs. They saw in Sir Robert the one hope of peace. ¹

The Christian Science Monitor, on the other hand, after presenting a fairly accurate review of Vansittart's official career, termed his retirement "metaphorical" and, showing itself much more closely attuned to Sir Robert's own feelings, intimated that "it would be not in the least

¹Manchester Guardian, May 21, 1941.
surprising if his 'retirement' leads to his being more in
evidence than ever."

During the next four years, Vansittart, never particularly noted for his sense of moderation, far exceeded this dim prophesy. Spurred on by the exhilarating, initial taste of public exposure and controversy provided by The Black Record, he eagerly looked forward to retirement as a release from the "governmental straightjacket" which all his life had barred him from political expression. For the better part of forty years—"forty years of silence, broken only by rejected memoranda"—the German Problem had been his central concern. Now, free from the restraints of governmental office, "the lawn of language suddenly thrown open," he became, literally, the slave of an obsession. Almost all his time and energies during the remaining war years Vansittart devoted to some aspect or other of the German problem. As an active member of the House of Lords, as a much sought-after speaker at meetings up and down the country, as president of two popular movements, and as a prolific

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5Ibid.
author, he fanned the flames ignited by the "Black Record" broadcasts. And although he hoped that no one would "blame a young sexagenarian at large if he sometimes kicks up his heels on being turned out to grass," he was determined that

... at all costs the world must never again be dragged by Germany into a war—merely because it fails to understand how Germany has behaved in the past and how it will behave again in the future, unless the German people undergo a deep, spiritual regeneration.  

With this one over-riding principle, Vansittart launched an intensive campaign aimed at solving once and for all, the recurring German question. In the process, he attracted a wide range of followers—mostly in Great Britain, but in other countries as well—which, in large measure, helped to offset the earlier, painful years of frustration and inactivity. His books and pamphlets sold well in both Great Britain and the United States, and translations of some of them into Polish, Czech, and Italian were very well received. Many of the leading British newspapers and journals were more or less at his disposal. The Sunday Times, for example, carried articles by Vansittart or by his followers almost every week; the Spectator and John Bull did the same. The "Correspondence" sections of every leading news organ in the country were

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6Ibid.

7Black Record, p. 37.
filled with comments about Vansittart or his views, mostly favorable.

In the House of Lords, not only his ideas, but his considerable oratorical gifts, won him many supporters. His activities as president of the "Win the Peace Movement" and the "Prisoners of War Relatives Association" netted him many additional adherents, as did his occasional radio broadcasts. While it is impossible to determine the full extent of Vansittart's popularity, it is reasonably certain that by far the majority of Englishmen supported, or at least agreed with, his views. Numbered among his supporters were such famous individuals as H. G. Wells, Thomas Mann, A. J. P. Taylor, A. L. Rowse, L. B. Namier, Rohan O'Butler and Harold Nicolson.

Lord Vansittart's rather dynamic emergence from political limbo was not everywhere greeted with the same degree of enthusiasm. His main opposition he found within the very diversified ranks of the "British Left." Prominent Socialists, such as Victor Gollancz, publisher

8 A fact even Vansittart's opponents reluctantly acknowledged. See for example, the comments to this effect by Lord Wedgwood (122, H L Deb., 5s, 1172) and Kingsley Martin ("The Small Voice," New Statesman and Nation, November 22, 1941). For more solid evidence, refer to the polls taken by the British Institute of Public Opinion (Hadley Cantril, ed., Public Opinion 1935-1946 (Princeton, 1951), pp. 1112-15, 1142, 1154/.
and founder of the Left Book Club, and Kingsley Martin and H. N. Brailsford of the *New Statesman* and *Nation*, repeatedly challenged his views. British Communists, led by the editor of the *Labour Monthly*, R. Palme Dutt, followed suit. Labour Party and Trade Union leaders like Harold Laski and Aneurin Bevan were also among his most vocal critics. In the House of Lords, his chief antagonists were invariably members of the Labour Party, Lords Farrington, Ponsonby, Strabolgi and Wedgwood being the most noteworthy.

Vansittart was also the target of a great many pamphlets, books and articles by German emigres, especially Social Democratic emigres. Among the latter, who were quite active in both Great Britain and the United States throughout the war, the most prominent were Paul Hagen, Julius Braunthal, Hans Vogel, Hilda Monte and Herman Fraenkel. Noted scholars such as G. P. Gooch and G. Barraclough, took issue with Vansittart's analysis of German history, while religious leaders like Reinhold Niebuhr in the United States, and the Bishop of Chichester and the Archbishop of Canterbury in Great Britain, objected to what they regarded as the moral implications of his attitude.

Long before Lord Vansittart's retirement his opponents had coined the word "Vansittartism" to describe his views. Some, apparently preferring to regard his ideas as akin to a disease, adopted the term "Vansittartitis."
These words, used interchangeably, served as the focal point of one of the most spirited, and crucial, controversies facing the British nation during the Second World War. Indeed, it is still not unusual to find vague allusions to "the doctrines of Lord Vansittart" in some of the more recent texts on German history. Unfortunately, its exact meaning has never been clearly established. Few individuals who used the term ever ventured a definition, and among those who did, confusing generalities and obvious personal emotional commitments tended to obscure understanding.

H. G. Atkins, for example, in an article in Contemporary Review, tried his hand at Vansittartitis:

"Vansittartitis is a state of mind which inevitably makes its appearance in the course of any war. It is based on the melodramatic urge to see things in pure blacks and whites. In wartime it is simpler and easier when damning your enemy to damn him completely."

This observation, although interesting and not entirely incorrect, hardly served as a satisfactory definition.

In truth there existed few better examples of "seeing things in blacks and whites" than the gratuitous use of the term "Vansittartism." More often than not it was

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merely a form of verbal abuse, freely bandied about by individuals who neither had nor sought any clear conception of what they meant by the term. Owing to the great diversity of ideas among both Vansittart's opponents and his defenders, "Vansittartism" came to mean "all things to all people." For his opponents, it often served as a vehicle for introducing views and policies which were only remotely connected with the issues which he had raised. This was especially true of British and European Socialists, most of whom were far more anxious to advance the cause of international socialism than they were to debate with Lord Vansittart. For them, "Vansittartism" was merely a convenient peg on which to hang a perfect propaganda argument. If there was any common denominator with respect to what his detractors may have thought the "doctrine" of "Vansittartism" really meant, it was the general thesis: "all Germans are the same; all Germans are Nazis." From under the broad shelter provided by this rather vague thesis, however, were hurled such diverse and generally unwarranted epithets as "anti-socialist," "anti-bolshevist," "upperclass prejudice," "the preaching of inhumane and unchristian principles," "reactionary," and above all, "racist."

11Erich Matthias, Social Demokratie und Nation (Stuttgart, 1952), p. 269.
For Vansittart's defenders, "Vansittartism" was merely "telling the truth about Germany without sentimental gloss and without a false pose of sympathy for the German people," although there was a considerable difference of opinion as to the nature of that "truth." All sorts of individuals hid under the label "Vansittartite," either by openly defending and in many cases, far exceeding the ideas set forth by the British peer, or by failing to repudiate, or dissociate themselves from, those ideas. Among the latter were many who not only accepted the general thesis that "all Germans were the same; all Germans were Nazis," but whose warped notions of the ideal punishment to be meted out to a defeated Germany ranged from sterilization to extermination.

Caught in the middle of this verbal melee was a rather bewildered, but far from docile, Lord Vansittart. For him, "Vansittartism" signified only further frustration and personal abuse—an unfortunate reminder that the "right of free expression" had its disadvantages. Although there had been a few instances during his official career when he had been the subject of attacks in the British press—notably during the furor over the Hoare-Laval agreement,

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when he had been pilloried as "The Man Behind it All," and more recently, following the publication of the Black Record broadcasts--Vansittart had for the most part enjoyed the customary immunity tendered civil servants.

Now, as the high priest of an extremely controversial set of beliefs, he found himself bitterly assailed, not only in the foreign and domestic press, but in hundreds of books, pamphlets, articles and speeches as well. All of the reckless vituperatives which had come to be equated with "Vansittartism" converged harshly and inevitably upon the person of Lord Vansittart. Thus it was freely put about that he was a racist, an anti-Bolshevik, a reactionary, an enemy of working classes, "the modern Cato crying that Carthage be destroyed," and, at best, "a sincere practitioner with bees in his bonnet." Not infrequently his detractors "represented him as saying that all Germans are steeped in sin and as implying that the only solution of the German question is to sterilize the young and massacre the old."

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13 *Mist Procession*, p. 542.


15 *New Statesman and Nation*, November 22, 1941.

Vansittart’s reactions to these charges did little to diminish the heat of the dispute over "Vansittartism." Although he personally did not approve of the term—he once called it "more suitable as a police test for alcoholism than as a slur upon political verities," he was unable, or unwilling to let the accusations and allegations go unchallenged. His first attempt to "cleanse his original doctrine from the many falsifications which . . . accrued to it," came in May, 1942, in an article in Nineteenth Century. Unfortunately, the attempt resulted more in a denial of what everyone else had said about "Vansittartism" than in a clear definition of the term itself. Eventually, as the word gained wider use and acceptance, he sometimes used it himself, but he never really established, in a positive sense, its meaning.

Adding further to the confusion was the fact that frequently the tone of Vansittart’s own language more than matched that of his accusers. In the aftermath of the Black Record broadcasts, Spectator, which was to become one of his strongest allies during the dispute, had felt it

18Nicolson, op. cit.
19Bones of Contention, p. 71.
necessary to warn him that he had "weakened his case by overstating it," and that "when it comes to the use of words, violence is not strength." 20

This was excellent advice, and Lord Vansittart would undoubtedly have been much better off had he heeded it. But during the remaining war years, and above all with respect to the German question, he was in no mood for accepting advice. His retirement had made it possible, "for the first time," to take part "in the rough and tumble of politics, instead of advising politicians." 21 An overwhelming certainty that he was "right," about "Germany, Past and Present," 22 which he had always possessed, he now combined with a new sense of urgency about what Germany would do in the future. One of the unfortunate consequences of this mixture was that all too often he would sink to the level of some of his more extreme foes by lumping them together into suggestive, but not always justified, categories like "Pan-Germans" and "The New Appeasers."

Vansittart's lamentable propensity to refer to the German people as "Huns" and "the Brazen Horde" was still

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20 *Spectator*, January 31, 1941.
21 *Bones of Contention*, p. 7.
22 "Germany, Past and Present" was a subtitle of *The Black Record*. 
another reflection of an attitude which, besides contributing to the demise of his own reputation, did much to build the legend that Vansittartism represented "a ferocious intent to wipe every last German from the earth's face." In any event, by November, 1942, the debate had become so tangled that even Kingsley Martin felt he could complain "with justification" that it was resulting "in mutual recriminations of guilt and wickedness between the disputants" and that "Vansittartite and anti-Vansittartite seem to be saying the same thing in different words." This revelation, coming as it did from one of the chief offenders, failed to change the ground rules of the controversy—least of all on the pages of the New Statesman and Nation. But it did pinpoint the primary cause for much of the confusion. The real issues involved in the controversy over "Vansittartism" were always shrouded over by a mist of heavy emotionalism, a condition for which Vansittart, because of his own predilection for "muscle-bound metaphors" and overstatement, must bear a full share of responsibility. Yet the issues themselves were of major concern not only to the citizens of Great Britain but to all the peoples of

24 New Statesman and Nation, November 14, 1942.
25 Nicolson, op. cit.
western civilization. In a general sense, the central questions raised by the disputant included affixing the responsibility for starting the Second World War, finding the best and quickest means of achieving victory over the Axis Powers, and above all, arriving at a workable peace to prevent a repetition of such a holocaust.

For Vansittart, of course, these problems were not new. He had grappled with them, in one guise or another, throughout his period of public service. Neither the previous war nor the present one had come as a surprise to him. He had predicted them; he had tried to stem the tide. Thus when the fateful eruption occurred, it merely verified and intensified attitudes which were already firmly engrained in his mind and heart.

Its more energetic language aside, one of the best insights into the basic ideas which Vansittart held at the time of his retirement was provided by The Black Record. Here he argued that the war in which Britain and the world found themselves was a "German" war, that there were elements in the national character and education of the German people which made them not only more susceptible to war, but eager participants and perpetrators of it against their neighbors. The spirit of militarism and the worship of authority, two essentials of the German tradition, were the prime motivating factors in the German assault upon
Europe. These characteristics were common not only to the Germany of the Third Reich, but to the Germany of the last two hundred years. They set the Germans apart from the rest of Europe, enabled them to commit unprecedented crimes against humanity and to instigate a series of disastrous wars.

After establishing, at least to his own satisfaction, the responsibility of the German people for the war, Vansittart proceeded to outline his own program for preventing another catastrophe. Briefly this entailed the defeat, demilitarization, occupation, and "re-education" of Germany. Also interspersed throughout the pamphlet were a few indefinite suggestions concerning the punishment of war criminals.

In his later wartime writings and speeches, as he became less concerned with determining the causes of the Second World War and began to concentrate more and more on the problem of preventing a third, Vansittart was to broaden and clarify these ideas somewhat. Occasionally, in the

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26 The "two hundred years" was apparently a variable in Vansittart's line of argument. Occasionally, when he was particularly carried away with the force of his own reasoning, he would even make allusions to what Tacitus and other ancients had said about the Germans. This naturally left him open to the accusations that he was a racist. See the discussion of this problem in the following chapter.
heat of the controversy over "Vansittartism," he, along with almost all of the other participants (and not infrequently because of them) would get side-tracked and involve himself in personalities and side-issues. But The Black Record, which had given the impetus to the debate, remained, because of its popularity and/or its notoriety, the major source book for discovering, and quoting, Vansittart's train of thought.

British and European socialists found fault with both Vansittart's analysis of the causes of the war and with his peace proposals. Typical of the basic line, although not the heightened tone, of their arguments was the book Shall Our Children Live or Die? by Victor Gollancz.27 Gollancz, who was one of Vansittart's prime enemies throughout the dispute and who published several anti-Vansittart tracts, subtitled his book "A Reply to Lord Vansittart," but it was hardly that. A much more accurate description was given by W. B. Worsley who justifiably called it "an able piece of propaganda for international socialism."28


Gollancz began by summarily dismissing Vansittart's arguments as "vulgar and ridiculous." 29 The major responsibility for the war, he reasoned, ought to fall not upon the "special" case of Germany, but upon world capitalism in general, of which Nazism and Facism with their overburdening emphasis upon heavy armaments were only the logical offshoots. Singled out for particular abuse was the "Carthaginian Peace" of 1919 which, failing "a deliberate and total change in the system, national and international, of the production of commodities," 30 had made the war inevitable. The only hope for arriving at a permanent peace for Europe, Gollancz continued, was through the mechanism of international socialism, with all participating nations as equal partners. This meant that Germany and her workers could not be held responsible for the present war, that Germany must play an important and unifying role in any post-war edifice and must not be singled out for further capitalist retribution. "Discrimination against one of the greatest of industrial peoples, for whatever reason it may be undertaken must necessarily defeat this aim." 31

29 Shall Our Children Live or Die?, p. 54.
30 Ibid., p. 19.
31 Ibid., p. 25.
Vansittart, by his severe condemnation of the German people, was providing Germany with another "war guilt" argument, and hence, was creating conditions which would make another conflagration not impossible, but inescapable.

In addition to these "doctrinal" objections, Vansittart's disinclination to admit the existence of any essential differences between the National Socialist Government and the mass of the German people also posed some very practical problems for British leftists. Not the least of these was the impression made by his ideas upon the British workers, who found in them a forceful expression of their own anti-German sentiments. This was unquestionably one of the major factors involved in leftist hostility to Vansittart—and with good reason. One indication of the extent to which such ideas had found acceptance among British workers was provided at the annual Labour Party Conference held in London in June, 1943. The Conference, according to the Manchester Guardian Weekly, "showed more feeling over 'Vansittartism' than over any other issue . . . . The vote was overwhelming—1,803,000 votes for a stiff view of the responsibility of the mass of Germans for the Nazi regime to 720,000 against."³² A minority,
led by the volatile Aneurin Bevan, angrily denounced the resolution, calling it a "victory for Vansittartism" (a sentiment which was quickly echoed by exiled officials of the German S. P. D.), but, as Vansittart later noted with satisfaction, their efforts to reverse the vote were "soundly beaten." And the British Trades Union Congress meeting the following year passed a similar declaration by an even larger majority (3,700,000).

Vansittart's impact upon the British Labour Movement, however, was not restricted merely to the rank and file. It was embarrassing enough for British leftists that H. G. Wells, long one of their intellectual heroes, should openly quarrel with the New Statesman and Nation, and especially with its temporary correspondent, Harold J. Laski. "I cannot find any open and honest justification for the outcry and misrepresentation Vansittart has occasioned," Wells complained to New Statesman editor, Kingsley Martin. "Long before the Germans heard of Vansittart, the misrepresentation of his views and motives had been sedulously digested and organized in this country

33Matthias, Social Demokrutie und Nation, p. 272.


35Ibid.
to distort the objectives of our war." Even more disconcerting, however, was the fact that some very prominent leaders of the leftist organizations also publicly subscribed to and were "engaged in working out the practical measures which . . . shall be adopted at the end of the war as the logical conclusion of Lord Vansittart's analysis." Within the Labour Party, the Secretary, Sir Walter Citrine, and the Secretary of the International Department, William Gillies, actively joined several M. P.'s in promoting his views. Frank Wolstencroft consistently used his position as President of the British Trades Union Congress to help spread Vansittart's influence, even going so far as to share the speakers' platform with him at a few union meetings. "The wisdom of Mr. Wolstencroft," praised Vansittart, "shines like sun in the natural fog of the good man's mind!"

Vansittart interpreted the support of such individuals, as well as the support he appeared to enjoy from the overwhelming majority of British workers, as proof that "the fundamental sanity of the British Left . . . is stronger than a self-appointed Intelligentsia."  

36 New Statesman and Nation, October 17, 1942.  
37 Gollancz, Shall Our Children Live or Die?, p. 5.  
38 Lessons of My Life, p. xvi.  
39 Ibid.
That "self-appointed Intelligentsia," however, was more numerous, much more active, and in better positions of influence than Vansittart found convenient. In spite of his general popularity, the majority of leftist intellectuals and party spokesmen were firmly opposed to his views and were determined to do everything in their power to discredit "Vansittartism." Thus, in addition to the general spate of anti-Vansittartite literature put out by British and European leftists, there were numerous pamphlets and journal articles aimed specifically at offsetting Vansittart's influence within the Labour Movement.\(^4\) One of the highlights of this campaign was the so-called "Cove Manifesto." Concocted in 1943 by Labour M. F., W. G. Cove, with the help of Victor Gollancz, J. B. Priestly and G. D. H. Cole, the manifesto purported to be a "counterblast to Vansittartism in the Labour Movement."\(^1\) Unfortunately, like so many of the "attacks" made on Vansittart during the war, the manifesto was not directly concerned with the


\(^1\) Sandison, "Vansittart and the Labour Movement."
issues he had raised. Its major recommendation was for the establishment of a "Socialist Britain" which was to be part of the "United Socialist States of Europe," which, in turn, was to branch out into the "Socialist Commonwealth of the World."

Such diatribes, however valuable they may have been as propaganda, did little to weaken the attraction which Vansittart's ideas had for most British workers. In fact, he continued to enjoy their support throughout the war years. Indicative of the general failure of his leftist opponents to heal the internal wounds opened during the dispute over "Vansittartism" were the "Fourteen Points" promoted late in the war by European Socialists. In March, 1945, The Economist noted that the "Fourteen Points"

... paid tribute to the spirit of the times... [They] have repeated many of the provisions for a "harsh peace" which are familiar in other political documents dealing with the issue. This is quite understandable because the "14 Points" had to be accepted by the adherents of two orthodoxies which compete inside the Labour Movement. The Orthodox Vansittartites and the Orthodox Marxian Socialists.42

Another practical problem confronting the British Left was the effect which the popularizing of Lord Vansittart's ideas was having, and would have, upon the

42The Economist, March 10, 1945.
German people. The "coming German Revolution" was an integral part of almost all leftist literature during the war. Its proponents viewed the overthrow of the Hitler regime from within as a necessary preliminary to the implementation of their dreams for post-war Europe. "Unless the German people themselves overthrow their militarists, junkers, and industrialists by means of a democratic (... socialist) revolution," asserted Victor Gollancz, "the terrible lessons of the past will be repeated. The whole of modern German history proves that the German people will win freedom only if they win it FOR THEMSELVES by the conquest of power. It cannot be won for them or 'granted' to them."43

Many leftists, especially German Social Democratic emigres, went beyond a mere recognition that a German Revolution was necessary, and took the view that it was inevitable. Not at all untypical was the Labourite peer, Lord Wedgewood, who blithely assured fellow members of the House of Lords that he was not worried about what would happen to Germany after the war, nor about whether or not the Allies would be able to prevent the Germans from doing the same thing again, "because I know, and everybody knows

43Shall Our Children Live or Die?, p. 33.
that this war can only end by revolution in Germany. This time it will not stop short."\textsuperscript{44}

Vansittart's massive and seemingly successful effort to convince the British people of the general responsibility of the German nation for the "Pentecost of Calamity" which now visited them, as well as his insistence that all "War Criminals," not merely members of the Nazi elite, be subject to severe punishment at the war's end, was regarded by advocates of the German Revolution as "a vindictive and reactionary policy towards the German working class."\textsuperscript{45} If this philosophy should ever achieve general acceptance among the peoples of the Allied camp, they argued, and if the German worker, the mainstay of the coming revolution, should ever become convinced that in the event of an Allied victory he would be regarded and treated no differently than the most active and notorious members of the Nazi party, his own will to resist as well as the success of his efforts to win-over other adherents to the anti-Nazi cause would be severely diminished.

Carrying this argument one step further, Gollancz insisted that "the Vansittart campaign," in addition to its deleterious effect upon the German Revolution, "must also have the

\textsuperscript{44}122, \textit{H L Deb.}, 58, 1177.

\textsuperscript{45}\textit{Bones of Contention}, p. 43.
effect of prolonging the war, and thus of adding perhaps millions to the killed, the tortured and maimed.\textsuperscript{46} The spectre of another Treaty of Versailles, however imaginary may have been its faults and injustices (and for the British and European Left, these seemed quite real), loomed ominously large to a German citizenry well-schooled in the "harsh peace" propaganda of the inter-war period. The leaders of the Nazi Government could easily exploit this fear, and thus Vansittart's whole analysis, by telling the German people: "You have made yourselves so permanently detested by your crimes that if you lose this war, you will be annihilated—so do everything, however foul, to prevent defeat."\textsuperscript{47}

To support his arguments, Gollancz pointed out that Nazi Propaganda Minister, Josef Goebbels had already made frequent use of Vansittart's writings. The charge was not new. It was to be found in editorials and letters-to-the-editor columns of most British journals and newspapers throughout the war period, and it was an accusation to which Vansittart was particularly sensitive since he prided himself on a long career devoted to blocking, not assisting, German aggression. At one point Kingsley

\textsuperscript{46}Shall Our Children Live or Die?, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., p. 95.
Martin even claimed that he could quote for Vansittart

... with dates if he wants, the frequent use
Dr. Goebbels has made of his writing. Dr.
Goebbels of course makes use of many types
of publications, but the point he emphasizes
about Vansittart is unique. He quotes him as
proof that official circles intend the
destruction of Germany ... Now comes the
final test. Black Record has been translated
into German and widely distributed by Dr.
Goebbels as propaganda in Germany.48

Vansittart issued an immediate challenge to the New States-
man and Nation to prove their allegations or make a public
apology. Eventually the editors of New Statesman did
rescind, but it was not because their information was
inaccurate.49

Taken at face value the evidence is far from
flattering to Vansittart. Not only were his more trenchant
statements widely publicised in Germany, but the walls of
most of the larger German cities were plastered with posters
containing excerpts from The Black Record.50 In his Diaries,

48 New Statesman and Nation, July 4, 1942.

49 The circumstances surrounding the New Statesman:
withdrawal suggest possible government interference. The
apparent source of Kingsley Martin's information was the
Czech Government in exile. When Martin asked Edward Beneš
for permission to divulge the source, however, the Czech
president denied any knowledge of the matter. See Edward
36.

50 Robert Bruce Lockhart, Comes the Reckoning
Goebbels records his extreme satisfaction over the writings of the British lord, calling them "grist for our propaganda mill." On another occasion, after one of Vansittart's speeches in the House of Lords (May, 1942), Goebbels stated his intention to "move heaven and earth to obtain the text, for undoubtedly it will be of tremendous value for our domestic propaganda." And a year later (April 24, 1943), in what is probably the most embarrassing statement about Vansittart on record, the Nazi propaganda chief wrote:

This fellow Vansittart is really worth his weight in gold to our propaganda. After the war a monument ought to be erected to him somewhere in Germany with the inscription "To the Englishman who rendered the greatest service to the German cause during the war."

Since 1945, numerous commentators have attempted to create a cause-effect relationship between the propagation of Vansittart's (and similar) ideas in Germany and the almost total failure of the German Revolution to materialize. This line of thought has been most fully developed in several studies of the resistance movement in Germany, a great many of which have been undertaken by German apologists. Supporting evidence has come from the

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54 See, for example, Hans Rothfels, *The German Opposition to Hitler* (Chicago, 1962) and Ritter, *op.cit.*
scattered records left behind by some of the known opposition figures, and from the post-war accounts of individuals who either claim to have been involved in opposition activities or who profess to be familiar with those activities but who were not themselves participants.

Illustrative of the first type was the diary of conspirator and former German Ambassador to Rome, Ulrich von Hassell. As early as February, 1940, von Hassell, with Vansittart in mind, complained that "the process of identifying the Nazi regime with all of Germany is persistently gaining ground." Among the more prominent resistance figures known to have survived the war, Erich Kordt and H. B. Gisevius are not unique in citing the anti-German attitude adopted, or at least not repudiated, by leading allied statesmen as one of the major factors inhibiting wide-scale opposition to the Nazi Government. This sentiment has also been given rather vigorous support by private persons like Baron Hans Christoph von Stauffenberg, who was on intimate terms with several of the leaders of the "July Plot" of 1944, and who claims to have heard one of them complain: "What is the matter with


this fellow Vansittart? Doesn't he realize that he is interfering with our efforts?"58

While the emphasis has not always been the same—too many authors have obviously been more concerned with defending or discrediting a particular ideology such as "Capitalism" or "Bolshevism" than with discerning the actual reasons for the failure of a large scale German revolution—acceptance of the thesis that the propagation of Vansittart's views by Goebbels acted as a major deterrent upon the potential "Allies inside Germany" has been a mark of quite a few other post-war analyses and general histories. This is especially true of those studies devoted to an examination of the problems of psychological warfare in Great Britain and Germany.

In one of the most recent and most thorough studies of Nazi propaganda,59 Ernest K. Breasted has discerned two major tendencies in German domestic propaganda after the year 1942. The first, Vergeltung (retaliation), was directed at the Allied Nations as well as the German people

58Interview with the author, May 17, 1965. Von Stauffenberg was not a close relative of the famous Graf Klaus von Stauffenburg who made the attempt on Hitler's life in July 1944.

and was no more than a continuation of the form of propa-
ganda which had been consistently propounded by Goebbels
since the beginning of the war. Its central theme was
that the German nation and her military forces were
fighting a defensive war against British, and later
Bolshevist, imperialism, but that through the strength
of her arms and the justice of her cause, she would emerge
victorious.

The German failure to win the Battle of Britain
undermined the effectiveness of this propaganda line
somewhat, but it continued to be the dominant theme until
late 1942. Then, an accumulation of military setbacks,
beginning with the opening of a British counter-offensive
in North Africa (which culminated in the defeat of General
Rommel at El Alamein on November 22), and made more serious
by the simultaneous invasion of French North Africa by
an Anglo-American force, began to make deep inroads into
the morale of the German military and civilian ranks.

Any vestiges of truth which the myth of the
invincibility of their armies may have contained for the
German people were brutally eliminated by the decisive
Russian victory at Stalingrad in February, 1943. According
to Professor Bramsted, Stalingrad marked a crucial change
in the tenor and motif of Nazi propaganda. From 1943 until
the end of the war, Goebbels conducted a two-pronged
propaganda campaign. On the one hand, he retained the theme of Vergeltung, hoping thereby to bolster the flagging spirit of the German soldier, while on the other, he took a page from the book of Winston Churchill by introducing on a wide scale a "propaganda of pessimism," which British psychological warfare experts subsequently termed "strength through fear." The latter approach was an attempt to mobilize the German citizenry behind the war effort, to stiffen their crumbling morale, and to establish their close identity with the philosophies and the fortunes of the Nazi regime by impregnating their collective mind with a deep-seated fear "of what the Russians and the English would do to them should they win."

It was indeed possible, as Victor Gollancz had argued in Shall Our Children Live or Die? to "play into the hands of this type of propaganda." Any intransigent utterance made by a prominent Allied statesman concerning the "national character" of the German people, any attempt to minimize the differences between "Nazism" and "Germany" and more importantly, any harsh comment concerning the terms which would, or ought to be, imposed upon a defeated

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Germany, was potential grist for Goebbels's "mill."

Seen in this light, the anti-German writings and speeches of Lord Vansittart, perhaps better than those of any Allied spokesman (with the possible exception of Ilya Ehrenburg, the noted Russian novelist and war correspondent whose statements, according to Vansittart, "exceeded anything in The Black Record! 63) met the requirements of a "strength through fear" propaganda approach.

Thus, Professor Bramsted's study would seem to lend factual, if unintentional, support to the purely personal opinions of individuals like the editor of The Goebbels Diaries, Louis Lochner. After noting that the Nazi Propaganda Minister "consistently held that it was a psychological mistake for Vansittart and his followers to make no distinction between the Nazis and other Germans," 64 Lochner concluded with the astute observation that "Goebbels, after all, knew something about the psychology of the German people." 65 The American journalist Howard K. Smith, whose war-time suggestions concerning the nature of the eventual peace terms had drawn Vansittart's fire, also takes this approach.

63125, H L Deb, 5s, 553.
64The Goebbels Diaries, p. 139.
65Ibid, p. 144.
"Mercifully," writes Smith, "we have the authority of Goebbels as to who was right."66

Unfortunately, the "authority of Goebbels," however plausible or convenient it may appear to Vansittart's detractors, is not sufficient proof of the validity of this argument. While there is no disputing the fact that Goebbels often used Vansittart's material, or that he believed it to be effective in his campaign to unite the German people behind the Nazi Government, this does not at all establish that such was actually the case. Just as logical, and probably much more justifiable, is the contention that fear of Nazi reprisal in the event of failure was the major factor preventing a German revolution. But this also is mere conjecture. It may even be legitimately questioned whether any barrage of statements by prominent allied statesmen, no matter how pacific their tone, could have succeeded in breaking down German morale, and especially to the point of social revolution. The only certainty, however unpalatable this fact may be for defenders of the German resistance movement, is that "for whichever reason or combination of reasons, the Germans did not surrender until they were physically incapable of continuing resistance."67

It is doubtful that their determination to fight on can be attributed even largely to the exploitation of the views of Lord Vansittart. In the first place, Vansittart was himself only one, and then perhaps not even the most prominent, part of a great melange of elements which are supposed to have combined to prevent the German people from rising against the Nazis. Among the other major ingredients were, in addition to the aforementioned Ilya Ehrenburg, the Morgenthau Plan, the insistence of the Allied Governments upon "Unconditional Surrender," and the so-called "Kaufmann-Roosevelt proposal." With the exception of the last named, each of these other elements was cited fully as often, if not more often, than Vansittart.

As for the influence which a steady diet of these propaganda items might have had upon the German people, it should also be noted that fear of Russia must have played an infinitely greater role. This fact has been emphasized in numerous examinations of German war psychology, including Professor Bramsted's analysis of Nazi propaganda, and is amply supported by the "authority of

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68 In his book, Germany Must Perish (New York, 1941), Theodore N. Kaufmann, a Jewish American, bitterly demanded that at the war's end, all Germans be sterilized. German propagandist frequently attempted to link Kaufmann's proposal and the official war aims of United States President, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

69 Bramsted, p. 327.
Goebbels": "There is no more terrible prospect for the German people than to fall into the hands of Bolshevism."\(^7\)

Another, rather obvious, fact to be considered in evaluating the accusations against Vansittart is that when it comes to propaganda, truth has never been a necessary corollary to effectiveness. Certainly Goebbels could have manufactured whatever propaganda materials he wished, and then attributed them to Vansittart or to any other Allied individuals. Even Vansittart's most implacable opponents could not fail to notice, along with a reluctant Lord Farringdon, that "very often entirely false statements are attributed to British speakers who address themselves to Germany in order that Goebbels might have the pleasure of denying those statements."\(^7\)

A good example of this technique, without Dr. Goebbels' denial, was provided by the reaction of German propagandists to Lord Vansittart's maiden speech in the House of Lords.\(^7\) In his speech, Vansittart had registered strong disapproval of the use of enemy aliens in British foreign propaganda. On the following day, March 20, 1942,

\(^7\)The Goebbels Diaries, p. 511.

\(^7\)H L Deb, 5s., 326.

\(^7\)Ibid., 309-19.
German newspapers and radio broadcasts, both domestic and foreign, dutifully reported:

Commenting on the fact that English propaganda is now placed under the control of the anti-Jewish Foreign Office, Lord Vansittart said in London that the measure had been taken to free British propaganda from the influence of the Jewish emigres from all parts of Europe.\(^{73}\)

Goebbels frequently combined such blatant inaccuracies with another indispensable tool of the good propagandist—a careful job of editing. Undoubtedly, with Vansittart's penchant for overstatement, these techniques were not always necessary. Nevertheless, the fact that they were used at all should be considered before accepting the notion that he was "playing the part of caddy boy to Dr. Goebbels."\(^{74}\)

Too often, what German propagandists were able to "exploit" were not the actual writings and speeches of Vansittart but rather mere excerpts from them, skillfully chosen to distort or pervert his meaning.

It is also important to establish the exact point at which Goebbels began to publicize the views of Vansittart.

\(^{73}\)BBC Monitoring Service, Monitoring Reports: (March 1942), In Flemish for Belgium (London, 1943). See also the reports in German, French and Italian.

\(^{74}\)Heinrich Fraenkel, Vansittart: Gift for Goebbels (London, 1941), as cited in New Statesman and Nation, July 12, 1941.
The first suggestions along these lines to appear in the British press occurred as early as January, 1941, shortly after the "Black Record" broadcasts were made available as a pamphlet. Yet, according to the pattern outlined by Bramsted and accepted by most students of German propaganda, "strength through fear" did not become a major theme of German psychological warfare until after Stalingrad. This would seem to indicate that these early complaints had little or not basis in fact. An examination reveals that this was apparently the case. Most of them came from private citizens who, while they had no evidence to support their contentions, were nevertheless genuinely concerned over the possibility that Vansittart's pamphlets might prove useful to Nazi propagandists.75

It was not long, however, before such suggestions became firm accusations. Thus in March, 1941, New Statesman editor Kingsley Martin revealed that his journal had made inquiries concerning the use made of Vansittart's pamphlet in German propaganda and "we are informed that it was exploited by Dr. Goebbels both when Sir Robert's article appeared in the Sunday Times and when the pamphlet was published."76 The results of the New Statesman's "inquiries"

75See E. Amy Buller, "Black Record as Propaganda," Spectator, January 31, 1941; The Times, February 25, 1941.
76New Statesman and Nation, March 15, 1941.
might have proved more effective if Martin had been more specific with regard to his sources of information. More than likely it was furnished by German exiles who resided in London in great numbers during the war, and who were fully as eager as British socialists to discredit the views of Vansittart.

Regardless of their respective motives, it is not inconceivable that even at this early date Martin was telling the truth. In the first stages of the war, the great successes of the German military had precluded the necessity for introducing a pessimistic note into German domestic propaganda. By December, 1940, (the time of the Black Record broadcasts), however, Great Britain had already survived the worst of the aerial Blitzkrieg. There now loomed a distinct possibility that despite Goebbels' and the Fuehrer's frequent boasts to the contrary, Germany might suffer her first military setback. While the Battle of Britain was not over--there remained one more major air assault (May, 1941)--the Nazi Propaganda Minister may very well have begun to anticipate the possibility of defeat, and in order to prepare the German people for such an eventuality, he may have introduced material like The Black Record. As long as the final issue above Britain remained in doubt, however, it seems unlikely that Goebbels would have placed too much emphasis upon this propaganda line.
Even the conclusion of the Battle of Britain did not force a noticeable change in German domestic propaganda since, for the most part, Goebbels was able to play down the fact that Britain had survived the massive air assault by emphasizing the dangers and opportunities presented by the opening of the Russian campaign. In the early months of the Russian offensive, the tone of Nazi propaganda remained essentially optimistic. German military successes received the most attention, often accompanied by the frenzied predictions of the Fuehrer or his chief aides. There was little evidence of the general defensive-ness which Bramsted says dominated German propaganda during the last two years of the war. Goebbels continued "pronouncing the impending doom of England and boosting the furor teutonicus as an aggressive force."

The first winter in Russia, however, proved decisive in changing this theme. A major Soviet counter-offensive inflicted heavy losses upon the German army and, with the assistance of a particularly severe climate, forced their retreat. Germany now encountered what Hitler later referred to as "the first crisis of the war." Nowhere was the full impact of this "crisis" better reflected

77Bramsted, p. 425.

78Ernst Kris and Hans Spier, German Radio Propa-
than in the change which occurred in Nazi propaganda, characterized by one observer as "a travesty of epic poetry." 79

Goebbels himself set the tone of the new propaganda approach with an article in Das Reich in which he argued that if Germany won the war "we have won everything; if we lose it, our whole national life will be lost." 80 In the following months, German propagandists came to rely more and more upon this theme, a fact which did not escape the attention of British psychological warfare experts. Thus the Ministry of Information, in a commonwealth overseas bulletin dated April, 1942, presented a convincing array of quotations from prominent Nazi leaders, including Hitler and Goebbels, in support of its contention that "a new note, a note of warning, of something like desperation, has been beginning to sound in the speeches and broadcasts made to the German people." 81 And a month later, the London Times, in a lead editorial entitled "Civilian Germany," spoke of "a great change in German propaganda," which aimed at convincing the German people that the only alternative to


81Ibid., April 1942.
National Socialism was "national annihilation" at the hands of the Allied Nations. 82

Vansittart's critics also took notice of the shift in German propaganda techniques, and the accusations concerning the use of his writings by Goebbels (which had been rather steadily applied ever since the "Black Record" broadcasts) increased markedly. The pattern of Vansittart's reactions to these charges is instructive. So long as he was still a civil servant, he was powerless to reply to the growing body of criticism, or even to acknowledge, publicly at least, the not inconsiderable measure of support occasioned by first the delivery, and then the publication, of his radio addresses. Shortly after his retirement, however, he took advantage of his newly-acquired "right to speak," by authoring a second pamphlet, Roots of the Trouble (London, 1941), in which he attempted to reinforce and defend the issues raised in Black Record. In this pamphlet, published in November, the British lord displayed the same vitriolic flair which had marked his earlier effort, reserving some of his most pungent language for the dispute which had arisen over the purported use of his writings in German propaganda. He brought the controversy full circle by declaring that Goebbels, "through the mouths of some

82 The Times, May 8, 1942.
German emigres and their echoes," was only playing the old teutonic game of trying to discredit anyone who knew the truth concerning Germany's warlike intentions.

The Doctor is telling them that by telling you the truth about Germany, I am uniting her. Strange rubbish to be swallowed and regurgitated! The Doctor and his gang have made no effective play with my exposure of German ways because they cannot. If you have shown up a man for cheating at cards, there is nothing that he can do but abuse you. That is precisely all the Doctor has been able to do with me, and my critics have supported him.83

Such evasiveness hardly served to silence those critics, although in fairness to Vansittart (at least on the basis of the sources consulted for the present study) there is no solid evidence that Goebbels was publicizing his views at this juncture. Certainly such exploitation, if it did take place, was done on a very minor scale and would have been more than offset by the general optimism which, as has been indicated, characterized Nazi propaganda until December, 1941. Nevertheless, the accusations continued, and even the Government appeared sensitive to them when, in a broadcast to Germany in February, 1942, a BBC announcer (who was, incidentally, a German refugee) dismissed Vansittart as "an ordinary private individual with whose views the British Government were not in sympathy at all."84

83Roots of the Trouble, p. 141.
84122 H L Deb, 5s, 304.
This particular broadcast moved Vansittart to deliver his first speech in the House of Lords, a charged oration on the general topic "Enemy Aliens and Propaganda." In what was described by Minister of Economic Warfare, Lord Selbourne, as "a very brilliant maiden speech," the former "Chief Diplomatic Advisor" vigorously protested against the activities of those German exiles who, on the basis of their own alleged opposition to Hitler, were promoting throughout Britain the "legend" of the German Revolution. "The combination of German Socialism plus anti-Nazism," he told his listeners, "is nothing like an adequate guarantee of security or reliability, either now or in the future." The British nation was fighting for its very existence, as it had in World War I. By emphasizing the probability of a revolution in Germany, he argued, these ex-German nationals were potentially contributing to a weakening of the resolve of the British people to see the struggle through to an "Allied" victory. To believe in a German revolution was to run the risk of losing the war since such a belief tended to obscure a very crucial fact:

The great bulk—not the whole but the great bulk—of the German nation—and please note, my Lords, I do not say race—has developed in the last three or four generations into a nation of fierce, organized and savage oppressors bent on the total destruction of this country. Twice they have tried that, and this time they are nearer success than ever. I think it is obvious from that that to be Anti-Nazi

85Ibid., 310.
is part of our concern, but it is only a part, and it will be fatal to our chances of survival if we mistake the part for the whole.  

The reactions of his audience were mixed. All seemed agreed that Vansittart's speech was "admirably enunciated and expressed," but his future opponents in the House quickly identified themselves. The most serious criticism was levelled by Lord Noel-Buxton, who linked Vansittart with a campaign of hate ... which can be described by German broadcasters, if not as the voice of our Government, still as representing in reality the view of our Government. It is a fact that that argument is constantly used by Goebbels as anyone can tell who cares to listen to the German broadcasts.

The most important reaction did indeed come from German broadcasters. Vansittart's speech was widely, although inaccurately, cited by German propagandists as proof that official circles in Great Britain contemplated as the only satisfactory means of concluding the war the total destruction of Germany. It was also at this point that Goebbels first mentioned Vansittart in his Diaries, calling the speech "grist for our propaganda mill."

This would seem to suggest that the "mill" was already established and in good working order prior to March, 1942.

86 Ibid., 317.
87 Ibid., 319.
In any event, the practice of quoting Lord Vansittart was fairly common after this time and was to be a minor feature of German propaganda right up until the final collapse of the regime in 1945.

Perhaps Professor Bramsted is correct in asserting that "strength through fear" did not become the dominant theme in German propaganda until after Stalingrad. Nevertheless, such assertions should be tempered by a realization that this line had been rather consistently utilized by Goebbels for almost a full year prior to that catastrophe. The significance of this fact for purposes of the present study is twofold. First, the early accusations concerning Goebbels' use of Vansittart's utterances, while they may not have been inaccurate, were certainly blown out of proportion and were not consistent with either the major themes of Nazi propaganda or the fortunes of the German military effort. Second, many of the individuals who criticized Vansittart along these lines during 1942 (notably Gollancz and Kingsley Martin) did have considerable evidence available to support their contentions that (a) Goebbels was publicizing his attitudes and (b), there was a definite attempt on the part of German propagandists to relate these attitudes to the official "war aims" of the British Government.
At the same time, the pattern of Lord Vansittart's responses to these accusations throughout 1942 would seem to indicate that, he was either largely unaware, or unwilling to acknowledge the extent of the exploitation of his views. On the other hand, he was genuinely unconvinced with respect to the effectiveness of such exploitation.

For example, in June, 1942, he gave a second major speech in the House of Lords in which he not only defended the Treaty of Versailles but suggested that in certain respects, notably the punishment of war criminals, the treaty concluding the present war would be even more severe. Unfortunately, he chose for his speech a time when many Englishmen were convinced it was possible to perpetrate revolution in Germany by addressing a more conciliatory propaganda to her dissatisfied citizens. The Germanophile Duke of Bedford argued that Vansittart had "shown singularly poor judgement with regard to the time he selected for threatening the German people with vengeance disguised as justice. Will he never learn . . . that it is not exactly a good plan to inform the bear you have not yet killed what you mean to do with his skin?"88

This sentiment was reinforced by Lord Ponsonby who accused Vansittart of "fourth form political war strategy:"

88Ibid., 1161.
I have seen that Goebbels has been quoting the noble Lord, Lord Vansittart, and I emphasize that when appeals have to be made to the Home Front in Germany because their leaders are very frightened that they are not going to be able to keep up the extraordinary toughness they have shown hitherto, it is regrettable that someone here should prophesy about the sort of treaty they are going to get.89

In replying to such criticism, Vansittart like so many of the disputants in the controversy over his views, almost completely skirted the issue of a "German Revolution." Instead, he dealt (no doubt with considerable relish in view of that Lord's previous inflammatory attacks against him) with Ponsonby's accusation of "fourth form diplomacy."

My noble friend Lord Ponsonby . . . will not take it amiss if crack for crack, I remind him that he was also in my service and never got beyond the third form. I was not only in the sixth form but I was head of the school for eight years. I have no doubt my noble friend thinks that I had no business in the sixth and that I was a rotten head of the school. He is quite free to hold that opinion, but there are the facts all the same.90

At least as late as October, 1942, when he successfully challenged the New Statesman and Nation to either prove their allegations concerning the exploitation of the Black Record in Germany or issue a public apology, Vansittart appears to have "blacked the evidence." But he could not do so indefinitely, and in February, 1943, he

89 Ibid., 1165.
90 Ibid., 1185-86.
met the issue head on in a lively House of Lords debate. In this speech and in subsequent speeches and writings, he not only defended his own views, but affirmed that those views should be endorsed by the British Government as part of its official propaganda approach. "I ask two things. I ask that henceforth the consideration of the interests of the victims should be the main, though of course not the only, criterion of our broadcasting in German, and secondly, I ask that we should drop conciliation until the Germans drop atrocities."  

In line with the first request, Vansittart advocated that the Government cut down on the amount of time allotted for broadcasts to Germany and transfer some of it for transmission to the occupied countries. Future broadcasts to the Nazi state, he said, should be brief, highly concentrated and much more vigorous. He deplored the tendency of making separate appeals to different segments of the German population and urged a single, regularly-scheduled broadcast for all Germans. Finally, he registered strong disapproval over the use of German exiles in British propaganda, calling it "fantastic in wartime." The BBC employed some 44 emigres, mostly for purposes of translation and propaganda.

91125, H L Deb. 5s, 1066.
The plain fact is that a good deal of our broadcasting, particularly our broadcasting in German, whatever its merits in other directions, is out of touch and sympathy with the occupied countries. I think the reason for that is that the voices are so often those of men with no feeling against Germany.  

With respect to German war atrocities, Vansittart looked back to the last years of the first World War when, as Head of the Prisoners of War Department, his desk was flooded by reports of the activities of the German Army in retreat. Now, as President of the Prisoners of War Relatives Association, he was determined that this tendency should not recur. He proposed, therefore, just as he had during World War I, that the British Government maintain and publicize lists of war criminals, while at the same time making it quite clear what kind of treatment such individuals could expect when the war ended.

We should long since have been driving at the German people the truth that the price of atrocity rises and that it was very vital in their interests to prevent it from rising further. Our propaganda, on the contrary, has always tended to reassure the Germans by telling them that only identified individuals will be brought to book.  

Such a propaganda approach, Vansittart insisted, had numerous advantages over the one then in existence.

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92 ibid., 1064.
93 ibid., 1060.
With respect to Britain's allies, as well as for her own citizens, it would have the effect of reconfirming both the depth of her commitment and her determination to see the struggle through to the point where victory would make another such catastrophe impossible. And it would be especially welcome to the peoples of neutral and Axis-occupied countries. In this connection, he noted that he had received protests on behalf of "hundreds and thousands of our martyred Allies who understand German." Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this approach had a double benefit with respect to Germany. On the one hand, it would give assurances to those few legitimate "Allies inside Germany" that at last the truth about the Nazis and the whole German tradition would be known to both the Allied and the German peoples. This was precisely the view taken by those German exiles in England who supported Vansittart. On the other hand this type of propaganda could help to convince the German people that

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94 Ibid., 1062. Vansittart cited numerous examples of such protests in his books and articles. See for example, Bones of Contention, pp. 33-5. One Allied leader who apparently agreed with Vansittart on this matter was Franklin D. Roosevelt. In November 1941, he suggested to his Co-ordinator of Information, Colonel J. Donovan, that Black Record, minus its "more British and British Empire sentences and paragraphs," could "be used with great effect . . . in this country." Elliot Roosevelt, ed., F.D.R.--His Personal Letters 1928-1945, Volume II (New York, 1950), pp. 1234-35.

95 Geyer and Loeb, p. 66.
theirs was a "fusion with a corpse," that the Allied nations were determined to fight until Germany was defeated, and that the sooner they dissociated themselves from the Nazi regime the sooner would be its collapse and, hence, the safer they would be from Allied punishment and retribution.

Tell them that the remedy is in their own hands, and that it is not a very difficult one; but tell them, too, that retribution—the lady with the limp—is not class conscious, and will not recoil before numbers, however great, if really guilty. Tell them every night that if they lie awake they can hear her footfall in the darkened streets, and tell them the addresses at which she will call. Tell them what their fellows and friends and relatives have been doing in every country, great and small, from Russia to Luxemburg.\(^{96}\)

By way of support for this "shock" technique, Vansittart quoted Samuel Johnson: "Depend upon it, Sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight it concentrates his mind wonderfully." "And what is true of two weeks is true of two months or two years, provided a man knows that it is a dead certainty that he is going to be hanged."\(^{97}\)

The severity of Vansittart's attack upon the existing propaganda system only added this to the growing list of controversies in which he was embroiled. His leftist detractors in particular repeated their earlier assertions

\(^{96}\)HL Deb. 5s, 1067.

\(^{97}\)Ibid.
that his tirades would strengthen rather than weaken the bond between Hitlerism and the mass of the German people, and they expressed concern lest other nations gain the "false" impression that the British Government shared his "anti-Germanism."

The key to the problem of British propaganda to Germany, and in many respects to the entire war-time controversy set in motion around Lord Vansittart, turned on the question of whether there existed within the confines of the Third Reich a sufficient number of "decent" citizens who, if encouraged by the Allied Nations, could be trusted to rise up and depose the Nazis.

Known variously as the problem of the "Two German­ies;" the "Good versus the Bad Germans;" the "German Opposition;" the "Other Germany," it was a question on which the entire nation, including the members of the Coalition Government and both houses of Parliament, was seriously divided. It was, for the greater part of the war, an individual matter, a question of personal emotions temporarily eclipsing party loyalties. And, as has been previously indicated, nowhere was this truer than within the ranks of the Labour Movement.

Vansittart's own view of the "Allies inside Germany," which he repeated over and over in his writings and speeches, should have been clear enough. Based upon the dealings
he had had with opposition figures both prior to and during the war, and firm in his conviction that Hitler would never have been able to perpetrate the tragedy but for the support he received from the overwhelming mass of the German people, he warned against the "pursuit of conciliatory phantoms." 98 The essential question, so far as he was concerned, was not whether there existed an "other Germany," but how powerful was it? "The peaceful and civilized elements which undoubtedly exist and always existed in Germany," he told Erica Mann, daughter of the famous novelist-in-exile, "are not, and never have been capable of exercising any moderating influence. To rely on them, and again stake the fate of humanity on their ability suddenly to acquire such influence would be suicidal." 99

As for the likelihood of a German revolution, Vansittart predicted that there would be no serious attempts along these lines until it became obvious that Germany would lose the war. Then there would be a mass effort to dissociate from Nazism "101 per cent of the German populace." 100

98 bones of contention, p. 36.

99 Erika Mann, "In Defense of Vansittart," Nation, March 11, 1944. Indicative of the consistency of Vansittart's thought on this crucial issue are the following: Black Record p. 88; Roots of the Trouble, pp. 109-10; Lessons of My Life, p. xvii; Bones of Contention, p. 22.

100 Deb. 5s, 553.
In Shall Our Children Live or Die? Victor Gollancz suggested that one of the reasons for Vansittart's hostility towards the "Other Germany" was that he did not want a German Revolution.101

This appears to have been the case. In Roots of the Trouble, for example, he queried: "Besides, what sort of revolution do you want? Communist? Militarist? A combination of the two, which is also possible? None of these? So what? . . . Revolution may not be the happiest beginning any how without a thorough re-education of the German people/"102

In subsequent books and articles, Vansittart attempted to show that there were no prominent groups in German society which, even if successful in overturning the Nazis, could be trusted to renounce all dreams of racial superiority and domination. The "Opposition" he dismissed as small in numbers, suspect in motivation, and ineffectual. The German Right (the "business as usual crowd") were "undoubtedly the bloodiest men who have ever defiled the earth, and I insist upon their being liquidated as a political party or force."103 The German Left, in

102Roots of the Trouble, p. 113.
103Bones of Contention, pp. 42-3.
view of "its tricky and ignominious record" during the Weimar period and afterwards, was likewise undependable. And the German workers, the fount of any leftist-oriented revolution, who "open eyed, have made the weapons for both these wars," had not proven "more refractory in matters of war and nationalism, nor less submissive than their compatriots in matters of democracy and freedom."

During the last two years of the war, Vansittart was so worried about what he thought was "a concerted German effort to dodge responsibility, organize sympathy, and 'salvage Germany' by a soft peace that would permit a third German bid of domination," that he came out openly against a German revolution.

We have had enough of delusions. We must do the job ourselves, and present a firm front to all those, irrespective of party, who may demur. The German Octopus is not killed but only scratched. If we do not finish it off, it will finish us.

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104 Ibid., p. 43.
108 *The German Octopus*, p. 43. See also *Bones of Contention*, p. 36; and Vansittart's letter, printed in *New Statesman and Nation*, June 29, 1946.
He received a great deal of unexpected support on this point from Curt Geyer and Walter Loeb, two former SPD officials who were the leaders of a small organization of German exiles in London, the "Fight for Freedom Group."

In 1941, Geyer and Loeb took it upon themselves to answer the question raised by Gollancz in his *Shall Our Children Live or Die?* by authoring the first in a series of "Vansittartite" tracts, *Gollancz in German Wonderland*. The basic argument of Geyer and Loeb was that there would be no revolution in Germany because the preconditions for such an uprising were missing: the German people had to be reeducated.

We have reached the conclusion that in his main findings Lord Vansittart is right. His analysis of the spirit of the German people is based on facts. It corresponds with what a life struggle against German militarism has taught us. Mr. Gollancz has in fact invented a German wonderland for himself.  

It would be useful at this point to consider the actual pattern of British propaganda to Germany during World War II. Prior to 1939, British political warfare was almost nonexistant. Consequently, in the early stages of the war, there was no clear-cut official attitude towards Germany, although there was a pronounced tendency.

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109 *Gollancz in German Wonderland*, p. 60. For information on the "Fight for Freedom" group, see Matthias, *op. cit.*, and Lewis Edinger, *German Exile Politics* (Berkeley, 1956).
"reflecting perhaps the general trend of British public opinion,"\textsuperscript{110} to acknowledge a distinction between the National Socialist Government and the bulk of Germans. It was hoped, as shown by the oft-repeated slogan of the first year "Peace with the German people, certainly, peace with the Nazis, never,"--that many Germans would "join the struggle against the common enemy."\textsuperscript{111}

Such hopes were quickly dashed by the Battle of Britain, as a result of which the great majority of the British electorate became convinced that, regardless of the strength of the personal convictions of individual Germans regarding the Nazi philosophy, England was indeed "fighting for her very existence." The Government in its foreign propaganda revealed the same attitude. For the remainder of the war, the "official" propaganda approach recommended by the British Government towards Germany tended to emphasize the general responsibility of the German people "for what the Nazis had done, and were still doing, in their name."\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{110}Bramsted, p. 310.

\textsuperscript{111}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}

It would appear that the fears of Vansittart's critics regarding the possible identification of his ideas with the official policy of the British Government were well-founded. These fears were given another jolt when, at Casablanca (January 26, 1943), Winston Churchill announced the Government's adherence to the policy of "Unconditional Surrender." German propagandists quickly keyed on this pronouncement as further proof that an Allied victory could be equated with the extinction of Germany. For the duration of the war, "Unconditional Surrender" was the most commonly-employed slogan in Goebbels' "strength through fear" program.

The official British reaction came in a speech by the Lord Chancellor, Viscount Samuel, on March 10, 1943. "I take this opportunity on behalf of His Majesty's Government to deny Goebbels' assertion altogether. But this must be added. It is for the German people to choose the course which they will follow."\(^{113}\) Lord Vansittart's followers, as well as his critics, might have detected a familiar ring to the rest of the Lord Chancellor's speech:

And I point out this distinction. There is not a single country in Europe that has been overrun by Germany in this war, held down and oppressed most terribly by the Gestapo, by horrible cruelties

\(^{113}\)H L Deb. 5s, 578.
and frightful inflictions, that has not thrown up some brave bold men who have publicly denounced the whole wickedness at whatever cost. I wish there had appeared up to now more instances of a similar reaction inside Germany itself.114

The ostensible similarity between the attitudes of Vansittart and those of the Coalition Government allows for some interesting conclusions with respect to the question of whether or not he helped unite the German people behind the Nazis. It is clear, in the first place, that regardless of the extent to which the promotion of Vansittart's views may have contributed to such a "unification," they were only a minor ingredient in the "strength through fear" propaganda line and were almost inconsequential in comparison to the British Government's policy of "Unconditional Surrender." And on this point, the Government must bear at least some of the responsibility for whatever impact his writings did have on the German people since, in the interests of their own domestic propaganda, they not only refused to repudiate his views, but on several occasions gave indications that his views were their own. Even the Government could see the merit in Vansittart's advice to the British people: "Never mind what the German's think. I am talking to you."115

114Ibid., 579. See also Bones of Contention, p. 31.
115Roots of the Trouble, p. 144.
Finally, when attempting to establish a cause-effect relationship between the "strength through fear" propaganda and the determination of the German people to fight "until they were physically incapable of continuing resistance," the essential question should not revolve around what was at best a minor ingredient of British propaganda. As indicated earlier, the effectiveness as well as the themes of Goebbels' propaganda were determined largely by the fortunes of the Nazi war effort. When that effort began to fail, "German political warfare ceased to be a really significant factor . . . ." Vansittart claimed that his writings would not unite the German people behind the Nazis because they were already so united.

This is at least arguable. Nevertheless, that the German people, even allowing for the distortions of National Socialist propaganda, could find anything in either Vansittart's writings or in the vagueness of "Unconditional Surrender" which could make the actual horrors of war they were waging appear tolerable by comparison, is certainly a strange reflection on their sense of human values.

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There was a definite, though not exclusive, pattern to Lord Vansittart's approach towards the German problem during the war years. The period between the outbreak of the war and his retirement from the British Civil Service (September, 1939-June 1941) found him, except for the interlude of the "Black Record" broadcasts, uncomfortably inactive. The next phase, lasting approximately eighteen months, Vansittart spent defending the basic set of attitudes outlined in The Black Record, placing special emphasis upon the general culpability of the German people for the war and upon "the absolute need of Germany reeducation."¹ The vagueness of these discussions was dictated largely by the general uncertainty which prevailed in Great Britain over the question of, as Vansittart put it, "whether the "Night of the Dark Ages" was to descend upon the world or the "Night of the Long Knives upon the Nazis."² For Vansittart, as for many Englishmen,

¹Lessons of My Life, xxi.
²The Black Record, p. 88.
however, the defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad was a solid indication that the issue would be eventually decided in favor of the "Long Knives." Consequently, he devoted the greater part of the remaining years of the war to the problem of formulating (and defending) a workable peace solution.

Vansittart's intense concern over the post-war fate of Germany did not, of course, originate with Stalingrad. One of his first acts as a private citizen had been to co-found, along with the publisher of all of his wartime books Walter Hutchinson, the "Win the Peace" movement. This organization had as its primary goal the prevention of Germany's "gaining again in peace the victory she could not win at war." For the next four years, the movement was sustained almost single-handedly by "Lord Vansittart's personal powers and convincing oratory in various towns up and down the country," and by a series of "Win the Peace" pamphlets, several of which were also his personal contributions.

A fair indication of the basic peace objectives of Vansittart's movement was provided by the following

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3 *Bones of Contention*, p. 7.

4 Ian Colvin, Letter to the Author (July 22, 1965).

5 *Roots of the Trouble; The Leopards' Spots; The Great Swindle: The Story of German Reparations; The German Octopus.*
advertisement, which adorned the back cover of each pamphlet in the series.

Do you want:
- to stop the Germans making war again?
- to see them permanently disarmed?
- to prevent them from perverting another generation?
- to see business protected from German economic warfare?
- to see war criminals brought to justice?
- to see Germany's victims get priority for their reconstruction needs?

If so, you should support Lord Vansittart, President of the "Win the Peace" movement (non-Party) in his fight for Peace with Justice.

During the last two years of the war, especially, Vansittart was quite specific with regard to the peace terms which he believed would achieve his broad objectives. In conjunction with the "Win the Peace" movement, therefore, he promoted as "the minimum requirements for a Peace with Justice" a "Twelve Point Peace Charter," The "Twelve Points" were widely publicized in both Great Britain and the United States where, unfortunately, they formed the basis for much of the controversy concerning the relative "harshness" of Vansittart's solution to the German Problem.

6The general success of this appeal can perhaps be measured by Vansittart's later claim (Bone of Contention, pp. 7-8) that the movement had "recruited and enlightened many scores of thousands of men and women . . . ."
Actually, these proposals. Actually, these proposals represented no more than some of the more important "highlights" of his total program, the terms which "alone . . . will not ensure peace; but without [which] . . . no peace is possible."\textsuperscript{7}

Vansittart's peace proposals, as they were presented throughout the war in numerous articles, books and speeches, can be conveniently grouped under two headings: a) those concerned primarily with the successful conclusion of the war, and b) those designed to ensure the "winning of the peace." As necessary preconditions for any final settlement, he insisted upon (1) the "Unconditional Surrender" of Germany and the other Axis powers. Remembering the \textit{dolchstoss} propaganda of the interwar period, Vansittart recommended in the case of Germany an "installment surrender" of 50,000 men. This, he saw as "the only way of breaking the pernicious myth of German invincibility;"\textsuperscript{8} (2) the immediate evacuation of all territories invaded by the Axis powers; (3) the complete demobilization and disarmament of all Axis armed forces. Germany, specifically, was to surrender her fleet and her airforce. On the point, Vansittart reminded his audiences that "the more completely

\textsuperscript{7}Bones of Contention, p. 48.

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., p. 50.
and permanently Germany is disarmed, the smaller will be the armies of occupation;"9 (4) the immediate occupation of Germany by Allied forces and the establishment of an inter-allied "Council of Control," both of which were to be maintained until the United Nations decided conditions warranted their termination.

These four preliminary requirements Vansittart termed "obvious," and as he expected, they engendered little opposition. There was no such unanimity on the rest of his program, however. Especially controversial were his ideas about the punishment of war criminals. He advocated first "the arrest and trial of persons believed guilty of war crimes, in the countries where they were committed."10 Noting the decision made at the Moscow Conference (1943) "to pursue the war criminals to the uttermost ends of earth," he suggested the establishment of inter-Allied "Commissions of Identification," and the publication and broadcasting of lists of known Axis-war criminals, the latter to be accompanied by stern warnings that any enemy soldier who committed crimes in the interim would be added to the lists and would be subject to severe penalties... In a House of Lords speech on this topic, Vansittart

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9Ibid.

10Ibid.
singed out "the entire Gestapo and all Death's Head Guards at the concentration camps. There may be exceptions here and there, but broadly speaking, all these men are not only guilty but atrociously guilty, and we ourselves shall be war criminals if we allow them to remain at liberty." He denoted as well, all those Germans who actually "perpetrated massacre, incendiarism, rape and torture," in the occupied territories, and those "who have been guilty of brutalities to prisoners and slaves. Above all . . . those involved in the unspeakable horrors of enforced prostitution." And for effect, Vansittart cited cases where prisoners of the Germans were only half-shot and were buried "shouting, "We are not dead, we are not dead," until their mouths were stopped with dust."

The reactions in the House of Lords to Vansittart's speech were perhaps typical of the general reactions, vocal as well as written, to his peace proposals in Great Britain and the United States. Many of the Peers found themselves agreeing with the Lord Chancellor, Viscount Samuel, that Vansittart's address had been "eloquent, brilliant and full of deep feeling." But quite a few

11130, H.L. Deb., 5 s, 111-12.
12Ibid., 112.
13Ibid., 116.
14Ibid., 125.
shared the view of the Archbishop of York who, while he agreed with much of Vansittart's argument, admitted that he "felt real terror as the list of war criminals steadily increased and the demand for the punishment of death fell upon them indiscriminately."\(^{15}\) And it was not too far a journey from the Archbishop's reaction to that of Viscount Maugham who told the House: "The moral of his speech is that all German men should be destroyed."\(^{16}\) Ironically, Maugham would later pay tribute to Vansittart's "gift of forcible and lucid utterance "and his" fine and rather unusual mental quality of never saying what he merely wishes to believe."\(^{17}\) Apparently, like so many of Vansittart's critics, Maugham himself had the "not so unusual" gift of finding in Vansittart's statements whatever he "merely wished to believe" was present. Small wonder that, despite constant disavowals by Vansittart,\(^{18}\) the view that he wished to exterminate the German people was widely accepted by both his critics and his more extreme followers throughout the war years.

\(^{15}\text{Ibid.}, 125.\)

\(^{16}\text{Ibid.}, 117.\)

\(^{17}\text{Viscount Maugham, At the End of the Day (London, 1954), p. 378.}\)

\(^{18}\text{"No one," he wrote in Roots of the Trouble (p. 141), who has read what I have written can mistake such a charge without fully conscious mendacity."}\)
Another set of proposals which aroused substantial criticism concerned the limitation of the rights of neutral countries with respect to a) the granting of asylum to Axis war criminals, and b) the export to Germany of such valuable war materials as chrome, ball-bearings and wolfram. On the first issue, Vansittart argued that the right of asylum was "designed to cover the victims of political persecution, not wholesale massacreurs and saidists," and he warned of "the moment when all the worst criminals in the Axis countries will be seeking temporary addresses where their loot has been already deposited, there to recuperate and ultimately to filter back and organize Germany's third war." 

This proposition was the topic of a vigorous debate in the House of Lords on February 7, 1945. Viscount Samuel, the Lord Chancellor, undoubtedly reflected the views of the majority of those present when he opposed Vansittart's motion on the grounds that Britain had no right to force such a course on neutrals. Vansittart was recalcitrant. To Samuel's tactful suggestion that "he should ask leave of the House to withdraw the Motion" he replied:

19130, H L Deb, 5s, 110.
20131, H L Deb, 5s, 818.
21134, H L Deb, 5s, 940.
I have in this House, I think withdrawn almost every motion that I have brought forward, but in this case I do not see my way to do so. I am prepared to leave my Resolution on paper. I shall not withdraw it. I am prepared to leave it where it stands today, and if I get any further evidence of abuse, I shall come to this House again and take up the matter where I left it and divide the house.\(^2\)

This outburst was effectively counteracted by Lord Cranborne who told the assembled peers that, if Vansittart insisted in bringing his Motion to a division, "I hope your Lordship will show in no uncertain manner what you feel about this procedure."\(^2\) The resolution was withdrawn.

Vansittart had no better success with his proposals regarding the restriction of neutral "war material" exports to Germany. He pointed specifically to the activities of Turkey, Portugal and Sweden, but to no avail. By the end of the war, he was reduced to arguing that "the resources of diplomacy should be able to find a new word for this fantastic relationship. In the interest not only of morality but of common sense, neutrality . . . needs sharp re-definition."\(^2\)

High on Vansittart's list of proposals for post-war Germany were certain territorial adjustments. First,

\(^2\)Ibid., 942.
\(^2\)Ibid., 943.
\(^2\)Bones of Contention, p. 82.
East Prussia, the "home of Junkerdom, reaction, militarism, oppression,"\textsuperscript{25} was to be detached from the Reich and transferred to Poland. This "amputation" Vansittart believed necessary to ensure Polish access to the sea ("unless we are going to revert to the timorous absurdity of the Corridor"),\textsuperscript{26} and to guarantee the ability of the Poles to defend themselves successfully. Second, an unspecified "great slice" was to be carved from Western Germany "to compensate the Dutch for the wanton flooding of their country by sea-water."\textsuperscript{27} Third, both the "Rhine bridgeheads" and the "industry rich Ruhr" were to remain under permanent Allied control.

The remainder of Germany was to be "re-formed and reformed."\textsuperscript{28} The first situation was to be accomplished primarily by the emancipation of the German people from the ruinous effects of Prussian hegemony. Prussia was to "revert to her former components, Brandenburg and Pomerania,"\textsuperscript{29} and her control over the Rhineland, Westphalia, Hanover, Schleswig-Holstein, the old Hansa towns

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., p. 99.
\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 100.
\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., p. 102.
\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., p. 71.
\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 66.
and territories, Hesse and the Free City of Frankfurt was to be eliminated. These areas in turn were to be included in the new state-form "on an equal footing with those States or Provinces which may be left or will appear anew from the past in modified form."30

Vansittart regarded the "reforming" of Germany—political, economic and "spiritual"—as the most crucial question of the immediate post-war era. The guiding principle behind his proposals for the political regeneration of Germany was "decentralization." Unlike the majority of Englishmen, he did not advocate the partitioning of the Reich into small states.31 Instead, he recommended the creation of a "German Union," to be composed of the various provinces officially recognized by the Allied Governments. Each province was to be as autonomous as possible, and the right of secession would be guaranteed. The Federal Government was to have jurisdiction only with respect to "customs and excise, post, telegraph and telephone, communications and foreign affairs."32 All other administrative matters would be the responsibility of the municipalities, counties and provinces. This applied especially

30Ibid., p. 63.
31See pages 166 and 167.
32Bones of Contention, p. 65.
to the police, which were to be "(a) decentralized, (b) unarmed, (c) not in garrisons, and (d) under the control of local authorities."\(^{33}\)

Throughout the war, Vansittart was determined that Germany should not revert, "even economically, to old habits, formations and organizations."\(^{34}\) This determination was fully reflected in his extensive (economic?) reform proposals. First, German economic penetration of other countries was to be halted. Such infamous cartels and monopolies as the I. G. Farben Company, and the Hermann Goring Trust—the latter "the biggest and most representative Robbery Trust of all time"\(^{35}\)—were to be broken up and brought under Allied control. German holdings and subsidiaries in foreign companies were to be either sold (if possible to local inhabitants) or placed under Allied supervision. The countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe were to be encouraged to "develop their own industries . . . thus render them less dependent on Germany for their manufactured requirements and for the purchase of their surplus agricultural products . . . ."\(^{36}\)

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\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 65.

\(^{34}\)The German Octopus, p. 3.

\(^{35}\)Ibid., p. 5.

\(^{36}\)Bones of Contention, p. 57.
Finally, a special committee of scientists and lawyers was to be formed to deal with the question of enemy patents. On this point, Vansittart recommended that the various products and methods covered by German patents be made available to British scientists and manufacturers. He also noted that in 1944, 6000 German patents had been registered through Sweden, and added to his proposals regarding the "rights of neutrality" the necessity of denying "any neutral whatever the right to act as a fence or receiver of stolen goods."37

For Germany proper, Vansittart advocated a program of "reasonable de-industrialization."38 Certain key war-industries, such as aviation (commercial as well as military), 39 machine tools, synthetic petrol and rubber, and oil refining, were to be prohibited altogether, while others, notably the heavy iron and steel industries, were to be nationalized and subject to strict inter-Allied supervision. The chemical industry, "the backbone of both Germany's world wars,"40 was to be thoroughly investigated

37135, H L Deb, 5s, 768.
38131, H L Deb, 5s, 428.
39Vansittart later changed his mind about German commercial aviation. See 135, H L Deb, 5s, 121.
40131, H L Deb, 5s, 428.
by a committee of Allied scientists, with a view towards especially "the control or elimination of . . . [her] nitrate and hydro-genation." In addition, temporary Allied directors, and even managers, were to be appointed for all of the "great German war combines." Germany's war potential was to be further curtailed by the careful scrutiny and rationing of her imports. The various Allied nations participating in the post-war occupation were to limit the importation of "not only copper and nickel, but chrome, tungsten, wolfram, managanese, boux, sulphur, iron ore and any other substances capable of ready conversion to war purposes." Among the other restrictions Vansittart would place on the new German economy, the most severe involved the payment of reparations. Germany's victims were to be compensated for all "loot, machinery and equipment removed or destroyed." By "compensation," Vansittart indicated that he meant not only restoration, but "replacement and reconstruction, where German destruction has rendered restoration

41Ibid., 427.
42Bones of Contention, p. 57. In this connection, Vansittart mentioned specifically the names Krupp, Thysson, Bloehm and Voss, Zeiss, and I. G. Farben.
43Bones of Contention, p. 55.
44Ibid., p. 49.
Reparations were to be provided mainly in the form of materials (potash, timber, wood-pulp, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, machinery, livestock), securities (especially patents, processes, trade-marks, and share and loan capital, although he did not rule out cash payments), and conscript labor.

Vansittart's economic peace terms were the particular target of a considerable amount of criticism. For many, they tended to lend credence to the already prevalent accusations that he was "vindictive," "unbalanced," "the modern Cato." Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, for example, who was far from moderate in his own peace proposals, remarked after listening to Vansittart present his economic program to the House of Lords: "I can only conceive that he really desires to reduce Germany to a condition of slavery."47

As previously indicated, much of the anti-Vansittart criticism was ideologically based, and took little account of what he actually advocated. It is also true that in defending his proposals, Vansittart repeatedly and undoubtedly accurately, stated that he had neither the

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46 See, for example, 133, H. L Deb., 5s, 157-58.
47 125, H. L Deb., 5s, 565.
intention nor the desire to restrict legitimate commercial activity in Germany. Yet, how must the "reasonableness" of such denials have been affected by, for example, his defense of forced labor?

Firstly, it will eliminate any fear of unemployment in Germany, and secondly, it will stultify Germany's iniquitous policy of winning the war by reducing the population of her neighbours, while stimulating her own birth rate. A period of celibacy in foreign labour camps will prevent the stealing of at least this blood-stained march.48

By far the most important part of Vansittart's peace program focused on the problem of "re-educating," or as he preferred "reforming,"49 the German people. He declared his belief in the necessity (thereby implying the possibility) of such a conversion in The Black Record:

If Germany, after a long and unbroken record of evil doing, is ever to cease to be a curse to herself and to everyone else, she will have to undergo the most thorough spiritual cure in history . . . . It will have to comprise a complete change of heart, mind and soul; of taste and temperament and habit; a new set of morals and values; a new, brand-new way of looking at life.50

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48Bones of Contention, p. 56. See also the reaction of The Economist (July 29, 1944) to this last proposal.

49Bones of Contention, p. 71: "I would sooner speak of reforming than re-educating the Germans. Re-education smacks of a desk and a schoolmaster. The Germans have got to become reformed characters--that is of more importance than their book-learning."

50The Black Record, p. 37.
This transformation, Vansittart warned, would be slow. Salvation would not be ready made: "there will be no ideal German democracy waiting around the corner." In the cases of the most thoroughly corrupted Germans—"the army," the "heavy industrialists," "the Junkers," "the brutes... of the Gestapo, the Sicherheitsdienst (S.D.), the S.S. and S.A.," "the reactionary civil service," "the corrupt and cruel judges," "the flamboyant teachers and professors of war and racial superiority," "the slave-driving German women" "the children trained to mock and stone slaves and captives"—the only probable "cure" was Time. So long as this "abominable residue" continued to "infect" German political, economic and social life, "extensive and persistent vigilance" would be required of the Allied nations.

Almost all of the various peace formulae which were promoted in Great Britain and the United States during the late stages of the war included some provision for the military occupation of Germany. Vansittart's own approach to this problem was unique. The occupation was "to be undertaken by all the Allied Powers and not merely the three Great Powers." Subject, of course, to the complete

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51 Bones of Contention, p. 53.
52 Ibid., p. 59.
53 133, H.L Deb. 5s, 120.
fulfillment of the requirement of German disarmament, each of the twelve Allies was to contribute one mechanized division (approximately 13,000 men). The latter were not to be concentrated in "strict, rigid zones," but were to be spread loosely, throughout the country. The duration, as well as the strength, of the Allied occupation would depend largely upon the pace of German re-education, a process Vansittart believed would take "at least a generation:"

To assist the Allied nations in affecting this "spiritual cure," Vansittart advocated a series of further restrictions and changes. In line with his belief that "what really produced Hitlerism was German militarism," he insisted upon "the abolition in Germany of all military or semi-military training at any age in any form whatever."

On this point, he mentioned specifically the "Officers' Corps," the "Training Corps," and the "Youth and Sport Associations." Also forbidden were "old-soldiers" and "patriotic" associations, as well as "all pre-military or paramilitary organizations." The German people would be

54Black Record, p. 93. See also Lessons of My Life (p. 75), where Vansittart suggested that "in all probability, it . . . /would/ take two generations."

55Bones of Contention, p. 48.

56Ibid., p. 49.

57Ibid., p. 55.
required to surrender all firearms, and would not be allowed to erect war memorials. Similarly, "all streets, squares and institutions connected with battles, wars, militarism, imperialism," were to be renamed. Finally, both "the mainstays of militarism, the Junkers," and the heavy industrialists, were to be expropriated, with little more "than a pittance in compensation." "Were they to remain a moneyed class," Vansittart argued, "they would simply re-enter politics through a side-door." 

To guard against the continued teaching of militarism and racism in Germany's post-war educational establishments, Vansittart also emphasized the absolute necessity for inter-Allied supervision of the Curriculum. German scientific research programs, (especially in view of the development of the "Flying Bomb War"), were to be carefully and frequently inspected. And similar inter-Allied surveillance would be necessary with reference to the German press, radio, and film industries.

In evaluating Vansittart's program for the political, economic and spiritual reform of the German people, it is

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58 Ibid., p. 56.
59 Ibid., p. 49.
60 Ibid., p. 50.
61 131, H L Deb., 58, 431.
important to note the essentially negative role which he believed he had assigned to the forces of occupation. In almost all phases of his peace solution, Vansittart repeatedly stipulated that he wanted as little Allied interference into the affairs of the new German state as possible. The "witches cauldron" of German politics was to be totally avoided, except to enforce decentralization. Even on the matter of secession, he insisted that the initial impulse had to come from the province rather than from Allied encouragement. Economically, the restrictions were greater, but, as previously noted, he did not wish to interrupt the flow of legitimate commerce. Indeed, Vansittart was apparently not especially concerned about the ideological alignment of the German economy. And with reference to the re-education/reform of the German people his motto was "no misconduct, no interference." 

This general "hands-off" attitude must be taken into account when considering the validity of the accusations that his peace plans were "vindictive" or "oppressive," or that he intended to "destroy Germany." Despite the numerous restrictions which many of his terms would place in the way of the early and complete return of the remainder

62Bones of Contention, p. 67.
63Ibid., p. 52.
of Germany into the comity of nations, there is no solid justification for assuming that he wished permanently to prevent that return.

Vansittart's peace program was not a "soft" one. In certain respects—notably with respect to the treatment of war criminals, the rights of neutrals, and the use of conscript labor—it exceeded the terms of the actual settlement. Yet the comparative mildness of the latter can not be attributed to either the generosity or the perspicuity of its framers. Most of the important analyses of the war-time peace-making efforts of the "Big Three," establish clearly that Vansittart's terms were, on the whole, no more severe than those entertained by the majority of the Allied leaders. This was especially true of the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, who advocated the detachment of East Prussia from the Reich (in favor of Poland), the extensive punishment of war criminals (he once used the figure 500,000), the exaction of reparations in kind and in forced labor, and the necessity for total and permanent German disarmament. On certain other points, such as the removal of German machinery to pay

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64 See for example, McNeill, op. cit., Herbert Feis, Churchill Roosevelt Stalin: the War They Waged and the Peace They Sought (Princeton, 1957); John Snell, Dilemma Over Germany (New Orleans, 1959).
Russian war losses, and the payment of reparations in cash, Stalin and Vansittart differed only in degree--the latter being by far the more moderate.

For the greater part of the war, President Roosevelt, also, either actively promoted or privately held notions about Germany and the ultimate peace requirements which more than matched Vansittart's. For example, he was the most forceful promoter of "Unconditional Surrender." During the negotiations at Casablanca (January 1943), Moscow (October 1943), and Yalta (February 1944), he indicated his support of, among other things conscript labor, the elimination of German synthetic oil and rubber, and airline industries, large-scale cash reparation payments, tight allied supervision of German schools and education, the detachment of East Prussia and the removal of Germany's heavy industry. His temporary adherence to the principles of Morgenthau's plan, which called for the "pastoralization" of Germany, should also be noted.65

Even Churchill, especially in the early years of the war, indicated a willingness to go along on several points, notably on extensive reparation payments in cash. In the last years of the war, he was actively contesting with Stalin over the prizes of German industry. It was

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65 For an indication of the strength of Roosevelt's ideas with respect to Germany, see Feis, p. 366.
no accident that Britain's eventual zone of occupation in Germany incorporated the most heavily industrialized areas.

Finally, on the question of the occupation of Germany, all three Allied leaders entertained notions which not only exceeded Vansittart in "harshness," but which indicated their almost total absorption in the game of "Big Power Diplomacy." Their ultimate solution, the division of Germany into large, potentially hostile blocs, was far removed from the principle of the "equality of nations" set forth in the Atlantic Charter and in the Moscow Declaration. It must be noted as well that throughout the peace-making, the "Big Three" rarely gave serious or extensive consideration to either the fate or the future role of the small powers.66 In these two respects, Vansittart's peace solution was not only more moderate, but, it could be argued, far more practical.

John Snell, in Dilemma Over Germany, suggests that one of the major reasons for the comparative mildness of the eventual peace solution was President Roosevelt's advocacy (after 1943) of the "postponement of decisions that would most unfavorably have effected Germany's future."67 As a result, many of the actual goals of the

66Snell, p. 142.
67Ibid., p. 221.
Allied leaders were never realized. In any event it seems clear that many of the terms of opprobrium hurled in the direction of Vansittart on the basis of his peace program could just as legitimately have been levelled at Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, if their views on the peace had been known.

In fact, however, the accusations against Vansittart did not stem from his peace proposals. There was little contained in the latter which could, or should, have encouraged those individuals who regarded him as "the symbol of all who are hoping for a post-war policy of hate and revenge." As one observer remarked after having read one of Vansittart's books, "the prescription is not half as outrageous as Vansittartism has often been represented to be . . . . Other eminent persons have said as much and have not been reviled."  

Vansittart's own degree of responsibility for the tendency of others either to misinterpret or misrepresent his views rests largely with the very thing which as Eden has indicated with reference to his earlier career, "weakened so many of the causes which he wished most to promote"—overstatement of his position.

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68 *American Mercury* (December 1944).
70 *Facing the Dictators*, p. 432.
Probably the best testimonial to Vansittart's prowess as well as his limitations in presenting his views came in a House of Lords debate in May 1942. Vansittart had taken this occasion to deliver his third major speech before the House, a sharp attack upon the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison. The major reaction came from Lord Wedgwood, who termed Vansittart's speech "marvellous."

I do not think that in all my experience of this or the other House I have ever listened with such amazement to such a tour de force of oratory. The noble Lord, who did not use a note, made endless quotations. He must have learnt his speech by heart, and for sheer eloquence it was the greatest possible pleasure for this House to listen to it. At the same time it was proof positive to me that the noble Lord was lacking in proper judgement.71

Continuing, Wedgwood noted Vansittart's extensive use of quotation, and especially his habit of quoting himself.

How sick and tired we get in politics, and outside as well, of what Mr. Gladstone said in 1866. What does it matter what Mr. Gladstone said in 1866; or what Lord Vansittart said in 1922, or any of the rest of us? What we think is more important than what somebody else thought in the back ages.72

The picture of Vansittart which comes through in this, and in numerous other commentaries on his way of

71ibid., 1175.

72ibid., 1175.
expressing himself, is very much consistent with the opinions which others had formed during his term as Permanent Undersecretary. The "jeux de mots" remained "a little too brilliant," while the force of his arguments continued to limit both the size and the receptivity of his audience.

With the formulation of his peace plans the last phase of Vansittart's war time attempt to deal with the German problem came to a close. By 1945, he had had more than enough of public exposure. The heat of the controversy over his views had been largely dissipated. Indicative of this perhaps was The Spectator's decision in August 1944 officially to close off all correspondence on "Vansittartism."

Looking back, Vansittart could view the war years with a certain amount of satisfaction.

We had moved from relative obscurity and inactivity into the center of an exceptionally active controversy. He had achieved considerable fame and had attracted thousands of individuals in Great Britain and the United States to his views. He was quite successful as an author, with four books including a volume of verse, and numerous pamphlets and articles to his credit (although he had perhaps not lived up to the expectations of that Manchester Guardian journalist who had earlier termed him
"the most promising new-comer to the political and literary field that the war has brought"), and had established a reputation as an accomplished and moving speaker. Yet in all of this the German Problem was the overriding factor. It had dominated his pre-war thinking to a very great extent, perhaps more than he realized. As Permanent Under-Secretary, however, no matter how menacing the activities of Nazi Germany, Vansittart was able to turn his attention, if only for an instant, to the more general problems of international politics. The German Problem was only a part, albeit the most important part, of the international situation.

Once the Second World War had started, however, the German Problem became an obsession for him. All the years of frustration, of rejected memoranda and advice, had led to another German war! The Black Record broadcasts had provided him with real taste for public exposure and controversy. From the time of his retirement in July 1941 until the surrender of the Nazis, the German Problem became the center of his life.

Professor Trevor-Roper believes that Vansittart was "... a little unbalanced about Germany," a view which

74 Interview with the author, December, 1965.
squares with that of several prominent historians, among them Sir John Wheeler-Bennett 75 and Gordon Craig. 76 Perhaps it was more a question of over balance. The Second World War did not bring about a radical change of views for Vansittart. The beliefs, even the language adopted during the war were very similar to those revealed before the war. The war brought rather a shift in emphasis, a sense of urgency over the prospect of still another German war, and Vansittart seemed to lose a little of his sense of perspective in the process. Thus, he was so obsessed with the German Problem that he occasionally failed to offer constructive advice on other matters concerning which he was pre-eminentally qualified. During the debates in the House of Lords over the question of Foreign Office reform, for example, he had little to say. 77 Similarly, when the House debated over the future of the Ministry of Economic Warfare, Vansittart, who had for a while been an adviser to that department, could only discuss the matter in terms of "applying economic pressure upon neutral countries who shielded German war criminals." 78

75Interview with the author, op. cit.
76Interview with the author, July 1965.
77134, H L Deb, 5s, 294-97.
78131, H L Deb, 5s, 819.
On the other hand, he was not so obsessed by Germany that he failed to recognize the potential danger from Soviet Russia. And his proposals concerning the post-war occupation of Germany were certainly more conducive to the aims of his socialist opponents, and less oriented to questions of party prejudice, than was the solution ultimately adopted.

Thus Vansittart was not exactly "unbalanced," and he was certainly more than "a sincere practitioner with bees in his bonnet," as the New Statesman dismissed him. There was a large degree of continuity in his attitude towards Germany before and during the war. Many of the issues, even many of his opponents, were the same. Most of the issues which concerned him warranted discussion and investigation. If his choice of words was strong, it was no stronger than that used by many of his opponents, and it was even moderate in comparison with that used by many of those who claimed to be his followers.
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