CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

"I never spend five minutes in inquiring if we are impopular. The answer is written in red ink on the map of the globe." 1)

These words written by Lord Curzon in 1900, are an indication of the international problems by which the Salisbury Government was faced.

If, at this time, the Cabinet had reviewed foreign affairs over the past few years, they would have found that crises had arisen in relations with the United States over Venezuela; with Germany over South Africa; with Russia over China; and, lastly, with France over Fashoda. They had not always been able to extricate themselves unscathed from these encounters, and this must have left doubts in the minds of some Ministers, whether Britain held cards which were strong enough, provided they were properly played, to make any impression on the international game of power politics.

Theoretically, the British Empire was more than a match for either of the two European Power Groups and neither the Dual Alliance nor the Triple Alliance could reasonably be expected to attack her. There was always, of course, in theory, the possibility that these two groups would combine against her, but no less a statesman than Lord Salisbury, when writing his famous defence of isolationism in 1901, insisted that this was "a danger in whose existence we have no historical reason for believing". 2)

We agree with Spender when he points out 3) that British naval superiority over any combination of enemies was a most important premiss of Lord Salisbury's reasoning. This supremacy might still have been a fact in 1901, but some of Lord Salisbury's colleagues were extremely doubtful whether the challenge of Germany's Naval Laws could be met without help from outside. In their opinion, a combination of the Dual and the Triple Alliances against Great Britain was not only a theoretical possibility, but something which a responsible British Government should always reckon with and be prepared to meet. Chamberlain, speaking at Birmingham on May 13th, 1898, put the case to his audience in this way:

"A new situation has arisen, and it is right the people of this country should have it under their consideration. All the powerful states of Europe have made alliances, and as long as we keep outside these alliances, as long as we are envied by all and suspected by all and as long as we have interests which at one time or another conflict with the interests of all, we are liable to be confronted at any moment with a combination of Great Powers so powerful that

¹⁾ Ronaldshay p. 254; Curzon to Lord Selborne April 9th 1900. 2) Br. Doc. II no. 86. 3) Spender p. 195, 196.

not even the most extreme, the most hot-headed politician would be able to contemplate it without a certain sense of uneasiness." 1)

Two years before, a question about the Government's policy, in the case of all the nations combining together against England, had been put to the First Lord of the Admiralty, and Mr. Goschen had, on that occasion, recalled a similar question which was once asked in the Athenian assembly. Then, as now, the answer was that "they would put their trust in Providence and in a good Admiral". 2)

It seems unlikely, however, that those of Mr. Goschen's colleagues who thought "splendid isolation" too dangerous a policy, considered this suggestion to be an adequate solution of the problem. Chamberlain, in particular, believing as fervently as he did in the need for an agreement with any one of the European Powers tried energetically, both publicly and in private, to put his ideas into effect. It was no fault of his that his offers to Germany to conclude such an alliance came to nothing. The foregoing has shown that the duplicity of those in charge of German foreign policy and their conviction that they could toy with Chamberlain's offers while at the same time building a German fleet, were unsurmountable obstacles. By pursuing this policy, Germany eventually "fell between two stools". 3)

Chamberlain's failure to end British "isolation" by making a deal with Germany did not, however, alter his conviction that his was the right policy to pursue. If one thought, as he did, that "splendid isolation" was the wrong policy, the only alternatives were still either to conclude an alliance with another Power, or to make a peaceful settlement of the outstanding problems with one or more of the European Powers, thus limiting the field of possible conflict.

In the end, Great Britain did both. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance gave her a very valuable safeguard for her interests in the Far East and a strong partner in case it became necessary to defend those interests; and the Anglo-French Convention was in reality no more than a series of detailed concessions by both partners, designed to clear up long-standing territorial differences, which had been causing friction. It is, however, necessary to emphasize that neither the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, nor the Anglo-French Convention, were seen by British statesmen at the time, in the light which other events have since cast upon them. They accepted the Japanese offer because they needed help to protect British interests in China against Russian encroachments and the opportunity of coming to terms with France about many of the causes of friction was welcomed. There is nothing in the records already published or in the many unpublished papers which it has been possible for the author to consult, to support the view that any definite decision to end the policy of "splendid isolation" was ever made at any specific moment by the British Government.

¹⁾ Times May 14th 1898. 2) Elliot p. 208. 3) Spender p. 149.

It would have been strange had it been otherwise, for, as Sir Thomas Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, said to the German Ambassador, "we [Great Britain] had not got a policy and worked from hand to mouth". 1)

We submit that the reasons for the gradual shift in Britain's foreign policy are to be found in the world-wide threats to her interests and position and that this shift is therefore in perfect accord with Lord Palmerston's axiom: "We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual and those interests it is our duty to follow." 2)

¹⁾ Br. Doc. II no. 98. 2) House of Commons, March 1st 1848.

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STELLINGEN

T

De terugkeer naar het districtenstelsel voor de verkiezing van een gedeelte van de leden van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, zal een bijdrage kunnen zijn voor de ontwikkeling van een dieper gewortelde politieke belangstelling bij de kiezers.

TT

De definitieve regeling van de administratieve rechtspraak, binnen het raam van de Wet op de Bedrijfsorganisatie, dient gelijke tred te houden met de daadwerkelijke oprichting van de Product-, Hoofdbedrijf- en Bedrijfschappen (art. 140, Wet op de Bedrijfsorganisatie).

III

Naarmate de economische integratie van West-Europa verder voortschrijdt, zal de noodzakelijkheid ener volledige onderlinge inwisselbaarheid der betrokken valuta's groter worden.

IV

Bij een verder voortschrijdende integratie van West-Europa, waarbij een groter aantal "Hoge Autoriteiten" ontstaat, zal het noodzakelijk zijn om te komen tot de instelling van een West-Europees Gerechtshof. Aan dit Gerechtshof behoren onder meer de geschillen met betrekking tot de interpretatie van de verdragen, waarbij de "Hoge Autoriteiten" werden opgericht, ter beslissing te worden voorgelegd. Zowel staten, "Hoge Autoriteiten", als natuurlijke of rechtspersonen, wier belangen betrokken zijn bij de werkzaamheden der "Hoge Autoriteiten", behoren partij te kunnen zijn in geschillen voorgelegd aan het Gerechtshof.

V

Het beginsel, dat de handelingsbekwaamheid van partijen bij een overeenkomst beoordeeld wordt volgens ieders nationale wet, geldt ook dan, als één der partijen volgens die wet handelingsonbekwaam is, terwijl de wederpartij hem voor handelingsbekwaam heeft gehouden en mocht houden.

VI

Het middel der functionele ordening zal slechts tot een gedeeltelijke oplossing van het vraagstuk der volledige economische integratie van West-Europa kunnen voeren.